



UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI
DI TRENTO

Dipartimento di Psicologia
e Scienze Cognitive

Dipartimento di Psicologia e Scienze Cognitive

SEMINARIO DiPSCo

Grammatical Gender in Bilinguals

**DANIELA PAOLIERI - Brain, Mind and Behavior Research Center;
Department of Experimental Psychology; University of Granada; Spain**

Scientific coordinator: Roberto Cubelli

Wednesday 16 May 2018, ore 15.00

Sala Convegni – Department of Psychology and Cognitive Science - corso Bettini, 31 – Rovereto

Abstract:

Grammatical Gender is one of the more puzzling of the grammatical categories. It plays an important role in the processing of languages with two (e.g., Italian and Spanish), three (e.g., German, Czech, and Russian) or more grammatical genders (e.g., Nigerian Fula, with around twenty gender categories). Grammatical gender is assumed to be stored at a representational level that is different from that specifying semantic information (Caramazza, 1997; Levelt, Roelofs, & Meyer, 1999). Recently, the importance of grammatical gender in bilingual's comprehension and production has been observed by mean of different task, and different bilinguals population: with languages of different degree of similarity in the grammatical gender systems. The results confirm that the grammatical gender of the native language affects language processing in a second language. To explain the grammatical gender effect we consider that grammatical gender is represented as an abstract nominal feature and it is always available in lexical processing (Cubelli et al., 2005). In addition, we assume that both languages of a bilingual are simultaneously active in the bilingual mind and that congruent gender nouns share more between-language information than incongruent gender nouns. Because of this, words with a similar gender value across languages are rapidly accessed with regard to words that do not match in gender, and faster response latencies are observed. However, an increasing amount of empirical evidence also shows that conceptual representation can be shaped by the syntactic properties of nouns. For example, Konishi (1993) and Boroditsky, Schmidt, and Phillips (2003) proposed that arbitrary syntactic features such as grammatical gender of nouns are part of the conceptual representation of the objects they refer to. In this context we found that semantic variables modulate the gender congruency effect, suggesting a close relationship between semantics and grammatical information in bilingual language processing.

Contacts

Staff di Dipartimento - Psicologia e Scienze Cognitive
tel. 0464 808608 - DipartimentoPSC@unitn.it