Abstract

Two reaction time experiments were carried out to examine the morphological gender processing of Spanish words that were either transparent -that is, ending in o/a (e.g., banco - bank)- or opaque- that is, without superficial gender marking (e.g., virtud - virtue). In Experiment 1, participants categorized the gender of a transparent gender target preceded by a derived word of the same gender (e.g., banquillo-dock, masculine) or of different gender (e.g., banqueta-stool, feminine). A negative priming gender effect indicates the use of strategic-attentional mechanisms to decide the gender of the target, but also automatic computation of the prime gender. Experiment 2 used a lexical decision task with the stimuli of Experiment 1 in addition to opaque gender words. The results show longer reaction times for transparent gender words with regard to opaque items. This effect was possibly due to the lexical requirements of the task: lexical decision, and also because transparent words are morphologically more complex than opaque words. Finally, in both experiments, there was negative priming: when prime and target were of the same gender, reaction times were longer. This effect indicates that participants cannot ignore the gender of the prime when they respond to the target.