

The Wesleyan Word Experience Project- Year 2

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Introduction

The lexical quality of words is determined by several factors, including age of acquisition (AoA) and familiarity. AoA is a rating that measures when a word is acquired (see Juhasz, 2005 for a review). Familiarity (Fam) measures how often a word is experienced (Gernsbacher, 1984). These variables influence how words are processed and recognized (e.g. Juhasz, Lai, & Woodcock).

Over time, however, these characteristics may change within the English language. The Wesleyan Word Experience Project seeks to follow how familiarity and AoA change through time and how differing experiences impact word recognition. There is currently 2 years of data collected between Fall 2019- Spring 2021.

Method

Participants: All participants were enrolled in Psyc 105 between Fall 19-Spring 21. The total N= 474 (F19= 161; S20= 121, F20=135, S21=57).

Stimuli: Words were selected from the English Lexicon Project (ELP; Balota et al., 2007) and by the researchers. A total of 499 words were included on the questionnaires. Lexical decision times (LDT) and word naming times were available for 446 of these words in the ELP.

Procedure: Participants completed the questionnaires through Qualtrics. They were asked to rate words based on familiarity and when they first learned the word (AoA) on a 1 to 7 scale. Demographic information was also collected. There were four versions of the questionnaires, and participants were randomly assigned to a given version.

Data Analysis: Correlation analyses were used to assess the relationship between the AoA, familiarity, and word recognition time.

Results

Year 2 Correlations

Variable	AoA F20	AoA S21	Fam F20	Fam S21
AoA F20	1.00	.982**	-.669**	-.649**
AoA S21		1.00	-.681**	-.665**
Fam F20			1.00	.968**
Fam S21				1.00

Year 2 Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Mean	SD
AoA F20	5.02	1.11
AoA S21	5.02	1.09
Fam F20	5.89	0.95
Fam S21	5.93	0.97

Correlations with ELP Reaction Times

Variable	LDT FAM	Naming FAM	LDT AoA	Naming AoA
F19	-.560**	-.486**	.584**	.510**
S20	-.540**	-.484**	.575**	.504**
F20	-.543**	-.478**	.588**	.502**
S21	-.532**	-.452**	.589**	.503**

Note: ** = $p < .01$.

Summary and Conclusions

Means and standard deviations for self-reported AoA and Fam ratings were similar between the Fall '20 (F20) and Spring '21 (S21) data collection periods. Significant positive correlations for AoA and FAM measures between F20 and S21 samples corroborate a strong similarity between self-reported measures. Both Fam and AoA are significantly correlated with ELP word recognition times. However, the magnitude of the correlation for Fam appears to be decreasing over time.

References

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