

The nature of verbal short-term memory codes in Chinese

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Abstract: The extent to which Chinese is represented phonologically or orthographically in verbal short-term memory was investigated using a short-term cued recall task (Tehan & Humphreys, 1998). In all conditions, proactive interference was induced by providing a retrieval cue (e.g. wild animal) that subsumed a to-be-recalled target word (e.g. leopard) and a to-be-forgotten foil word (e.g. tiger), so that the foil was sometimes recalled instead of the target. In two critical conditions, filler words presented with the target word shared orthographic properties with the foil word, or shared phonological properties with the foil word. These two conditions increased the level of foil intrusions observed relative to the standard interference condition where the retrieval cue subsumed target and foil semantically, but not orthographically or phonologically. The results suggest that both phonological and orthographic codes are represented in verbal short-term memory for Chinese words.