

## A Study on Bilingual Semantic Processing: Category Effects and Age Effects

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**Abstract :** The present study addressed the nature of bilingual semantic processing in Mandarin Chinese and Southern Min and examined category effects and age effects. Nineteen bilingual adults of Mandarin Chinese and Southern Min, nine monolingual seniors of Mandarin Chinese, and ten monolingual seniors of Southern Min in Taiwan individually completed two semantic tasks: Picture naming and category fluency tasks. The instruments for the naming task were sixty black-and-white pictures, including thirty-five object pictures and twenty-five action pictures. The category fluency task also consisted of two semantic categories – objects (or nouns) and actions (or verbs). The reaction time for each picture/question was additionally calculated and analyzed. Oral productions in Mandarin Chinese and in Southern Min were compared and discussed to examine the category effects and age effects. The results of the category fluency task indicated that the content of information of these seniors was comparatively deteriorated, and thus they produced a smaller number of semantic-lexical items. Significant group differences were also found in the reaction time results. Category effects were significant for both adults and seniors in the semantic fluency task. The findings of the present study will help characterize the nature of the bilingual semantic processing of adults and seniors, and contribute to the fields of contrastive and corpus linguistics.

**Keywords :** bilingual semantic processing, aging, Mandarin Chinese, Southern Min

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