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The Role of Underlining in the Ability to Recognize Words



Grupo de Investigação em Memória Humana
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Introduction:

Underlining is a widely used study technique. Research about underlining usefulness has been scarce and somewhat inconsistent (Bell & Limber, 2010; Dunlosky et al., 2013). Underlining has been classified as a typographic cue that drives the reader's attention to the most important parts of a text (Bell & Limber, 2010; Golding & Fowler, 1992). This work aimed to explore the role of the underlining in memory, specifically its effectiveness in word recognition.

Does the underline benefit memory?

Study 1

$N = 48$ students ($M = 20.72$; $SD = 3.10$)

Within-participant design

Participants were instructed to actively underline marked words (↘) and read unmarked words silently

Study 2

$N = 48$ students ($M = 21.69$; $SD = 3.11$)

Within-participant design

Participants were instructed to silently read underlined words (passive underlining) and read unmarked words silently

Study 3

$N = 40$ students ($M = 21.33$; $SD = 4.16$)

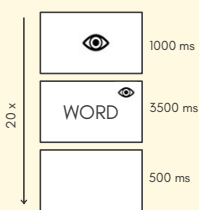
Within-participant design

Participants were instructed to actively underline (without color) marked words and read unmarked words silently

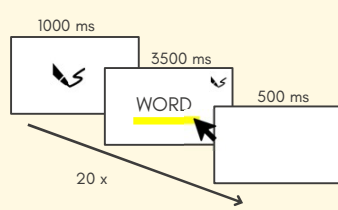
Procedure

Study Phase

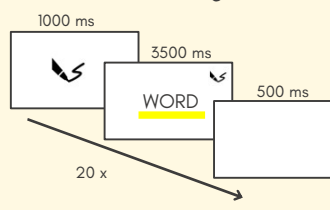
Silent reading



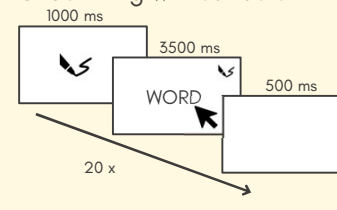
Underlining with color



Passive Underlining



Underlining without color

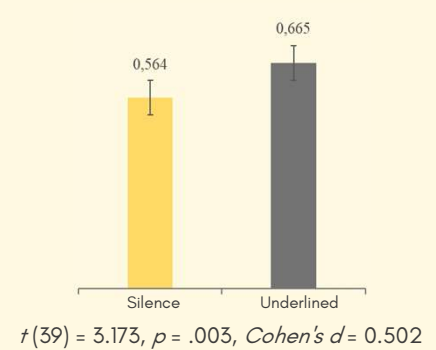
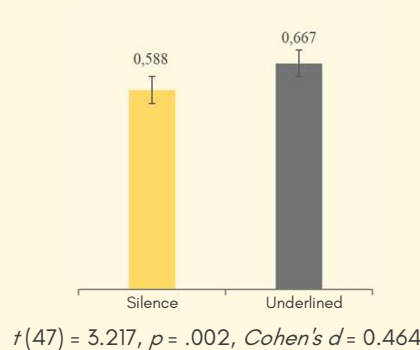
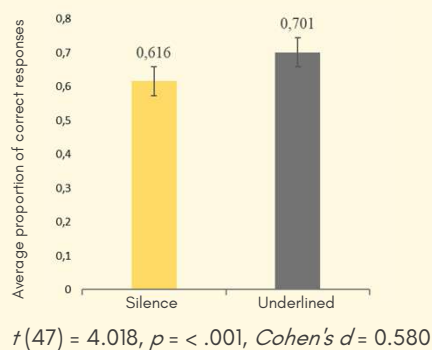


Test Phase



Did you study this word?
Yes / No

Results



Conclusions:

- ✓ Underlining is a form of study, and both underlining with or without color and reading words already underlined contribute to an increase in later recognition of the words
- ✓ This effect could be explained by distinctive elements of these study techniques, specifically, visual enhancement and motor execution

References:

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