

Prepare to Swear: Considering Phonological Preparation of Taboo Words

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Abstract

The current studies investigated whether speakers can prepare to swear the same way they prepare non-taboo words. Swearing, when produced reflexively, has greater right hemisphere activation than normal production suggesting that swearing is a different linguistic process. We used a form preparation paradigm to consider phonological preparation for non-reflexive swearing. Participants were given two types of lists; homogeneous - all words shared phonological onset (e.g. /f/ - feet, fork, film, fuck), and heterogeneous nothing shared (e.g. film, shit, dock, poll). Results indicated the taboo words did not contravene preparation for homogeneous sets, and taboo words were facilitated similarly to non-taboo words. Next, we tested variable homogeneous sets (taboo item was inconsistent with majority onset, e.g. shit, film, fork, feet) to understand whether increased attention to taboo items would disable preparation. Results showed reduced preparation for items sharing the majority onset in variable sets, but preparation was still significant.