READING DISORDERS IN ALZHEIMER SPANISH

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Introduction: The Spanish language has a transparent orthography so, Spanish people should be able to read words aloud without needing to draw on information about word meaning. In consequence, the loss of the semantic representation of a word, for example in probable dementia of the Alzheimer's type (pDAT), should not impact on their reading.

Aims: To test if the reading of pDAT patients is affected by the degradation of the semantic representation of words.

Methods: We tested the reading ability of 23 AD patients, with a MMSE of 21 and a control group of healthy people matched for sex, age, years of education and socioeconomic level. Participants had to read lists of words in which frequency and length were manipulated. These same words were tested in a semantic task (word-picture matching).

Results: The results show lower accuracy and higher reading latencies in pDAT patients. Reading performance was worse in patients with lower MMSE, and the difference between controls and patients was greater for low frequency and longer words. In addition, the patients were slower and less accurate in reading those words that they failed in the word-picture matching semantic task.

Conclusions: The results indicate that, despite the transparency of the orthography, Spanish-speaking readers also make use of lexical-semantic representations in reading aloud. When pDAT patients lose some the semantic information corresponding to a word that word is more likely to elicit incorrect and slow responses in the reading task. These results inform how reading is degraded in Alzheimer's disease.