Two routes to read in Kannada? Evidence from bi-literate (Kannada-English) persons with brain damage

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The dual route theories propose the existence of two functionally distinct routes (viz. lexical & sub-lexical/phonemic) while reading. Clinically, selective impairment of these two routes in brain-injured readers/writers of alphabetic orthographies (e.g., English) leads to surface alexia/agaphia and phonological alexia/agaphia, respectively. However, such reading/writing deficits have seldom been investigated in non-orthographic orthographies, especially, in alphasyllabic (or semi-syllabic) orthography. In this context, we present the reading/writing errors from an on-going cross-linguistic investigation on a group of bi-literate (Kannada-English) people with brain damage. Kannada, the primary language spoken in Karnataka (a southern state of India), employs the alphasyllabic orthography that shares properties of both alphabetic and syllabic orthographies (Karath, 2003). While the reading/writing errors in English supported the dual route model, such errors from Kannada did not. The implications on reading/writing errors as a function of orthography are discussed in the light of the current findings.

Reference