

Are Place Names Merely Referencing Expressions?

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Abstract: Previous research found cross-modality priming for the names of well-known people and landmarks, but not for nouns or country names (Hollis & Valentine, 2001). Hollis and Valentine argue that country names were processed like nouns because they have sense (i.e. they can act as adjectives) and are therefore not pure referencing expressions. However, it could be argued that the participants processed country names like nouns because they possessed richer knowledge about countries (e.g. culture, climate, political structure) than about landmarks. The current study used locality names that cannot act as adjectives to test this interpretation. No cross-modality priming was found for locality names, indicating that they are processed like nouns. One possible interpretation of these findings is that the richness of the mental representation associated with a given place name determines whether it will be processed as a noun. © Crown Copyright 2010 Reproduced by permission of Ordnance Survey.