

DECREASES IN WORKING MEMORY CAPACITY FOR SENTENCE STIMULI WITH ADULT AGING

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ABSTRACT

Previous studies have found that older adults have poorer immediate recall for language. Older adults may recall fewer chunks from working memory, or may have difficulty binding words or sentences together to form multi-unit chunks. We examined these two hypotheses by presenting participants with 4 types of spoken sentences for immediate free recall, varied by the number and length of chunks per trial: 4 short, simple sentences; 8 such sentences; 4 compound sentences, meaningfully comprised of two short sentences; and 4 random sentences. On those trials where the number or length of presented chunks were large, older adults formed fewer chunks than young adults with few differences in chunk size. Our results suggest that both of the above hypotheses influenced recall for older adults, though the degree of involvement of each has yet to be determined