
Font Size Matters - Emotion and Attention in Cortical Responses to Written Words

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Abstract

For emotional pictures with fear-, disgust- or sex-related contents, stimulus size has been shown to potentiate emotion effects in attention-related event-related potentials (ERPs), presumably reflecting the enhanced biological impact of larger emotion-inducing pictures. If this is true, size should not enhance emotion effects for written words with symbolic and acquired meaning. Here, we investigated the effect of font size for emotional and neutral words. Large font size lead to a potentiation of early emotion effects in ERPs; the Early Posterior Negativity started earlier and lasted longer for large relative to small words. These results indicate that interactions of stimulus size and emotion are not limited to biologically relevant stimuli, but might generalize to stimuli with arbitrary perceptual features. Therefore, biological relevance might not be a prerequisite for emotion-driven facilitation of attention visible in ERPs. Furthermore, this finding points to the high relevance of written language in today's society as an important source of emotional meaning.

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