Swiss Center for Affective Sciences

Impacts of Associated and Inherent Emotional Salience on Visual Sensory Processing: Evidence from Event-Related Brain Potentials (ERPs)

LECTURE

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Tuesday, 25th April 2017

12:15 - 13:15

Stimuli of emotional content have an undeniable processing advantage over neutral stimuli, discernible both at behavioral level and in emotion-related modulations of several components of event-related potentials (ERPs). Recently, it has been proposed that also inherently neutral stimuli might gain salience through associative learning mechanisms. In this talk, I will present a series of ERP studies that investigated whether acquired salience leads to processing advantages similar to inherent emotional salience. To this aim, associative learning paradigms were applied to stimuli of different domains, ranging from meaningless symbols to linguistic and face stimuli. Together, these studies indicate that emotional salience associated to inherently neutral stimuli can sharpen sensory encoding, reflected in amplifications of early ERP components (C1, P1), but does not obligatorily lead to preferential processing at later stages ■

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Swiss Doctoral School in Affective Sciences
with the support of swissuniversities