Music-induced Emotions: Cross-modal Affective Priming of Non-affective Responses

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Abstract

Abundant research found that a wide array of musical features could influence the judgment of the affective properties of visual stimuli. It was also suggested that the perception-action association is closely related to music-induced emotions. The present study used a cross-modal affective priming paradigm with the affective and non-affective evaluation tasks to investigate the music-induced emotions and the role of motor representations. Participants (*N*=42) were divided into three groups, either remaining still or engaging in limb movements when they were primed with happy or fearful real-life music before responding to the affective and non-affective features of target faces showing either happy or fearful facial expression. Results of repeated measures ANOVA did not support the notion that motor representations played a role in music-evoked emotions. However, target faces were evaluated significantly faster if they were preceded by music with same valence as compared to affectively incongruent music-face pairs in the non-affective evaluation task but not in the affective evaluation task. The observed affective priming effect in the non-affective evaluation task is mainly explained by the spreading activation account. Therefore, it is suggested that the valence characteristics of real-life music are spontaneously extracted and evaluated, and thus contribute to emotional responses that affect the encoding of the subsequently presented visual stimuli.

Keywords: affective priming, music-induced emotions, spreading activation, response competition, affective and non-affective evaluation tasks, perception-action