

PSYC4920 Senior Thesis Research II

Emotion and Attention: Attention Scope Depends More on Motivational Intensity than Valence

Abstract

The Broaden-and-Build Theory suggests that positive emotion broadens the scope of attention, as positive emotion is associated with impaired selective attention. However, several findings propose another view, that affects low in motivational intensity cause a broadening of attentional focus. In the present study, three global-local attention tasks were applied to compare the relationship between attention and emotions varying in valence and motivational intensity. Four emotions, amusement (low motivation positive emotion), sadness (low motivation negative emotion), desire (high motivation positive emotion) and disgust (high motivation negative emotion) were investigated. Across three experiments, low motivational intensity was found significant in widening visual attention while valence failed to exert an impact on attention. The implications of the finding for future study in emotion and cognition are discussed.

Applied Experiments

1. Kimchi and Palmer Task (e-prime)
2. Navon Task (e-prime)
3. Flanker Task (e-prime)