

How mood affects processing of emotional adjectives in L1 and L2 – an ERP study

We investigate how positive or negative moods affect categorization of and ERPs elicited by positive, negative, or neutral adjectives presented either in one's native language (L1: German) or one's non-native language (L2: English). Participants viewed short, emotionally evocative movie-excerpts and were then visually presented with series of adjectives. EEG was recorded while participants performed a valence decision task on the words. Most words were categorized as positive and fewer as negative or neutral in L2, whereas in L1, words were categorized more often as positive or negative than as neutral, positive and negative not differing. The N400 ERP was larger in L1 than L2 and larger in negative than in positive mood. On the late positive potential (LPP) an interaction was found: In L1, particularly in positive mood, larger responses occurred for both positive and negative adjectives compared to neutral ones. In L2, by contrast, across moods largest LPPs were found for positive adjectives. This research specifies the effects of mood on the processing of emotion words in the native versus non-native language, extending previous word-level (e.g. Sereno et al. 2015) and sentence-level work (e.g. Vissers et al. 2013; Pinheiro et al. 2013). Results corroborate the idea of reduced processing of negative content in L2 (e.g. Wu and Thierry 2012; Jończyk et al. 2016), laying the groundwork for future cross-linguistic research into mood-content interactions.

References

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