Emotional agreement

Anna Hatzidaki ¹ & Mikel Santesteban ²

¹ National and Kapodistrian University of Athens (Greece); ² University of the Basque Country (UPV/EHU) (Spain)

Following emotion and neurolinguistic theories that postulate the existence of a network that contains both linguistic and emotional information (Keuper et al., 2013; Kissler et al., 2006; Pulvermüller, 1999), the present ERP study investigated whether access to syntactic representations during subject-verb agreement is independent of or affected by the emotional content of a local noun. Thus, valence (negative vs. neutral) and number (singular vs. plural) were manipulated in grammatically correct sentences; El gorro de aquel cazador / mecánico / aquellos cazadores / mecánicos era de gran colorido por seguridad ('The hat of that hunter / mechanic / those hunters / mechanics was colourful for safety'). Reading performance of Spanish monolinguals showed that affective information influenced grammatical computations at a late stage (Late Positivity) of syntactic processing, suggesting that the emotional content of a PP subject modifier had a distracting effect during integration processes. Examining the role of emotional content separately for the local noun and (target) verb revealed that the processor considered it differently for each grammatical category, in lexical processes of the former and syntactic computations of the latter.