

PSYCHOPHYSIOLOGY OF EMOTION, LANGUAGE AND COGNITION IN HEALTHY SUBJECTS

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This study was conducted to examine the basic mechanisms of affective reactivity. Thirty medically and psychologically healthy individuals were given an interview designed to elicit speech samples in response to positive and negative valenced questions. Interview questions were based on the Circumplex model of emotion and were balanced in terms of valence (pleasant/unpleasant) and arousal (high/low). Physiological measures of ANS activation (heart rate, skin conductance, salivary cortisol) were collected during the interview and during an independent task of selective attention (emotional Stroop). Affective reactivity was measured by examining the frequency of language errors using the Communication Disturbances Index (Docherty, 1996), and by examining the pattern of physiological arousal. Results will be discussed in terms of frequency of communication errors, levels of physiological arousal during both the interview and Stroop task, and moderating influences of the relationship between affective reactivity and communication disturbance (ie personality measures, mood, recent life events, cognitive functioning). Results of this study are particularly relevant to improving our understanding of the underlying mechanisms of affective reactivity in patients with schizophrenia.