Picture-picture priming study : Emotional Categorization task

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INTRODUCTION

Given the profound impact of emotions, researchers have extensively studied emotional regulation and perception. Gross (2015) argues that emotion regulation plays a crucial role in health and illness, and may fail without proper identification of the emotion. One emotion regulation strategy that has gained increasing attention is affect labeling (Moyal et al., 2024) - the explicit verbal identification and naming of one's emotional state. This linguistic process focuses attention on the emotional aspect of the situation, facilitates encoding of its characteristics, and supports memory of the emotional experience (Moyal, 2014).

Within the emotional spectrum, a variety of emotions can arise, some of which may be **conflicting**. What happens when two different emotions arise at the same time?

Paradigm: Eliciting emotional conflict through the successive presentation of two emotional images.

Previous studies
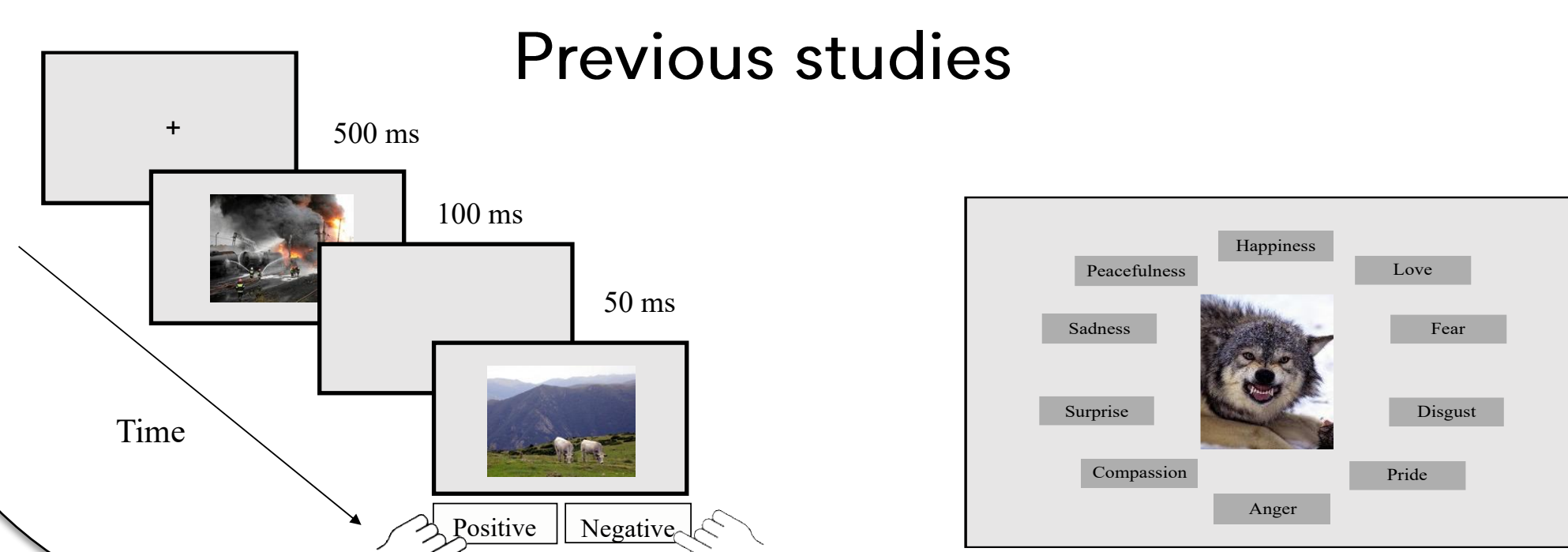
METHOD

o **56** students from BGU University
o **15** pictures from 4 emotional categories: sadness, fear, happiness, peacefulness (CAP-D; Moyal et al., 2018).
o **30** neutral pictures (IAPS; Lang et al., 1997).
o **5** prime categories * 4 target categories = 20 combinations. **400** trials in total.

Experimental Trial
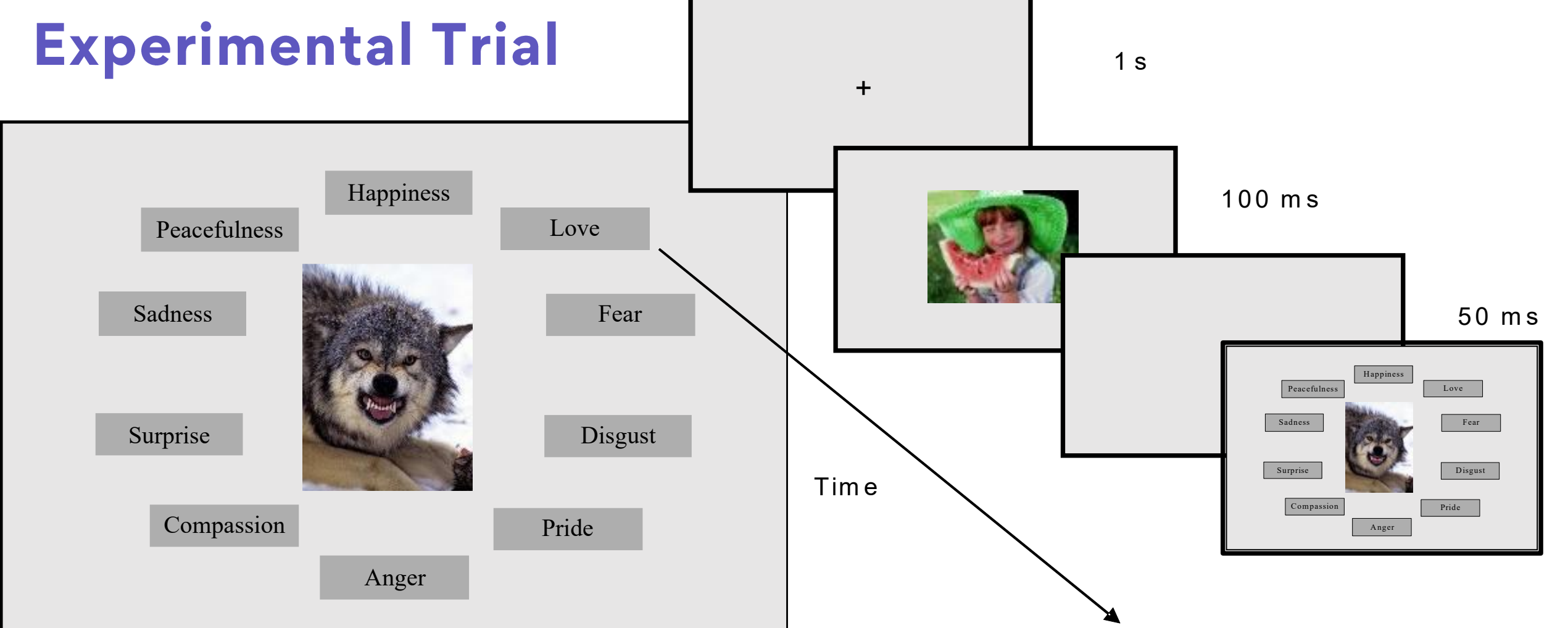
Emotional Questionnaires

Emotional Intelligence Scale (EIS)
-emotional intelligence (IC)
(Wong & Law, 2002).

Trait meta-mood scale (TMMS)
- emotional clarity (EC)
(Salovey et al., 1995)

Mean Accuracy by Valence and Congruency

RESULTS

A significant main effect of **valence**
$F(1, 55) = 9.659, p = .003, \eta^2_p = .149$

A significant **interaction** between valence and congruency
$F(1.65, 90.75) = 6.309, p = .005, \eta^2_p = .103$

A significant main effect of **congruency**
$F(1.77, 97.47) = 3.442, p = .041, \eta^2_p = .059.$

CONCLUSIONS

The current results, showing that emotional congruency enhances emotion recognition accuracy, support the emotional construction theory. According to this theory, emotions are constructed mental states that emerge from the brain's process of categorizing internal sensations in combination with external sensory input and prior experience. This categorization occurs automatically and unconsciously (Barrett, 2009). In addition, the findings indicating that recognition accuracy was generally higher for positive emotions than for negative ones, reflecting a main effect of valence, align with Fredrickson's Broaden-and-Build Theory, which suggests that positive emotions expand cognitive flexibility and broaden one's thought–action repertoire, supporting both emotional clarity (EC) and emotional intelligence (EI). In contrast, negative emotions often require more complex cognitive and regulatory processes (Gross & John, 2003; Pekrun, 2006).

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