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Effects of attentional load on explicit and implicit memory for voices

We investigated the role of selective attention in explicit and implicit voice recognition. We initially presented distractor voices while manipulating the attentional load of a relevant task according to Lavie's (1995) theory. Participants listened to dual tone melodies superimposed on 2000 ms voice samples, either categorising pitch of the last tone (low load) or comparing pitches of first and last tones (high load). An unexpected name recognition test revealed above-chance explicit recognition for previously presented vs. new famous voices, with no load effect. In a subsequent voice familiarity task, we did not observe significant priming, although there was a tendency for a load effect, with marginally more priming from voices initially encoded under low load conditions. On the basis of the present data, findings that attentional load affects explicit but not implicit memory for faces (Jenkins et al., 2002) may not transfer to the voice domain in a straightforward manner.