COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS
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Research Horizons Day
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Fluency and Font Size Affect Predicted and Actual Number Recognition Performance

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Overview

People perceive words presented in larger fonts as more memorable than words presented in smaller fonts despite font size having no impact on actual recall performance. Rhodes and Castel (2008) termed the disconnect between predicted and actual recall for items presented in large and small fonts the font size effect, and attributed it to larger items seeming easier to process (i.e., more fluent) than smaller items.

The font size effect has been replicated multiple times with words. We wondered whether the effect would extend to numbers and how number fluency and font size would combine to influence participants' predicted and actual recognition performance.

Procedure in Each Trial

Encoding: Studied 32 numbers (half fluent, half disfluent) with half of each type presented in small/large font sizes. Provided a judgment of learning (JOL) after each item

Recognition Test: Shown 64 numbers (half studied/half new)

Sample Stimuli

Fluent Numbers

Small Font: 246, 777

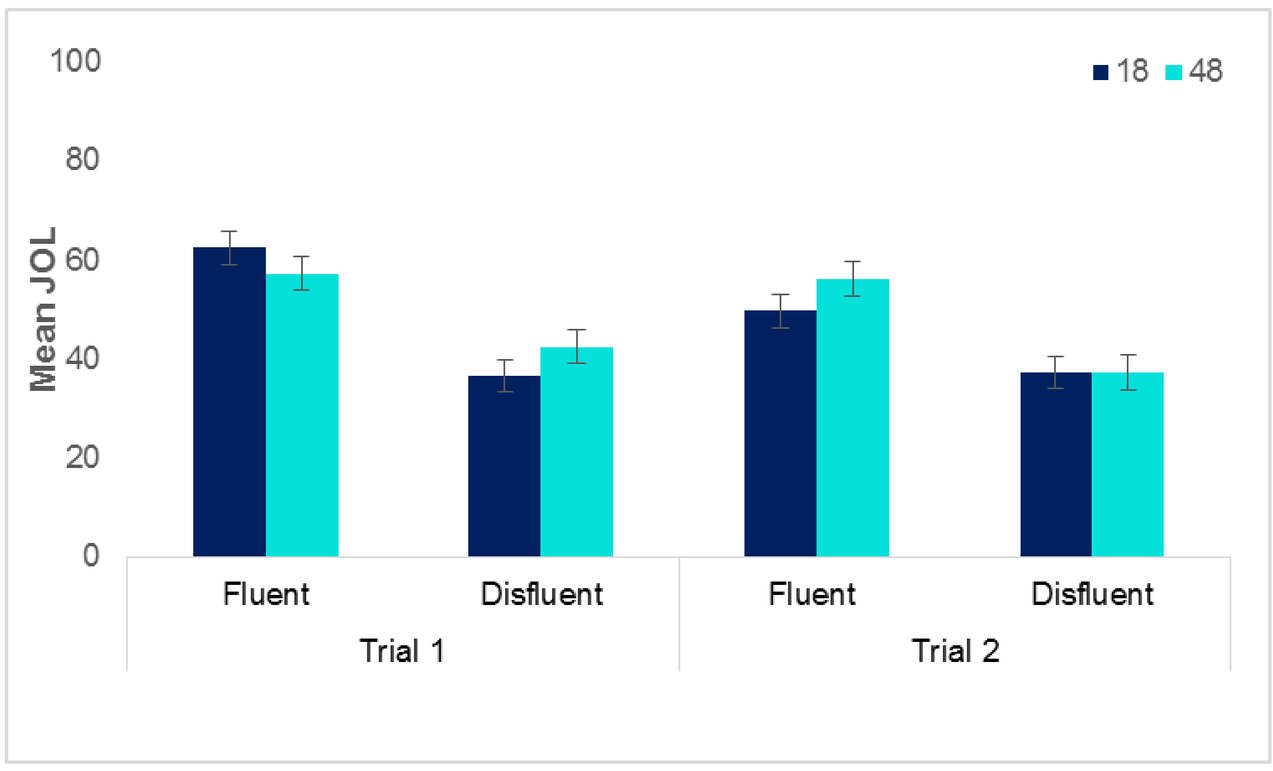
Large Font: 999, 123

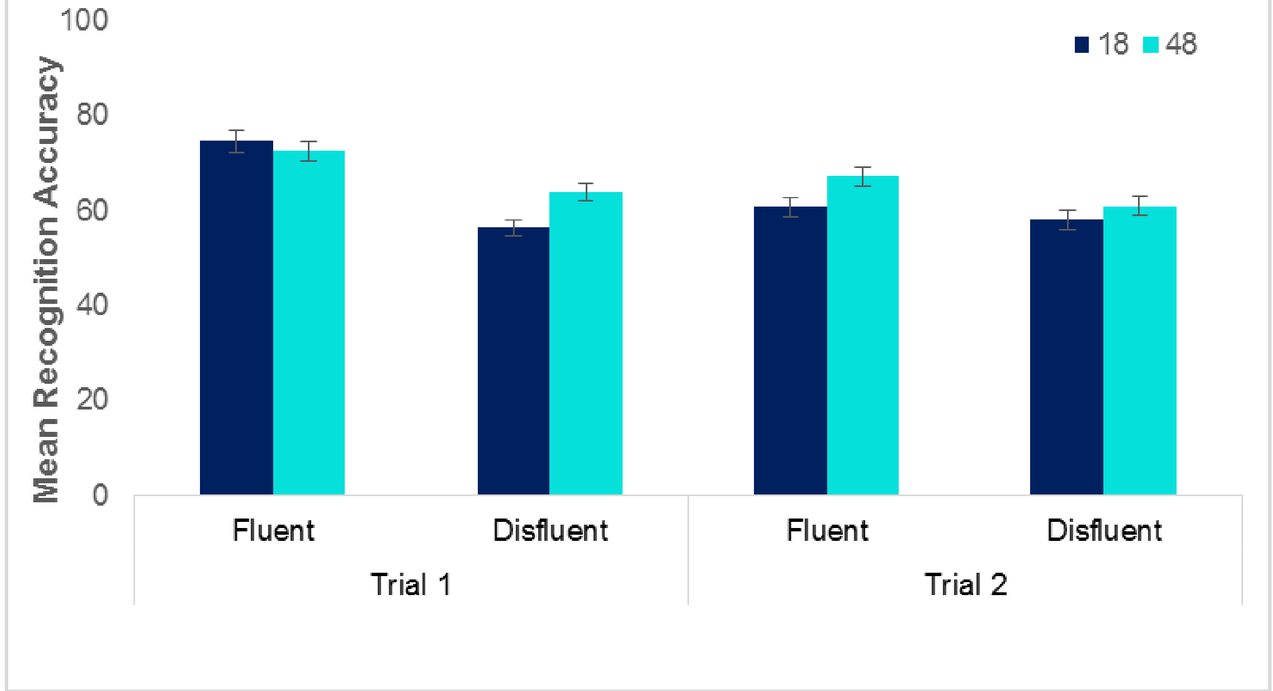
Disfluent Numbers

Small Font: 038, 385

Large Font: 713, 592

Key Findings





Impact

- JOLs and recognition accuracy affected by both font size and fluency.
- JOLs indicated that in general, people expected fluent numbers and those in larger fonts to be easier to recognize than disfluent numbers and those in smaller fonts.
- Recognition results aligned with these predictions.

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