

The Role of Font Size and Familiarity in Evaluations of Truth

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Overview

Participants were more likely to rate statements as true when they were presented in easy-to-read, high contrast colors than when the statements were presented in difficult-to-read, low contrast colors (Reber & Schwarz, 1999). This held true regardless of the statements' veracity. Reber and Schwarz attributed their results to perceptual fluency, or perceived ease of processing. Perceptual fluency has also been argued to underlie participants giving higher judgments of learning (JOLs; i.e., confidence ratings regarding the likelihood of recalling items) to items presented in large fonts than to items in small fonts, despite there being no differences in recall performance as a function of font size (Rhodes & Castel, 2008). While fluency has been the dominant account for the font size effect, Mueller, Dunlosky, Tauber, and Rhodes (2014) suggested that JOLs are driven by memory beliefs that people have about the impact of font size on memory rather than fluency. Examining whether font size affected evaluations of truth provided an indirect test of the fluency versus memory belief accounts for the font size effect.

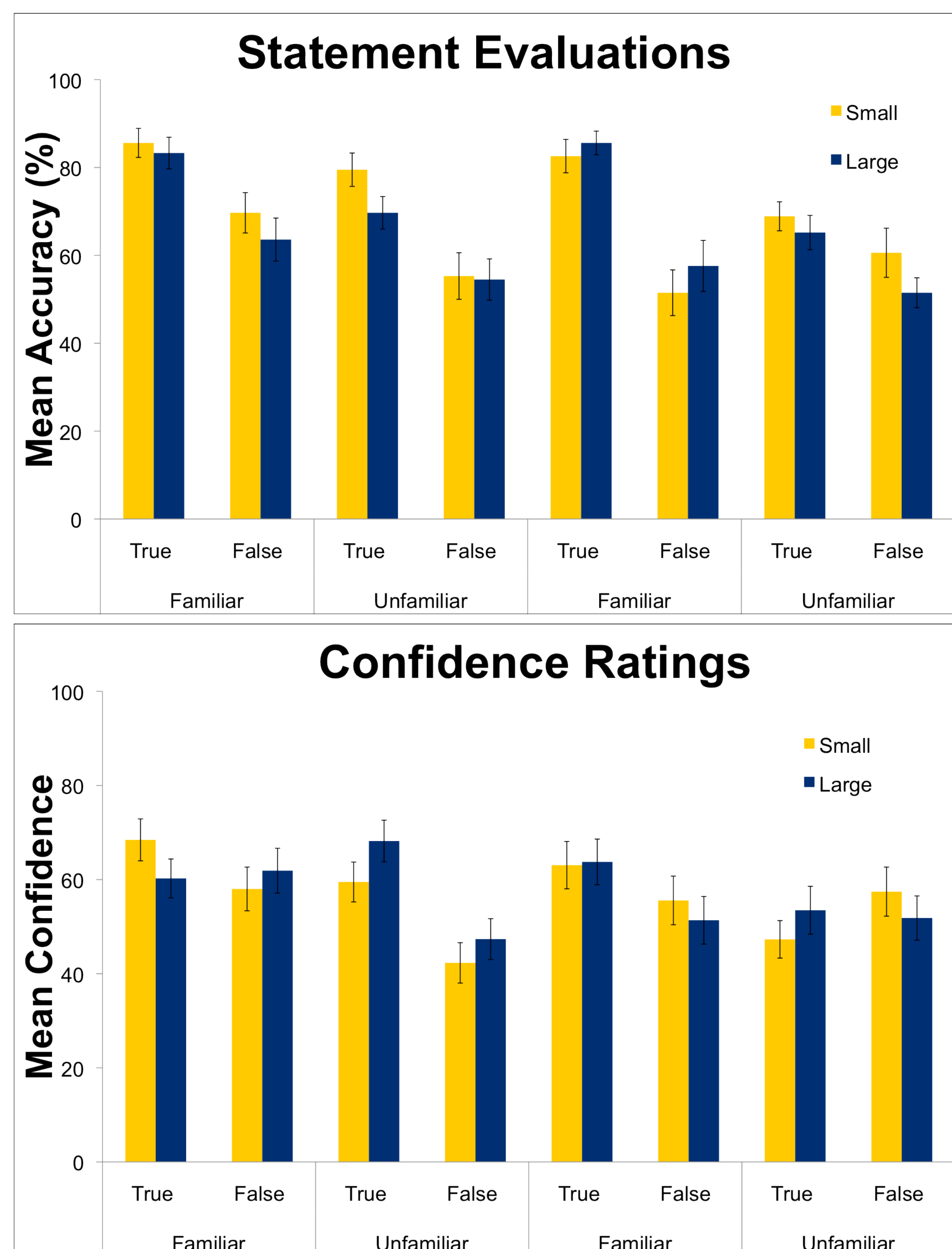
Procedure in Each Trial

- Participants viewed 32 statements (half true and half familiar).
- Participants evaluated statements as True or False.
- Participants provided confidence rating that evaluation of statement is accurate.

Acknowledgements

Dr. Jodi Price, Director of the Lifelong Learning Lab in the Psychology Department.

Key Findings



Impact

- Participants more accurately evaluated statement veracity when the statements were true and familiar.
- Font size did not impact the likelihood of participants judging statements as true or judgment accuracy.
- Participants expressed more confidence for unfamiliar statements presented in large font, but more confidence for familiar statements presented in small font.
- These findings raise questions about perceptual fluency being the basis for the font size effect.