Visual perceptual learning modulates decision network in the human brain: The evidence from psychophysics, modeling, and functional magnetic resonance imaging

Ke Jia
School of Psychological and Cognitive Sciences and Beijing Key Laboratory of Behavior and Mental Health, Peking University, Beijing, China
PKU-IDG/McGovern Institute for Brain Research, Peking University, Beijing, China
Key Laboratory of Machine Perception (Ministry of Education), Peking University, Beijing, China

Xin Xue
Department of Health Industry Management, Beijing International Studies University, Beijing, China
School of Psychological and Cognitive Sciences and Beijing Key Laboratory of Behavior and Mental Health, Peking University, Beijing, China
PKU-IDG/McGovern Institute for Brain Research, Peking University, Beijing, China
Key Laboratory of Machine Perception (Ministry of Education), Peking University, Beijing, China

Jong-Hwan Lee
Department of Brain and Cognitive Engineering, Korea University, Seoul, Republic of Korea

Fang Fang
School of Psychological and Cognitive Sciences and Beijing Key Laboratory of Behavior and Mental Health, Peking University, Beijing, China
PKU-IDG/McGovern Institute for Brain Research, Peking University, Beijing, China
Key Laboratory of Machine Perception (Ministry of Education), Peking University, Beijing, China
Peking-Tsinghua Center for Life Sciences, Peking University, Beijing, China

Jiaxiang Zhang
School of Psychology, Cardiff University, Cardiff, UK

Sheng Li
School of Psychological and Cognitive Sciences and Beijing Key Laboratory of Behavior and Mental Health, Peking University, Beijing, China
PKU-IDG/McGovern Institute for Brain Research, Peking University, Beijing, China
Key Laboratory of Machine Perception (Ministry of Education), Peking University, Beijing, China

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Perceptual learning refers to improved perceptual performance after intensive training and was initially suggested to reflect long-term plasticity in early visual cortex. Recent behavioral and neurophysiological evidence further suggested that the plasticity in brain regions related to decision making could also contribute to the observed training effects. However, how perceptual learning modulates the responses of decision-related regions in the human brain remains largely unknown. In the present study, we combined psychophysics and functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI), and adopted a model-based approach to investigate this issue. We trained participants on a motion direction discrimination task and fitted their behavioral data using the linear ballistic accumulator model. The results from model fitting showed that behavioral improvement could be well explained by a specific improvement in sensory information accumulation. A critical model parameter, the drift rate of the information accumulation, was correlated with the fMRI responses derived from three spatial independent components: ventral premotor cortex (PMv), supplementary eye field (SEF), and the fronto-parietal network, including intraparietal sulcus (IPS) and frontal eye field (FEF). In this decision network, we found that the behavioral training effects were accompanied by signal enhancement specific to trained direction in PMv and FEF. Further, we also found direction-specific signal reduction in sensory areas (V3A and MT+), as well as the strengthened effective connectivity from V3A to PMv and from IPS to FEF. These findings provide evidence for the learning-induced decision refinement after perceptual learning and the brain regions that are involved in this process.

Introduction

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Materials and methods

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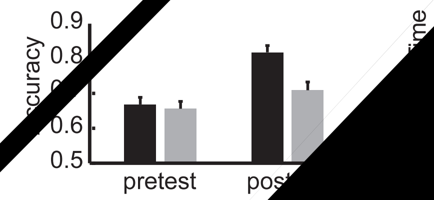

$F(1, 21) = 35.78$, < 0.001, $\eta^2 =$

12 $F(1, 21) = 13.87$, $= 0.001$

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Learning effects on drift rate

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$F(1, 21) = 15.60$, $= 0.001$, $\eta^2 = 0.426$; , $F(1, 21) = 48.27$, < 0.001, $\eta^2 = 0.697$; ,
$F(1, 21) = 25.43$, < 0.001, $\eta^2 = 0.548$.

, $F(1, 21) = 27.22$, < 0.001,
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, $\beta = 0.214$, $= 0.26$,
, $\beta = -0.01$, $= 0.97$.

Session effect on decision caution

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, $F(1, 21) = 8.45$, < 0.01, $\eta^2 = 0.287$ (2). (=
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Brain network for sensory information accumulation

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Learning effects within decision network

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Learning modulates feedforward connectivity

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Ke d : LBA, d f a e, fMRI,

Acknowledgments

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