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Sommario/riassunto

Correct word identification and processing is a prerequisite for accurate reading, and decades of psycholinguistic and neuroscientific research have shown that the magical moments of visual word recognition are short-lived and markedly fast. The time window in which a given letter string passes from being a mere sequence of printed curves and strokes to acquiring the word status takes around one third of a second. In a few hundred milliseconds, a skilled reader recognizes an isolated word and carries out a number of underlying processes, such as the encoding of letter position and letter identity, and lexico-semantic information retrieval. However, the precise manner (and order) in which these processes occur (or co-occur) is a matter of contention subject to empirical research. There’s no agreement regarding the precise timing of some of the essential processes that guide visual word processing, such as precise letter identification, letter position assignment or sub-word unit processing (bigrams, trigrams, syllables, morphemes), among others. Which is the sequence of processes that lead to lexical access? How do these and other processes interact with each other during the early moments of word processing? Do these processes occur in a serial fashion or do they take place in parallel? Are these processes subject to mutual interaction principles? Is feedback allowed for within the earliest stages of word identification? And ultimately, when does the reader’s brain effectively identify a given word? A vast number of questions remain open, and this Research Topic will cover some of them, giving the readership the opportunity to understand how the scientific community faces the problem of modeling the early stages of word identification according to the latest neuroscientific findings. The present Research Topic aims to combine recent experimental evidence on early word processing from different techniques together with comprehensive reviews of the current work directions, in order to create a landmark forum in which experts in the field define the state of the art and future directions. We are willing to receive submissions of empirical as well as theoretical and review articles based on different computational and neuroscience-oriented methodologies. We especially encourage researchers primarily using electrophysiological or magnetoencephalographic techniques as well as eye-tracking to participate, given that these techniques provide us with the opportunity to uncover the mysteries of lexical access allowing for a fine-grained time-course analysis. The main focus of interest will concern the processes that are held within the initial 250-300 milliseconds after word presentation, covering areas that link basic visuo-attentional systems with linguistic mechanisms.