



available at [www.sciencedirect.com](http://www.sciencedirect.com)



[www.elsevier.com/locate/brainres](http://www.elsevier.com/locate/brainres)

**BRAIN  
RESEARCH**

R R

# Attention shift in human verbal working memory: Priming contribution and dynamic brain activation

Zhihao Li<sup>a</sup>, Min Bao<sup>a</sup>, Xiangchuan Chen<sup>a</sup>, Daren Zhang<sup>a,\*</sup>, Shihui Han<sup>b</sup>,  
Sheng He<sup>c</sup>, Xiaoping Hu<sup>d</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Hefei National Laboratory for Physical Science at Microscale, and School of Life Science, University of Science and Technology of China, Hefei, Anhui 230026, PR China

<sup>b</sup>Department of Psychology, Peking University, Beijing 100871, PR China

<sup>c</sup>Department of Psychology, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN 55455, USA

<sup>d</sup>Department of Biomedical Engineering, Emory University and Georgia Institute of Technology, Atlanta, GA 30322, USA

## ARTICLE INFO

### Article history:

Received 6 January 2006

Accepted 9 March 2006

### Keywords:

Attention  
Working memory  
Event-related potentials

## ABSTRACT

Working memory (WM) is a core cognitive function that is essential for human behavior. It is a system that temporarily stores and manipulates information. The present study investigated the contribution of priming to attention shift in human verbal working memory. Participants performed a verbal WM task while their brain activity was recorded using functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI). The results showed that priming significantly affected the brain activation patterns during attention shift. Specifically, the priming effect was more pronounced in the left prefrontal cortex (PFC) and the left superior temporal gyrus (STG). These findings suggest that priming plays a crucial role in the dynamic brain activation during attention shift in human verbal working memory. The results also have implications for understanding the neural mechanisms underlying WM and attention.

## 1. Introduction

Attention is a fundamental cognitive function that allows us to focus on relevant information while ignoring distractions. It is a dynamic process that involves the selection and manipulation of information in working memory. The present study investigated the contribution of priming to attention shift in human verbal working memory. Priming refers to the process by which a stimulus influences the response to a subsequent stimulus. In the context of attention, priming can occur when a stimulus is presented before the target stimulus, leading to a faster and more accurate response. The present study used functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) to investigate the brain activation patterns during attention shift in human verbal working memory. The results showed that priming significantly affected the brain activation patterns, particularly in the left prefrontal cortex (PFC) and the left superior temporal gyrus (STG). These findings suggest that priming plays a crucial role in the dynamic brain activation during attention shift in human verbal working memory.

\* Corresponding author. Fax: +86 551 3601443.

E-mail address: [dzhang@ustc.edu.cn](mailto:dzhang@ustc.edu.cn) (D. Zhang).

c88 a a ( c8c8 a a c8 ac8.S,a  
 a ) a a a ( ., a8c8 c8a a j c8  
 a a ).T a c8 a c8 a c8  
 c8 c8 a a - c8 c8  
 c8 .T “ ac8 ” a a a  
 a a a a a c8  
 c8 a a a a a (Ga a a  
 a., 2000; G a., 2003; K a., 2003; L a.,  
 2004; S a., 2003). H , a  
 c8 a a , a a a8.  
 a c8 , a ac8  
 c8 c8 a c8 a (G a., 2003).  
 O a a8 c8 a  
 a8 c88  
 Bc8a c88 a a a  
 c8 a a c8 a ,  
 a c8 a c8 .I ,  
 c8 c8a a  
 a88 a a a a j a  
 a .T a a  
 c8 c8, Ga a a (1998) a c8  
 a a a a a c8c8  
 a a ac8 .H a a a a  
 c8 - c8 c8 a a  
 a c8 a - c8c8 .T  
 , c8 c8 a  
 a a a c8 c8.S c8c8a ,  
 a88 a ac8 a a a a  
 a a a8 c8a c8 c8 -  
 a a a a  
 c8 a ( ., ).T a ,Ga a a a  
 c8a a .I , a  
 a a c8a c8 CONGRUENT/INCONGRU-  
 ENT a8 c8 a c8 a  
 a a a a LARGE/SMALL j  
 INCONGRUENT a  
 T c8a c8a a a  
 c8a a a a8 a -  
 c8 c8 “ ac8 ” a .H ,  
 a a c8 c8a a  
 “ ac8 ” a .I c8a a ,a  
 a a , a a a .S -  
 c8 c8  
 a a a c8 a  
 a8 c8 a88 .I c8 a a a  
 c8 .H , “ ac8 ” a ,  
 a c8 a a .A a c8  
 a c8 a a8 a c8 ac8  
 (c8a a ),  
 a c8 c8  
 c8 a ac8c8 a a a a  
 .Bc8a c8 a ac8c8 a  
 a a c8a -  
 c8 , a c8 .W a a  
 a a  
 Ga a a ’ c8 ac8 c8.O  
 c8 a , “ ac8 ” a a ,  
 c8 c8 c8a a a -  
 c8 a c8a .S c8 c8

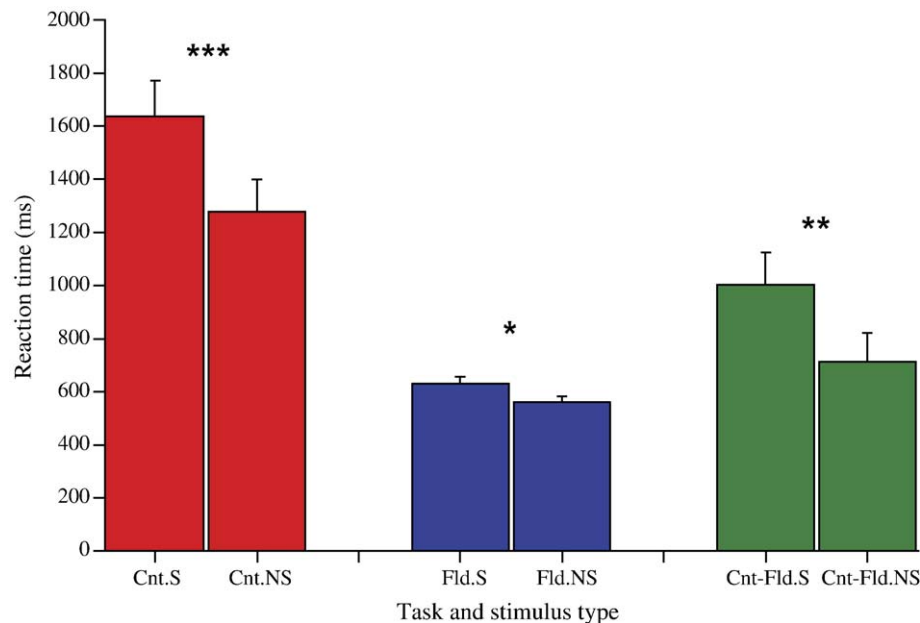
a a c8 ac8.S,a  
 c8a a j c8  
 a a c8  
 c8 c8.  
 D Ga a a ’ , G a. (2003)  
 a c8 a “ ac8 ”  
 a .T 4 c8a c8 (#, @, &, %)  
 a c8 .T a a c8 a  
 - c8 a c8 c8 c8  
 a a c8a a a ac8 a a  
 c8 c8 ac8 a c8 a.  
 T a a a a a c8 c8  
 a a a c8 , - c8  
 a8 a a a a a a  
 c8 a .I a , a ERP a8 a c8a  
 a8 c8, c8 a a a  
 a c8a c8 c8 .W , G  
 a c8 a a c8a  
 c8 a8 c8 / c8 c8  
 c8 c8  
 T a - c8 c8 Ga a a ’ “ a -  
 c8 ” a a8  
 c8 a c8  
 c88 c8 a c8 a  
 a c8 .I a , a - a  
 a ac8 .A c88  
 c8 a c8 a a a a  
 c8 .I a , c8 a /  
 a c8 c8 , c8 a a  
 c8 a a a a c8 a a  
 c8 .I a a a - c8  
 c8 c8a - , c8 a  
 a a , a a a  
 a a , a a c8 a  
 a a c8 a a c8  
 H , G ’ a , c8 a a  
 a8 c8 , a c8 a  
 a c8 a .O a  
 a a c8a a  
 ac8 , c8 a a c8 a  
 c8 c8 .T c8 - a a  
 a c8 a Ga a a ’ a “ a -  
 c8 ” a .I G , c8  
 c8a c8, a ERP c8  
 “N -a - c8, - ” a “N -a -  
 - c8, a - ” c8 a  
 c8 - a c8  
 Ba a c8 a , a a a  
 a a  
 c8 a a a c8a  
 a a - c8 c8 .Ga a a  
 a (Ga a a , 1998), ac8  
 c8 a a c8 “ - c8 ”  
 a a a a c8 a8 .A  
 c8a a a c8  
 j a8 a c8 a .I c8  
 c8 ( c8 a a ),  
 c8

c8 . I ,  
a a ERP a a c8 a -  
c8a a .  
I a c8a ,  
a a ERPc8 a a c8 a c8 .  
c8 a a A  
a MRI (Ga a a a ., 2000; K a ., 2003; L  
a ., 2004; S a ., 2003), a a  
(c8 c88 a a a a, a a  
c8 , c8 a , a a a ac8 . )  
a c8 . I ac8 a ,  
MRI (L a ., 2004), a a  
c8 a a a a a  
ac8 a a a a - c8 c8  
c8 . I a , a a a a  
ac8 a " " a "  
c8 . T a8 c8 a a .  
a a a a a c8 a  
. H MRI a ac8  
a8 a a ac8 a , a8 a  
a a a a c8 . F a , c8 a  
a a a a c8 a a8 a a c8 c8  
a c8 a c8 a  
c8 a a a  
c8 c8 . A a a a  
" c8 a8 a c88 " ? W a c8 a  
, ERP c8 a a a a a c8  
a  
I c8 a ERP  
MRI a8 (L a ., 2004), a a " c8 "  
a a a MRI . Na ,  
a c8  
I Ga a a ' " ac8 " a (Ga a a , 1998), a  
c8a RT c8 a "A → B" a "B → A"  
c8 . I c8 a , a , a -  
c8a c8 a a " c8 "  
a a a a a a a  
c8 ( . . , ac8  
a a A-B-C, a c8 "A → B"  
a a "B → A"; "A → C" a a "C → A"; "B → C"  
a a "C → B"). T c8 a c8 c8 a  
a a8 a . W  
c8 c8a a a  
a ERP c8 c8 a c8

I " c8a " a , a c8 -  
a8 a ( a a8 a8 : 98.5%, SD: 1.1%). A a  
c8a c8, a c8a RT  
c8 "NS" (563.4 ) a "S" (633.5 )  
c8 ( a t , N = 12, t = 9.1, P < 0.001). H  
c8 a " c8 " a , c8a c8  
a a a c8a RT  
c8 "DS" a "US" a8 (DS: 625.5  
US: 640.1 , a t , N = 12, t = 1.3, P = 0.26).  
T "NS" a "S" RT " c8 " a "  
c8a " a a F .1. T a a

## 2. Results

I " c8 " a , ac8 a8 a8 a  
24 c8 a 91.2% (SD = 7.4%). M c8  
a c8 a c8 c8 a  
. I a a a c8  
a a T c8  
a8 a8 97.1% (SD = 4.0%) c8  
. T RT "NS" (1232.5 c8 a  
c8a a a "S" (1851.4 c8  
( a t , N = 24, t = 18.1, P < 0.001). I a , "DS" RT  
(1795.5 ) a a c8a a a "US"  
(1907.4 c8 ( a t , N = 24, t = 2.1, P = 0.046).



**Fig. 1** – The “NS” (no-switch) vs. “S” (Switch) reaction time comparison in both the “count” (Cnt, the red bars) and the “figure identification” (Fld, the blue bars) task. The data shown here were from the 12 subjects who performed both tasks. The figure identification priming contribution could be subtracted (Cnt-Fld, the green bars) out from the stimuli switching cost without affecting the significance of the RT difference from a mental attention shift. The error bars represent the standard error. The significant levels of each paired comparison (paired *t* test) were indicated by the “\*” ( $P < 10^{-5}$ ), “\*\*” ( $P < 10^{-7}$ ), “\*\*\*” ( $P < 10^{-8}$ ).

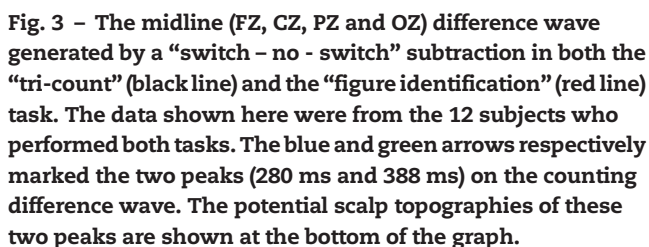
c8 a a a  
a (280 a 388 ).T c8a a  
c8 c8 a a a F .  
3.T a (280 ) a c8 a a  
a a a8 .F. c8 a (388 ), a  
c8 a a,  
ac8 ,a c8 a a a .  
T a a8 a a a c8 a c8a a  
a c8 a ERP a8 ,  
c8 c8 a a 216  
-468 .O M a G a F P (MGFP)  
c8 c8 a , c8  
a (280 a 388 ) a ( F .  
4). W SNR ( a a ) =6.4, c8  
a a a a a8 a  
a a a a a a a -  
c8 a a a , a a a ( “G ”  
a\_ .).T c8 c8 a a8 a a  
MGFP a a F .4.A 280  
(SNR = 6.4, a a a8 = 97.6%), a  
a a a , a a a  
a a a a8 a .A 388  
(SNR = 6.2, a a a8 = 97.4%), a8 a a  
a a a a c8 a a  
a ac8 , a a , a  
c8 ,a c8 a a a.N a  
c8 ac8 -a8 a a-c8 a a a  
a c8 a a a a c8  
I a ,a c8 a c8  
c8 a a , a c8 .

a8 a a a a a  
a8 a c8 c8 ,  
a8 a a a a a a  
a8 a a a a a a

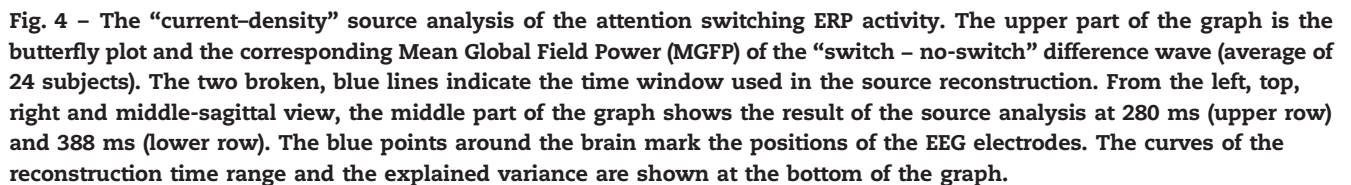
### 3. Discussion

T c8 a a a ERP a a a  
a a c8 c8 c8a a a  
a a a I a , a  
a c8 c8a  
a a c8 c8  
O ac8 a  
“S” “NS” ERP c8 a a a c8  
a .H c8a a (280 a 388  
) “S” – “NS” c8 a , a  
a N2- a a a “NS” a  
a a “S” a , a c8  
a a a P300 “NS” c8  
a8 c88 “NS” c8 a a  
c8 a a c8  
T a a a a  
“S” a “NS” c8 .Bc 8a “S” a , c8  
“US” a “DS”, c8 ac8 a “NS”  
ERP c8 c8 a  
a a c8 .T a c8a c8  
a a a ,3 a a a c8  
c8a a a “S” a “NS” a a j





a, c8 a c8 T c8  
 c8 c8 c8 c8  
 a .F. a , c8a a c8 a, c8  
 a a c8 a  
 , c8  
 c8a a .G a .(2003) a c8  
 a c8 , a /  
 a a  
 B a ac8 a a - -  
 a ( c8 ),G a .(2003)  
 a ERPC8 a c8a x8 ( c8  
 x8 c8 ) c8 a a 288 a  
 .T c8a a a a  
 e8 a a a .I  
 c8 a , a a a c8a  
 "S" - "NS" ERP c8 a a a a (280  
 ) a a a a  
 a .A c8 c8 , c8 c8  
 c8a ERP a a  
 c8 a  
 I a - - a , a c8 a  
 c8 a a a a c8 a  
 c8 , a - - a .O a  
 c8 , a c8 , a c8  
 c8 a a c8 c8  
 - - a c8 .H  
 a c8 , x8 c8  
 c8 a a c8 a c8 .E  
 c8a a a c8 ,  
 a a c8 a  
 c8 .A c8 a c8 a c8  
 a a (Ma a .,2002;R a .,2004), 288  
 ERPC8 a c8a x8  
 G a . (2003)c8 a e8  
 H , G a c8 a c8 ERP  
 e8 a ac8 a a ac8  
 c8 c8a x8 c8 c8  
 .O  
 .T c8a x8 a "S"  
 c8 , c8a c8  
 "NS" a "S" a 500 "  
 c8a " a  
 O a a "NS"t8 a c8 a a  
 , c8a c8 a ( a ) a  
 a - - a , a c8 -  
 a c8 a .T  
 , c8a c8a c8 a  
 c8 a a c8 .T c8a a  
 c8 a a c8a a ( .  
 a a , e8 a , x8 a ),  
 a c8 a c8 / a a c8  
 c8a c8 a .I a - - a ,  
 a c8 a a a a -  
 c8a a c8 a ( ., a c8 a x8 ) a  
 c8 .T e8 a a  
 "CHANGE" c8 "CHANGE TO WHAT"  
 a .H , a ,  
 a c8a "CHANGE TO  
 WHAT" a .Bc8a c8a a

[illegible]

c8a a a c8 c8 a  
c8 a c8 (CE), a a  
c8a a a a c8 CE. A c8a  
c8 a8 a a  
c8 a CE (D'E a., 1995), c8 -a8 a  
a c8 a a a a a  
a a c8 c8  
a a CE' a a a (R  
a., 2000). Ec8 c8a a a



a. (RR, RE, RT, ER, EE, ET, TR, TE, a TT).  
I " c-8 " a , c-8 a

T 3 c8 (a (T),  
(E), a c8 a (R)) a a 21- VGA  
c8 ( a : 2.4 4.8 c8 a a  
, 4.4 4.4 a ). F. " c8 " a  
" c8a " a a  
c8 a a8 a Ic8 55 c8  
a , 5 c8  
a8c8 . Ec8 a8c8 c8 , a 50 c8  
c8 a 110 c8 a8

a (c8 a a c8a ,a  
, a a )a c8 c8 .T a8  
a c8 a a a c8  
a a a  
I "c8" a , j8c8 a  
a a ac8 a.T a c8 a8  
a8 a,a c8  
a c8 a c8 a a  
c8 .Ba  
a a a a8 " "  
" , c8 c8c8 XXX". F  
a  
(R-E-T, R-T-E, E-R-T, E-T-R, T-R-E, a T-E-R). T 24  
j8 a , a8 a

T " c8a " a a (a  
c8 a )a "c8" a .W  
a c8 a8 , j8 j  
a8 a  
( "1", "2", "3" a ). F a8  
a j8, a a c8  
/ "c8" a .F  
a , a E-R-T, "  
c8a " a , j8 a a "1"  
a a , "2" a c8a ,  
a "3" a a  
F j8 "c8" a  
" c8a " a , a a  
c8 a ac8 .T c8  
TJ-9.8237-1.4238-294(-570( 4238-294( /F71T )719T 2.31)76969( )-.8( .7( 7 )38528 c8)374( .a )-73.9- )-7

F a , a a a a  
a a a a  
a a a a  
a a ( C U G a ). T  
a a a a a a  
a 200

## Acknowledgments

W a S LaC a  
T a8 Na a Na  
8 c8 F a C a (30370478, 30328017, 30470572,  
30225026, 30328016), M 8 c8 a Tc8  
C a (2006CB500705), a NIH ( a RO1 EB002009).

## Appendix A. Supplementary data

S a a a a c8a a c8 c8a  
a :10.1016/j. a .2006.01.032.

## REFERENCES

- Ba , A. (E .), 1997. HUMAN MEMORY a a8c8 . T  
R M C : W M . Pc8 .  
P , H . C a . 4, 52 .
- Bac8 , M.T., M a , M.P., Ac8 , R.A., C , N.J., W , A.,  
W a , T., K a , A.F., L a , Z., B a a , V., G , D., S a ,  
C., B , C., 2000. P a a a a a  
a a a a c8 MRI C .  
B a R . 10, 1–9.
- B , P.S., 8 , M.K., C , M.G.H., 1995. W I  
: a c8 c8a a a c8 .  
J.E . Pc8 . H . Pc8 . P . 21, 1312–1322.
- B c8 , M., L , E.N., F , K., Ca , C.S., C , J.D., 1999.  
C c8 c8 a8 a  
c8 a c8 . Na 402, 179–181.
- Ca , C.S., B a , T.S., Ba8 , D.M., B c8 , M.M., N , D.,  
C , J.D., 1998. A c8 a c8 c8 ,  
a c8 . 8 c8 280,  
747–749.
- Ca , K.R., B8 , N.P., 1999. V a a a :  
Pc8 . B . R . 6, 204–223.
- C , W., Ka , T., Z , X.H., O a a , S., Ta , D.W., U , K.,  
1998. H a a a c8 a a a c8 a  
c8 a8 a a a . N R . 9,  
3669–3674.
- C , J.D., B c8 , M., Ca , C.S., 2000. A c8 a a  
ac8 : c8 . Na . N c8 . 3, 421–423.
- Da a , S., P , M.I., Tc8 , D.M., 1994. Lc8a a a  
a c8 a c8 a . Pc8 .  
8 . 5, 303–305.
- Da a , S., P a a , M., P , P., C , L., 2003. T a a  
c8c8 c8 . C . N c8 . 20,  
487–506.
- D'E , M., D , J.A., A , D.C., S , R.K., A a , S.,  
G a , M., 1995. T a a a c8 a c8  
Na . 378, 279–281.
- D , A., P a , S., 8 , T., W , C.J., Y  
C a , D., 2000. P ac8 a8 a a  
c8 : a a MRI . C . B a R . 9,  
103–109.
- D , K.N., K c8 , V.K., C a , I.V., 2001. T c8 a  
NMDA c8 a a a a  
a a a a a8  
a a a a a c8 . N c8 . B a .  
P . 31, 191–200.
- E , H.E., Ya , S., 1997. V a a c8 ,  
a , a c8 . A . R . Pc8 . 48,  
269–297.
- Fa , M., H , J., H a , J., B a , L., 1991. E c8  
c8 a a a a ER8 : 2.  
E c8 c8 c8 a8 a . Ec8 c8 a .  
C . N . 78, 447–455.
- Fc8 , M., D c8 a , R., Wc8 a , H.A., Wa , M., 1998. A  
a a a c8  
c8 c8 . IEEE. T a . B . E . 45, 980–997.
- Fc8 , M., Wa , M., K , T., Wc8 a , H.A., 1999. L a  
a ac8 c8 c8 . J. C .  
N . 16, 267–295.
- Ga a a , H., 1998. S a a a . M .  
C . 26, 263–276.
- Ga a a , H., R , T.J., L , S.J., S , E.A., 2000. A a a c8  
a a c8 a c8 c8 . C . C .  
10, 585–592.
- G , W.J., K , R.T., 2000. P ae8 a a8  
a8 . Na . N c8 . 3, 516–520.
- G , W.J., B c8 , R.L., J , J., A , R.L., Ba , D., 2003. T  
, , a ? I ac8 c8 c8  
a a . Pc8 . 40, 572–585.
- G , R.L. (E .), 1992. H a : a a a  
a a . Rc8 c8 Ec8 F Rc8a . La c8 E a  
A c8a , H a , . 50. C a . 3.
- Ha , L.R., J , M., 2001. V a a . I : J , M.,  
Ha , L. (E .), V a A . S , N Y ,  
1–17.
- H , G.D., B , E.T., S a a , T., 2000. P a8  
a a a c8 c8 a  
a a a ac8 c8a a8 a . N I a 12,  
495–503.
- K , J.G., C , J.D., Ma8D a , A.W., C , R.Y., S , V.A.,  
Ca , C.S., 2004. A c8 a c8 c8 a  
a j c8 . 8 c8 303, 1023–1026.
- K , K.A., L , P.F., H , J.B., 2000. E c8 a  
a a c8 a : a MRI  
Pc8 . 36, 765–774.
- K , I., Pa a , A.L., P , J.B., K , S.M., L B a , D., 2000.  
T a a8 ac8a8a c8 a  
a a : a MRI . J. C . N c8 .  
12 (S . 2), 15–23.
- K , A., M , K., Ka a , J., S , E.A., Ga a a , H., 2003.  
C a a a a a a a  
: a a a a  
c8 . N I a 20, 1298–1380.
- L a , D., S a , W., 1980. R c8 c8 a  
c8 c8 c8 a c8 a  
a . Ec8 c8 a . C . N . 48,  
609–621.
- L , Z., S , X., Wa , Z., Z a , X., Z a , D., H , S., H , X., 2004.  
B a a a c8 a MRI a  
a a a . N I a 21, 181–191.
- L , T.L., S , G.V., F , R.J., M , W.L., 2002. E c8  
a c8 a c8  
a a a a . N I a 17, 792–802.
- L , E.D., R , G., 1999. C a a a8 a a  
ac8 a c8a j8 a c8  
Pc8 . Na . 8 . U. S. A. 96, 1669–1673.
- Ma8D a , A.W., C , J.D., S , V.A., Ca , C.S., 2000.  
D c8a a a a a a  
a c8 a c8 c8 c8 . 8 c8 288,  
1835–1838.

- Ma, F., Sa, a, a, B., Ca, L., R, R., A, N., A, M., R, T., 2002. Dc8 - a c8 a a ac8. Ba 125, 624–639.
- 8, T.W., B, S., B, P., D c8, E., H, a, S.A., J, J., R., M, G.A., R, W., Rc8, D.S., R, M.D., Ta, M.J., 2000. G c8 : c8 a a a c8a c8 a. P c8 37, 127–152.
- R, R., Ra, a, N., Ma8 a, C., W, J.L., J, a, P., Ca, C.S., S, S.M., 2004. D c8 a c8 a c8 a a a ac8 a a8 a a c8 a a a c8 - a c8 B. P c8 a 55, 594–602.
- R, J., F, K., F a8 a, R., Pa a, R., 2000. A a8 : c8c8 a c8 c8c8 c8a a8 a .N I a 17, 988–998.
- S, S., 1966. H - c8a a . 8 c8 153, 652–654.
- S, C.C., Wa, T.D., La8, S.C., H, a, L., N8, T.E., S, E.E., J, J., 2003. S c8 a a c8 : MRI a c8 c8 . N c8 a 41, 357–370.
- Wa, M., Fc8, M., 2001. I a c8 a MRI, S c8 a MRI, EEG a MEG. I .J. B. c8 a 3.
- Ya, S., 8 a a8, J., S c8, J.T., Ca, R.L., S, M.A., P a, J.J., C, S.M., 2002. T a a a8 a a ac8 a a a .Na . N c8. 5, 995–1002.
- Z a, D., L., Z., C, X., Wa, Z., Z a, X., M, X., H, S., H, X., 2003. F c8 ac8 a a8, a c8 c8 a a a - : a a MRI .C .B a R .16, 91–98.