

Introduction

Praise, a type of positive feedback in social interaction, is known to activate the reward system in the brain, which involves bilateral nucleus accumbens (NAc), bilateral medial orbitofrontal cortices, and posterior cingulate cortex (PCC). (Liu et al., 2011) Praise, however, does not always reflect the true evaluation by others. While sincere praise is based on the performance or status of the praised person, flattery is not based on such features (Fogg & Nass 1997). Therefore, the reliability of praises could vary from high (sincere praise) to low (flattery). To study if sincere praise and flattery are processed differently in the reward system, we examined the neural activity using functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI).



The Emperor's New Clothes ; a fairy tale by Andersen

Flattery has been used for a long time.



Flattery

Oh! How beautiful our
Emperor's new clothes are!

But the Emperor isn't
wearing anything!



Sincere feedback

- Does flattery work similarly to sincere praise in our brain?
- Does flattery activate our reward system?