Discussion

The main goal of this study was to investigate how pupil size alters during affective- and non-affective touch conditions. Is was hypothesized that affective touch would cause larger pupil dilation compared to non-affective touch. Results revealed a significant main effect of stroking velocity on pupil size. At  1-2.8s, and 3.8-10s after stroking onset, 30cms-1 stroking resulted in a significantly larger pupil size than during 3 and 0.3cms-1 stroking. At 2.8-3.8s after stroking onset, both 3 and 30cms-1 stroking resulted in larger pupil size than 0.3cms-1 stroking. Thus, no specific effect of affective touch on pupil size was found. These results aren’t in line with studies that used visual or auditory stimuli. In these studies, a pupil dilation was associated with processing of both negative and positive but not neutral stimuli.

Rather a positive linear effect of stroking velocity on pupil size seems present.

Shortly after onset of stroking, a large peak of pupil size is found for the 30cm/s condition. It is stated before that pupil dilation is likely caused by an arousal increase. Then the question remains what factors cause this arousal increase. It cannot be explained by subjective pleasantness, as one would then expect a similar peak for the 0.3cm/s condition.

It can be concluded