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Processing various conceptual metaphors at the same time with a bad mood

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Abstract: The activation of conceptual metaphors has always been studied one mapping at a time. What happens when various conceptual metaphors are processed at the same time is still unknown. The experimental design used here enabled the activation of three conceptual metaphors at the same time (past-left/future-right, negative-left/positive-right and negative-past/positive-future). Participants had to make temporal or valence judgments with their left or right hand on negative or positive verbs conjugated to the past (e.g. “he cried”) or to the future (“she will smile”). Our results showed that the three conceptual metaphors were processed in parallel: the processing of one conceptual metaphor did not interfere with the processing of the other metaphors, even if they shared a conceptual domain. We also tested whether participant’s mood could bias the perception of the concepts used here. Depressive participants showed a past-oriented bias that changed towards the future after a therapy session.