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Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Cognitive Science Society

Title

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Journal

Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Cognitive Science Society, 46(0)

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Publication Date

2024

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Peer reviewed

What makes a novel spatial metaphor of time?

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Abstract

Metaphor comprehension studies have investigated how we process metaphors by pitting conventional metaphors against novel ones. Although these studies have yielded much data on how we comprehend metaphors, no research has examined how we process novel spatial metaphors of time. We constructed a stimuli pool of 80 spatial metaphors of time, 40 were conventional time metaphors, whereas the other 40 were novel spatial metaphors of time evenly distributed among Moving-Ego or Moving-Time perspectives and Path or Manner metaphorical motion in the main verb. Ratings by 40 participants showed that the novel metaphors had more possible interpretations, were more ambiguous, difficult to interpret, less apt, and less conventional. A pilot study with 10 participants showed that these properties of metaphors were linked to metaphor interpretation and temporal gesture production in various ways. This study will continue to investigate how we process and represent novel spatial metaphors of time with more participants.