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Grounded Congruency Effects Between Vertical Meaning and Vertical Responding: Not Replicated

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Abstract: According to theories of grounded cognition, words whose semantics are associated with a salient vertical position (e.g., CEILING vs. CARPET) should activate simulations of these positions in space. When responses are analogously made in the vertical dimension, grounded congruency effects should result (e.g., processing CEILING should be faster for an UP vs. DOWN response). Previous research obtained grounded congruency effects when participants used ink color (RED vs. BLUE) as a cue for response direction (Casasanto, 2008). Typically researchers assume that these effects are automatic, but they could possibly be strategic. Two experiments attempted to assess this issue with 6 groups of 24 participants each, but failed to replicate the original grounded congruency effect, leading us to question its reliability when ink color is used as a cue. We further discovered a motor facilitation effect for upward as opposed to downward responses not reported previously in this paradigm.