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Literary metaphors in a foreign language: their processing and aesthetic appreciation

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Abstract

Few research exists concerning the processing of metaphors in a foreign language. Even less research has been conducted on the aesthetic appreciation of such metaphors by non-native speakers. The experiment conducted in 2022 at the University of Warsaw may fill this gap. The methodology consisted of both online (i.e., eye tracking) and offline (i.e., comprehension tests, appreciation ratings) methods. The results of the analysis of eye tracking parameters, as well as comprehension scores confirm that literary metaphors are more difficult to comprehend and take longer to process than do their equivalent simplified versions. Additionally, the presented research shows that readers aesthetically appreciate the original literary metaphors more than they do their equivalents rewritten in plain language. Interestingly, the results reveal that the less comprehensible metaphors are, the more they are appreciated.

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