

UC Merced

Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Cognitive Science Society

Title

Embodied Metaphor in Communication about Experiences of COVID-19 Pandemic

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/516380dt>

Journal

Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Cognitive Science Society, 43(43)

Authors

Deng, Yu

Yang, Jixue

Wan, Wan

Publication Date

2021

Copyright Information

This work is made available under the terms of a Creative Commons Attribution License, available at <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

Peer reviewed

Embodied Metaphor in Communication about Experiences of COVID-19 Pandemic

Yu Deng

Sichuan International Studies University, Chongqing, China

Jixue Yang

Sichuan International Studies University, Chongqing, China

Wan Wan

Huaqiao University, Chongqing, China

Abstract

This study investigated how a group of twenty seven Wuhan citizens (coronavirus patients and their family member, medical staff, college students, social workers, teacher, journalist) employed metaphors to communicate about their experiences of COVID-19 pandemic through in-depth individual interviews. The analysis of metaphors captured the different kinds of emotional states and psychological conditions of the research participants, focusing on their mental imagery of COVID-19, extreme emotional experiences, and symbolic behaviors under the pandemic. The results show that multiple metaphors were used to construe emotionally-complex, isolating experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic. Most metaphorical narratives are grounded in embodied sensorimotor experiences such as body parts, batting, fighting, hit, weight, temperature, spatialization, motion, violence, light, and journey. Embodied metaphors were manifested in both verbal expressions and nonlinguistic behaviors (e.g., patients' symptom of obsessive-compulsive behaviors). These results suggest that the bodily experiences of the pandemic, the environment, and the psychological factors combine to shape people's metaphorical thinking processes.