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Hartman, Jenny; Paradis, Carita

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LUND UNIVERSITY

PO Box 117
221 00 Lund
+46 46-222 00 00

Ways of simulating sensations and emotions through language

Jenny Hartman¹, Carita Paradis²

Lund University

Jenny.Hartman@englund.lu.se¹, carita.paradis@englund.lu.se²

In this study, we explore how speakers make use of language to mediate their sensations and emotions through language. The data used are authentic disorder narratives by people with Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD), Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), and Tourette Syndrome (TS). The study is part of a series of investigations of how speakers make use of language resources to talk about sensory/emotive experiences and what kinds of construals they use to get those experiences across to the addressees (Caballero and Díaz Vera, 2013; Caballero and Paradis, 2015; Paradis 2015a; Hartman 2017, 2018). The basic premise is that wordings are cues that evoke meaning structures in conceptual space (Zwaan, 2004; Paradis, 2005, 2015b; Gärdenfors 2014). While comparative construal (metaphorization) and individual words such as *angry*, *sad*, *sour* (Gentsch, Loderer, Soriano, Fontaine, Eid, Pekrun, and Scherer, 2017; Majid and Burenhult, 2014; Scherer and Meuleman, 2013) have been the subject of considerable research in linguistics, psychology, and cognitive science, very little attention has been paid to the role of comparison more broadly for sensory/emotive simulation (Thagard and Shelley 2006: 27; Hartman and Paradis, 2018).

This study makes use of a corpus of 600,000 words, evenly distributed across the three disorders. Experiential comparisons were identified through manual read-throughs in combination with directed seed word searches (e.g. *feel like*, *imagine*, *picture*, *as though*). Our data indicate that speakers show a preference for comparative construal for the mediation of sensory/emotive meanings to trigger corresponding vicarious experiential simulations, as in (1) and (2) (italics added).

- (1) Another urge which overtook me was to momentarily shake my head. It was *as if* I was tossing my hair back --- except that I had short hair. (OCD)
- (2) But I can't and I really mean can't filter out just one sound. It's what makes teaching difficult. *Imagine* someone constantly clapping their hands in front of your face and trying to hold onto a conversation with the other person. It's the dripping tap that keeps you up all night. But I can't find a plumber. I can get very frustrated and overloaded very quickly. (ADHD)

Some comparative construals are similes, as in (1), which conveys an explicit comparison between a source (the way people toss their hair back to get rid of it) and a target (the writer's compulsive headshake). Other construals take the form of a request, as in (2), where the reader is asked to imagine a noisy and frustrating situation very similar emotively and sensorially to the writer's experience of ADHD. Two different ways of achieving sensory/emotive simulation and vicarious experience in a reader can be discerned in our data; one is descriptive–epistemic, as in example (1), and the other is imperative–deontic, as in (2). Linguistically and conceptually, these two routes to sensory/emotive simulation exhibit both similarities and differences.

Keywords: comparative construal, simile, embodied simulation, epistemic, deontic

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