
'You don't hang a Frida Kahlo next to a Jackson Pollock.' The effect of gender congruency on the comprehension of unfamiliar artist-for-work metonymies in German

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Abstract

Familiarity is a precondition for successful comprehension of systematic artist-for-work metonymies. We test a hitherto understudied cultural-historical aspect of familiarity, participants' sensitivity to sex/gender distributions regarding the artist in the artist-for-work metonymy 'a real Rembrandt'. A corpus search revealed that male painters occur more frequently in the construction than female painters. In an implicit acceptability task, we manipulated the congruence between a contextually introduced female painter and the grammatical gender marking in a later target sentence. Our results show that all forms were acceptable, thereby weakening the assumption that the artist's sex is a relevant feature for metonymic sense selection.

Keywords: metonymy, language comprehension

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