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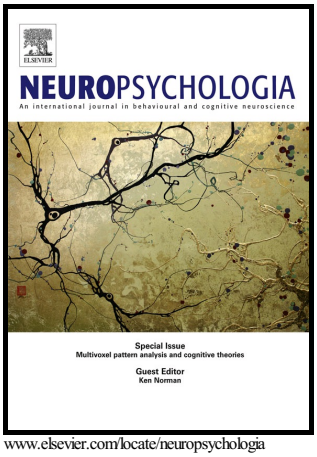

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Hemispheric Processing in Conventional Metaphor Comprehension: The Role of General Knowledge

Stephen W. Briner[a*], Michael C. Schutzenhofer[b], Sandra M. Virtue[b]

[a]Sacred Heart University

[b]DePaul University

[*]Please address correspondence to: Stephen W. Briner, Department of Psychology, HC-219-R, Sacred Heart University, 5151 Park Avenue, Fairfield CT 06825, briners@sacredheart.edu

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Abstract:

This study explored the relation between general knowledge and the hemispheric processing of metaphoric expressions in college age students. We hypothesized that prior knowledge influences how the hemispheres process metaphors in these individuals. In this study, 97 young (college-aged) adults completed a general knowledge and vocabulary test, and were then divided into high-knowledge/high-vocabulary and low-knowledge/low-vocabulary groups. Next, participants viewed word pairs consisting of conventional metaphors, novel metaphors, word pairs with a literal meaning, and unrelated word pairs. The first word in each pair was presented centrally, and the second was presented to the right visual field-left hemisphere (rvf-LH) or the left visual field-right hemisphere (lvf-RH), and participants indicated whether each pair was a meaningful expression. Accuracy results showed an interaction between general knowledge and visual-field hemisphere. Low-knowledge participants were more accurate for metaphors presented to the rvf-LH than the lvf-RH, whereas high-knowledge participants showed no

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