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Authors

Chen, Junqing

Kacinik, Natalie

Chen, Yingjun

et al.

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Metaphorical Color Representations of Emotional Concepts in English and Chinese Speakers

Junqing Chen

The Graduate Center and Brooklyn College, CUNY, New York, NY, USA

Natalie Kacinik

Brooklyn College, CUNY, Brooklyn, NY, USA

Yingjun Chen

Shanghai Normal University, Shanghai, China

Nianyang Wu

Shanghai Normal University, Shanghai, China

Abstract: This project examined whether the cultural and linguistic experiences of English and Chinese speakers can result in different metaphorical representations of emotion in those individuals. The Brief Implicit Association Test (BIAT) technique was used to measure how strongly various colors are associated with anger, sadness, happiness, fear, envy, shame and shyness. The results showed that some metaphorical associations like red-anger are common in both English and Chinese speakers, whereas other associations are culturally-specific (e.g., red is also associated with happiness in Chinese, while only English individuals associate blue with sadness). Some interesting gender differences were also obtained, such that Chinese females associate shyness with pink, but males with red. Black was associated with fear in both genders in Chinese, but only present in English males. This study thus demonstrates that the conceptual representations of different emotions are shaped by an individual's linguistic and cultural experience.