

NOVEL METAPHOR PROCESSING IN HIGH AND LOW SCHIZOTYPAL INDIVIDUAL

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THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Maleval (2019) proposes that there is a **difficulty of metaphorization** both in **clinical psychosis** and in so-called 'ordinary psychosis', which would be a non-clinical non-decompensated form of a psychotic structure. Based on **this idea of psychotic structure**, and **drawing on Langdon's hypothesis of a continuity between schizophrenia and schizotypal traits**, this study examines **how schizotypal traits**, particularly interpersonal deficits, **may influence the comprehension of novel metaphors**. More specifically, the study explores whether these traits lead to a preference for literal or concrete interpretations, rather than metaphorical ones.

METHOD

672 participants completed an online survey consisting of:

- The New Metaphor Comprehension Task: 10 new metaphors, with response options: metaphorical, literal, or concrete.
- The French validated SPQ-brief (SPQ-B): Assesses three schizotypal dimensions: Disorganization, Interpersonal deficits, and Cognitive-perceptual deficits.

The New Metaphors

10 new metaphors with three proposed answers.

Sample item: A priming sentence : « Jean is very hungry; he opens the fridge, he eats a storm ... »

Metaphor Response : « and finally he is satisfied »

Literal Response : « and he digests the rain »

Concrete Response : « and the wind blows hard »

RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

Participants were categorized into low-schizotypal (lo-S) and high-schizotypal (hi-S) groups based on SPQ scores.

*When controlling for age and education, Logistic Regression Analysis revealed **less metaphorical responses in the hi-S group compared to the lo-S group** ($B=-2.390$; $p=.000$; $Exp(B)=1.826$; moderate effect).*

*The hi-S group showed a preference for more **literal** ($B = 1.756$, $p = .006$) and **concrete responses** ($B = 2.753$, $p = .003$), with moderate effects.*

The Interpersonal subscale was the strongest predictor of both metaphorical ($B = -1.974$, $p < .001$) and concrete ($B = 2.378$, $p = .009$) responses.

The study confirms that schizotypal traits impair the comprehension of novel metaphors.

These results in a non-clinical population align with the hypothesis that ordinary psychosis shares the same fundamental structure as clinical psychosis (Maleval, 2019).

The Interpersonal subscale was found to play a central role in metaphor comprehension deficits, confirming earlier findings (Langdon et al., 2002).

References

Langdon, R., Coltheart, M., Ward, P. B., & Catts, S.V., (2002). Disturbed communication in schizophrenia: the role of poor pragmatics and poor mind-reading. *Psychological Medicine*, 32(7), 1273–1284.

Maleval, J-C. (2019). *Repères pour la psychose ordinaire*. Paris : Navarin.