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## LINGUISTIC SYNESTHESIA

*A Meta-analysis*

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# Linguistic Synesthesia

## A Meta-analysis

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**Abstract:** Linguistic synesthesias combine different senses, as in English *smooth melody* (touch→sound). For nearly a century, researchers have gathered data that have been interpreted as supporting the notion of a hierarchical ordering of the senses. According to this proposal, expressions map the presumed-to-be “lower” senses of touch, taste, and smell onto the presumed-to-be “higher” senses of sound and sight. Here, this proposal is tested in the first-ever meta-analysis of linguistic synesthesias, combining thirty-eight datasets from fourteen different languages. The authors demonstrate that clear patterns emerge from the data, but many such patterns are inconsistent with the notion of a linear hierarchical order or a simple lower/higher divide of the senses. This calls for a shift in what theories are considered to be viable for explaining asymmetries between the senses in linguistic synesthesia.

**Keywords:** perception, sensory language, metaphor, embodied cognition, synesthesia

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