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Figurative Language Production in Schizophrenia and Acute Schizophrenia–Spectrum Psychoses: A Psycholinguistic Study Across Structured Interview and Picture Description Task

Language deficits in psychotic disorders can be observed at almost all levels of language, but they become particularly prominent at the pragmatic level. Linguistic concreteness or the inability to understand and produce figurative language has often been described as a feature associated with psychotic disorders. However, the number of studies interested in the production of this type of language in these clinical populations is limited. The aim of this paper is therefore to investigate the production of figurative language in clinical populations with schizophrenia (F20) and acute schizophrenia–spectrum psychoses (F23), across two elicitation conditions (structured interview and picture description tasks). Figurative language was analyzed qualitatively, drawing on existing psycholinguistic research on figurative language and cognitive–linguistic frameworks of conceptual metaphor and metonymy. The figures identified in the overall corpus include metaphor, metonymy, phrasemes, proverbs, hyperbole and similes. The results of the qualitative analysis showed a preserved ability to produce figurative language in the structured interview, whether the forms were conventional or novel. Its primary function lies in the verbalization of past and present emotional states. Figurative language, despite the projective nature of pictorial stimuli, is still limited in its number and function in the picture description tasks. Future psycholinguistic research on figurative language production in these populations would benefit from placing greater emphasis on picture description tasks as an elicitation method.

Keywords: figurative language; schizophrenia; acute schizophrenia–spectrum psychoses; structured interview; picture description task

Introduction

A prerequisite for the development of psycholinguistic research into figurative language, which became prominent from the 1970s onwards, was a departure from traditional philosophical and linguistic currents that viewed literal meaning as the only valid use of language and tolerated figurativeness exclusively as a rhetorical device, while its occurrence in everyday communication was seen as a violation of communicative norms (Gibbs, 1994). In psycholinguistic handbooks (e.g., Spivey, McRae, & Joanisse, 2012), chapters on figurative language are placed between sections on sentence production and discourse level, which points to its status as a complex pragmatic phenomenon. Given this complexity, the study of figurative language from a psycholinguistic perspective proves to be a productive line of inquiry. As Aloairdhi and Kahlaoui (2020) point out, psycholinguistics investigates the underlying mechanisms of figurative language processing in both healthy individuals and clinical populations, and further considers figurative language to be a form of pragmatic competence in first language acquisition as well as foreign language learning.

Building on established theoretical frameworks of figurative language research (e.g., Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Lakoff & Turner, 1989; Radden et al., 1999; Kövecses, 1986; Kövecses, 2000) psycholinguistic scholars (e.g., Gibbs, 1994; Cacciari & Glucksberg, 1994; Coulson, 2012; Cummings, 2014) have identified various forms of figurativeness (e.g., metaphor, metonymy, tautology, irony, oxymoron, as well as phrasemes, slang, indirect speech acts, simile, hyperbole, proverbs, and jokes) for the psycholinguistic research of the figurative language, thus providing a foundation for investigation in clinical populations.

According to Lakoff and Johnson's Conceptual Metaphor Theory (1980), metaphors reflect underlying cognitive processes that allow individuals to comprehend one concept through the lens of another. Within this framework, metaphors are understood as mappings between a source domain and a target domain. The authors illustrate this with the conceptual metaphor ARGUMENT IS WAR, drawing on everyday expressions such as "Your claims are indefensible" and "He attacked every weak point in my argument". These examples demonstrate how the vocabulary of warfare is systematically mapped onto the domain of argumentation. Given the degree of connection between the source and target domains, a well-established distinction is made between conventional and novel metaphors. Conventional metaphors are used frequently by speakers, and the connection between the two concepts has become so entrenched that it is hardly recognized as metaphorical. In the production of novel metaphors, the key lies in creating a link that may not be immediately obvious. While a metaphor is simplistically represented by the formula *X IS Y*, a simile is based on the form *X IS LIKE Y* (Shibata et al., 2012). Metonymy connects concepts based on their logical, temporal, or spatial proximity. As Lakoff and Johnson (1980) note, metonymy allows one entity to stand for another, fol-

lowing the *X FOR Y* format. Tautology is a figure of speech based on reduplication, most commonly taking the form of *X IS X*. Irony is characterized by incongruity, a discrepancy between what is said and what is meant or believed (Gibbs 1994b). Two further types of figurative language are also grounded in incongruity: oxymoron and jokes. An oxymoron is a figure of speech that pairs two contradictory or opposing words together. Similarly, jokes disrupt conventional ways of using language and thinking, playing with both linguistic and logical rules (López & Vaid, 2017). Phrasemes are defined as conventional multi-word expressions with a fixed syntactic structure whose meaning cannot be derived from the sum of their individual components (Koller et al., 2022). Furthermore, hyperbole is traditionally defined as a figure of exaggeration, while proverbs are fixed formulaic expressions used to convey widely shared truths and social norms (Gibbs & Beitel, 1995).

Figurative language is of particular interest in the context of psychotic disorders. In recent years, there have been increasing efforts to identify linguistic biomarkers in at-risk populations (Corcoran et al., 2020) but also to stress the need for collaboration between psychiatry and linguistics (Erdeljac et al., 2019a). Since concreteness, understood as the difficulty in the comprehension and production of figurative language, has often been described as a feature of psychotic disorders (Rossetti et al., 2018), we assume that a deeper understanding of this ability could provide particularly valuable insights for future psycholinguistic research. The aim of this paper is therefore to investigate the production of figurative language in the aforementioned populations, taking into account two elicitation conditions: structured interview and picture description tasks.

1.1. Clinical Manifestations of Psychotic Disorders

Psychotic disorders is an umbrella term that includes a variety of disorders such as schizophrenia, schizoaffective and delusional disorder, as well as other forms of psychosis, including acute psychotic disorder, psychogenic psychosis, and paranoid psychosis (Erdeljac et al., 2019b; Štrkalj–Ivezić, 2011). The term may also include psychotic depression and psychosis in bipolar disorder. A common feature of all psychotic disorders is impaired reality testing, resulting from disturbances in perception, thought, and affect. The symptoms of psychotic disorders are categorized into different categories, of which positive and negative symptoms are the most significant. Positive symptoms include hallucinations and delusions, i.e., changes in perception that occur without external stimuli and fixed false beliefs that persist despite contradictory evidence. Other positive symptoms include catatonia, agitation, disorganized speech and behavior (Ostojić, 2012). Disorganized speech most often represents a manifestation of a formal thought disorder (FTD). Formal thought disorder is a multidimensional disorder that occurs in various mental disorders, but it represents one of the core features of schizophrenia, with a prevalence ranging from 50 to 80% of cases (Roche et al., 2015, as cited in Maderthaner et al., 2023). It involves disturbances in thought organization that are reflected in

language and communication. The disorder occurs because of changes in the functioning of temporal brain regions associated with auditory perception, language processing, and social cognition. These functions are also part of broader cortical networks associated with higher-order cognitive processes (Wensing et al., 2017). Negative symptoms are characterized by a reduction in normal functioning and include affective flattening, alogia, avolition, anhedonia, attention deficits, and difficulties in social interaction. Although FTD is typically associated with positive symptoms, it can also occur in individuals with prominent negative symptoms. The negative dimension of FTD is characterized by deficits in language production, particularly the poverty of speech and alogia (Rosenkranz et al., 2019). Besides positive and negative symptoms, which affect language to varying degrees, it is also important to mention other cognitive deficits that occur in this population and can influence language as well, such as impairments in attention, working memory, executive functions, verbal and visual learning, social cognition, problem-solving, and emotion recognition (Cummings, 2008; Rojnić Kuzman & Bošnjak Kuharić, 2023). The diagnosis of psychotic disorders is based on the presence of specific symptoms, their duration, and their impact on the individual's functioning. In this study, we will focus on individuals with schizophrenia (F20) and acute schizophrenia-spectrum psychoses (F23). These clinical groups differ primarily in the temporal course of their symptoms: schizophrenia manifests as a chronic disorder, whereas acute schizophrenia-spectrum psychoses typically present as sudden and brief episodes (lasting for less than one month).

2. Linguistic Deficits in Psychotic Disorders

Language deficits are a prominent feature in the clinical presentation of psychotic disorders. They are closely related to FTD, can be observed across all levels of language, and can be explained by deficits in semantic and working memory, theory of mind, and executive functions. Their manifestation and severity vary greatly and differ depending on the presence of positive or negative symptoms. The clinical population exhibits a slower pace of speech, an increased number of pauses and hesitations, monotonous speech, and changes in voice pitch and quality (Cummings, 2008). All the above-mentioned characteristics appear more often in negative symptoms and are consequently reflected in the prosodic properties of speech. Changes in these individuals' prosody may also indicate sentence boundaries and turn-taking difficulties (Alpert et al., 2000, as cited in Meyer et al., 2021). Morphological deficits are extremely rare and often depend on the typological characteristics of the speaker's language (Covington et al., 2005). Neologisms produced by patients are in accordance with the phonotactic rules of the speaker's language and arise from deficits in the retrieval of units from semantic memory, rather than deficits in derivational processes. Although language deficits can be observed at the phonological and morphological levels, impairments are more pronounced at lexi-

co-semantic, syntactic, and pragmatic levels (Ehlen et al., 2023). Individuals with these disorders have lexical retrieval difficulties, are less sensitive to discourse context (Kuperberg, 2010b; Li et al., 2017), often select words unrelated to the ongoing discourse plan, and exhibit disorganized and tangential speech. In addition, lexical priming tests show excessive activation of associative networks even in cases of distant concepts (Erdeljac et al., 2019b), a phenomenon likely linked to deficits in inhibitory control (Sekulić Sović et al., 2019). Moreover, the complexity of sentence structure is reduced and as the disorder progresses, the use of dependent and embedded clauses declines (DeLisi, 2001, as cited in Cummings, 2008). Pragmatics appears to be the most affected level of language, which is unsurprising, given that it involves the construction of meaning in interactive contexts (e.g., topic selection, discourse organization, conversational maintenance, speaker's intention, and role management), i.e., inferential processes that depend on social cognition and executive functioning, both of which are commonly impaired in this population (Ehlen et al., 2023). Combined with difficulties in social interaction, pragmatic deficits occur in approximately 30% of cases (Saban-Bezalel & Mashal, 2017). For example, patients with schizophrenia show difficulties in organizing complete discourses, evident in disrupted deictic frames (Hitrec et al., 2015). Additionally, reduced use of connectors, impaired comprehension of long and grammatically complex sentences (Kuperberg, 2010a), inappropriate responses to indirect questions and difficulties in understanding figurative language can be observed (Li et al., 2017).

2.1. Comprehension and Production of Figurative Language in Psychotic Disorders

Concreteness, or the difficulty in comprehension and production of figurative meanings, is a well-known feature of psychotic disorder. It is often associated with FTD or interpreted as a secondary phenomenon due to general deficits in theory of mind, executive functions, contextual processing, and semantic memory organization (Rossetti et al., 2018). Difficulties in metaphor comprehension were first observed in the 1960s, and the results of these initial studies have since been replicated numerous times, most recently by Elvevåg et al. (2011) and Rapp et al. (2018). Research on metaphor comprehension is mainly conducted using metaphorical stories that participants must interpret, as well as proverb comprehension tests. Deamer et al. (2019) took this a step further and conducted a test requiring participants to select a corresponding pictorial stimulus after reading a metaphorical story. The authors found poorer performance in clinical participants and noted that incorrect responses were consistently paired with literal image choices. Recent research has emphasized the necessity of distinguishing between conventional and novel metaphors. For example, Rapp et al. (2018) and Adamczyk et al. (2024) report poorer performance and longer activation times in clinical population with a diagnosis of schizophrenia when processing novel metaphors. Regarding other types of figurative language, the clinical population also shows a lower performance

on proverb and irony comprehension tasks (Rapp et al., 2013). Recent research also shows reduced humor comprehension, especially for jokes that rely on theory of mind (Wyszomirska et al., 2020). However, research on figurative language in the context of psychotic disorders has mainly dealt with comprehension and to a lesser extent with its production. A small body of studies to date suggests a preserved ability to produce figurative language in individuals diagnosed with schizophrenia. For example, Billow et al. (1997) report a similar frequency of figurative language (metaphors, similes, and idioms) across three participant groups: schizophrenia, borderline personality disorder, and a control group, in a semi-structured interview. Elvevåg et al. (2011) also report that individuals with schizophrenia produce metaphors in free speech at rates comparable to healthy controls, with fear being the most frequently expressed emotion. The same observations regarding the quantity of figurative language are made by Despot et al. (2021), who analyzed metaphor production in schizophrenia on three levels – linguistic, conceptual, and discourse. The materials used by the authors consisted of a structured interview with semi-open questions and pictorial stimuli, extending previous methodologies that relied exclusively on (semi)structured interviews. At the linguistic and conceptual levels, there were almost no differences between the clinical population and the control group. At the discourse level, however, difficulties in maintaining cohesion and the inability to stop associations were observed in the structured interview. The authors also note, in addition to metaphor, the occurrence of metonymy, hyperbole, and irony, but do not explain in more detail the possible differences between the two conditions. Also noteworthy is the recent development of TOPSY, a picture description dataset specifically designed to examine speech and language in first-episode psychosis (Bhullar et al., 2026). Mueller et al. (2025) investigate the production of figurative language across three clinical groups (patients with major depressive disorder, schizophrenia, and bipolar disorder), relying primarily on picture description tasks, specifically images from the Thematic Apperception Test (TAT) (Murray, 1943). The clinical population demonstrated an equal, if not greater, capacity for producing figurative language (metaphors and idioms) compared to the control group. Participants with major depressive disorder produced the highest number of figurative expressions, followed by patients with schizophrenia and then those with bipolar disorder. To our knowledge, this is one of the few studies that relies exclusively on a picture description task. The study's findings highlight the need to treat the comprehension and production of figurative language as distinct abilities in the assessment of language skills. Although the study included 157 native German speakers (healthy controls = 70; MDD = 49; BD = 19; SZ = 19), it offers limited insight into how the individual groups differed in their use of figurative language. For example, participants with schizophrenia most frequently used figurative expressions based on the “animal,” “force,” and “orientation” domains, yet the study offers little qualitative elaboration on how these domains were employed.

3. Aims and Research Questions

Building on previous research, the aim of this study is to investigate the occurrence of figurative language in the Croatian-speaking clinical populations diagnosed with schizophrenia (F20) and acute schizophrenia-spectrum psychoses (F23). Specifically, the study aims to conduct a qualitative analysis of figurative language across two elicitation conditions: the structured interview and the picture description tasks. Given the sample size and descriptive nature of the study, this research aims to identify tendencies and patterns rather than to draw definitive conclusions or support broad generalizations. Our research questions are as follows:

- RQ (1) Which types of figurative language do clinical participants produce in the structured interview and the picture description tasks?
- RQ (2) How contextually appropriate and comprehensible are the figurative expressions?
- RQ (3) Are there observable differences in figurative language production between the structured interview and the picture description tasks within clinical populations?

4. Methods

The study was conducted using the Croatian protocol (Sekulić Sović & Savić), a translated and adapted version of the protocol developed by Palaniyappan et al. (2022) within the *International Scientific Consortium for Research in Thought, Language, and Communication in Psychosis* (DISCOURSE).¹ Our research is divided into two parts: a structured interview and picture description tasks. The structured interview section consists of five tasks: Free Speech (encouraging the participant to talk about themselves, their place of upbringing, education, and interests), Personal Story (the participant describes an important event in their life), Health Story (the participant describes the history of their illness), Dream Report (the participant describes the last dream they remember or a dream that has remained in their memory throughout life), and Retelling the Story (the participant must read a short story about a bird and then retell and interpret the events). The second part of our research consists of two picture description tasks: the Picture Description Task (the participant is expected to describe three images of a projective nature, i.e., ambiguous visual stimuli that are often used in psychological research and can reveal an individual's unconscious emotions and motivations) and the Story Illustration Task. The three images in the Picture Description Task depict: 1) a rural landscape and a woman holding a book while looking at a man working in a field in the background; 2) a man turning away from a woman who is holding him by the shoulders; 3) the sun shining between clouds above a building on the other side of a bridge, while a

1 Discourse in Psychosis. Retrieved August 12, 2024, from <https://discourseinpsychosis.org/>.

woman stands on the bridge and looks at the water. The images are taken from the Thematic Apperception Test (TAT) (Murray, 1943). In the Story Illustration Task, the participant is shown comic strip images one at a time. The participant is then required to tell what happened in the comic. During the administration of the test, the participant is encouraged through follow-up questions to produce as much discourse as possible.

Responses were recorded, and the audio files were anonymized. The audio files were then transcribed using the Computerized Language Analysis (CLAN) software (MacWhinney & Wagner, 2010). Following transcription, the data were organized into a database for coding and thematic categorization. After this, the transcripts were subjected to extraction and categorization of figurative language, with instances labeled according to the definitions outlined in the theoretical overview (see Appendix A and Appendix B). The identification of figurative language was based on a combined lexical and contextual approach. Metaphors and metonymies were furthermore annotated using conceptual metaphor theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Lakoff, 1987). Conceptual metaphor and metonymy labels were assigned by the researcher on the basis of the source and target domain mappings and domain contiguity relations identified in the corpus data. Where established labels were available, naming conventions from Lakoff & Johnson (1980), Lakoff (1987), and the MetaNet.HR repository² (Despot et al., 2019) were followed. Since this study seeks to provide a qualitative analysis of figurative language production, we drew on cognitive–linguistic tools to help identify underlying tendencies and patterns. Figurative lexical meanings were also obtained from *Croatian Language Portal* (*Hrvatski jezični portal* = HJP³). Idiomatic expressions were annotated using the *Croatian Phraseological Dictionary* (Filipović Petrović & Parizoska, 2022)⁴ and the *Croatian Phraseological Database*.⁵ The coding and categorization were conducted by a single researcher, and inter-rater reliability was not assessed. Finally, the production of figurative language was compared across two conditions within the two clinical populations. The study was conducted with the written consent of clinical participants and approval from the Ethics Committee of the University Psychiatric Hospital Vrapče (Zagreb), under protocol number 23–188/48–19.

2 Despot et al. (2019), <http://metanet.hr/>

3 Znanje i Srce (n.d.). *Hrvatski jezični portal*. <https://hjp.znanje.hr/>

4 Filipović Petrović, I., & Parizoska, J. (2022). *Frazeološki rječnik hrvatskoga jezika*. Hrvatska akademija znanosti i umjetnosti. Retrieved September 26, 2024, from <https://frazeeoloski-rjecnik.eu/>

5 Institut za hrvatski jezik i jezikoslovlje (n.d.) *Baza frazema hrvatskoga jezika*. Retrieved July 21, 2024, from <http://frazemi.ihjj.hr/>

5. Participants

The study included seven participants with diagnoses of schizophrenia (F20; N=4; 57%) or acute schizophrenia–spectrum psychoses (F23; N=3; 43%). Table 1 presents detailed sociodemographic information for all seven participants.⁶

Table 1. Sociodemographic Data for All Seven Participants and Descriptive Statistics by Clinical Group (F20 and F23)

ID	Sex	Age	Languages spoken	Education (years)	Episode number	Duration since first episode (months)	Diagnosis
0–0–1	M	28	Multilingual	12	3	68	F20
0–0–3	M	20	Monolingual	12	3	27	F20
0–0–5	M	28	Monolingual	12	2	48	F20
0–0–6	M	32	Monolingual	15	3	90	F20
0–0–2	F	27	Bilingual	15	1	1	F23
0–0–4	F	26	Monolingual	12	1	2	F23
0–0–7	F	19	Monolingual	12	1	6	F23

Descriptive statistics by group: **F20 (n = 4)** Age: M=27.0, SD=5.2; Education: M=12.8, SD=1.7; Months Since First Episode: M=58.3, SD=26.9; Sex: M=4 (100%), F=0 (0%) Languages: Monolingual=3 (75%), Multilingual=1 (25%). **F23 (n=3)** Age: M=24.0, SD=4.0; Education: M=13.0, SD=1.7; Months Since First Episode: M=3.0, SD=2.5; Sex: F=3 (100%), M=0 (0%); Languages: Monolingual=2 (67%), Bilingual = 1 (33%).

6. Results

6.1. Figurative Language Production in Schizophrenia (F20) Across Structured Interview and Picture Description Tasks

Across all participants with schizophrenia (F20, N=4), a total of 41 figurative expressions were identified. Of these, 33 (80.5%) occurred in the structured interview, while 8 (19.5%) occurred in the picture description tasks. Individual variation was observed, with the number of produced figurative expressions ranging from 4 to 17 per participant.

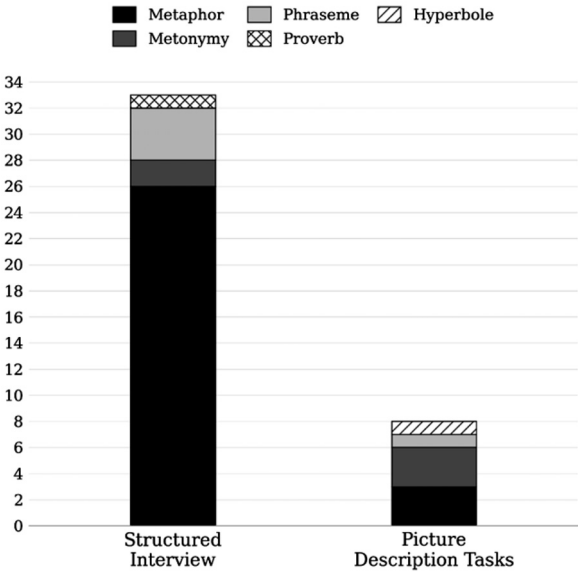
6 Participants were originally coded in numerical order (P001–P007) but in the table they are grouped according to diagnosis (F20 and F23).

Table 2. Number of Figurative Expressions Produced by Participants with Schizophrenia (F20) Across Structured Interview and Picture Description Tasks

ID	Sex	Age	Episode number	Duration since first episode (Months)	Figures (Structured Interview)	Figures (Picture Description Tasks)	Figures (Total)
0-0-1	M	28	3	68	15	2	17
0-0-3	M	20	3	27	3	1	4
0-0-5	M	28	2	48	12	3	15
0-0-6	M	32	3	90	3	2	5

Given this small sample, observations suggest that the number of figurative expressions was consistently higher in the structured interview, while it remained very low in the picture description tasks, typically limited to 1–2 figures. Additionally, neither the duration of illness nor the number of episodes appeared to be associated with the number of produced figures, regardless of task type, possibly indicating notable individual differences. The analysis revealed the occurrence of metaphors (26 in the structured interview, 3 in the picture description tasks), metonymies (2 in the structured interview, 3 in the picture description tasks), phrase-
mes (4 in the structured interview, 1 in the picture description tasks), a proverb and a hyperbole. Metaphor was the most frequent in the structured interview. The picture description tasks showed lower overall frequency, yet the types were more evenly represented.

Figure 1. Figurative Language Production in Schizophrenia (F20) Across Structured Interview and Picture Description Tasks



Although individual variability outweighed clear group-level patterns, the analysis still points to some recurring tendencies that may be useful for future research. Participants with schizophrenia (F20) showed a preserved ability to produce contextually accurate forms of figurative language within the structured interview. The following thematic clusters can be identified in the analysed corpus: containment metaphors (1, 2, 3, 4, 5), movement metaphors (6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11), metaphors of embodied experience (12, 13, 14).

THE BODY IS A CONTAINER

- (1) *Želim biti ja, onaj Ivan koji, jednostavno, vrišti iznutra: Budi ti, pusti me van.*
'I want to be myself, that Ivan who, simply, screams from within: Be yourself, let me out.'
(2) *U tom trenutku aktivirale su se neraščišćene stvari iznutra.*
'At that moment, unresolved things from within were activated.'

EMOTIONS ARE CONTAINERS UNDER PRESSURE

- (3) *Nisam ni znao da je došlo do zasićenja i onda je puklo.*
'I didn't even know I had reached saturation, and then it burst.'

EMOTION IS A HOT LIQUID IN A CONTAINER

- (4) *Nisam baš spavao i nije bila nekakva baš zdrava atmosfera i to je vjerojatno utjecalo i onda se to polako zakuhalo.*
'I wasn't sleeping much, and the atmosphere wasn't very healthy, which likely contributed, and gradually things started to boil over.'

UNRESOLVED ISSUES ARE OPEN CONTAINERS

- (5) *Stvari koje su ostale otvorene utječu na čovjeka i na svijest, otežavaju mu život ako nisu završene i bačene na stol.*
'Things that remain open affect a person and their consciousness, making their life more difficult if they are not completed and laid out on the table.'

LIFE IS A JOURNEY

- (6) *Kako bi se reklo, kroz trnje, ali k boljem.*
'As they say, through thorns, but for the better.'

GAINING POWER IS MOVEMENT

- (7) *Kako sam počeo raditi, odskočio sam visoko, što nije prirodno.*
'As I started working, I jumped high, which is not natural.'

OPPORTUNITY IS A MOVING OBJECT

- (8) *Volio bih više uhvatiti prvi vlak.*
'I would rather catch the first train.'

EXPERIENCED STATE IS AN OBJECT THAT APPROACHES

- (9) *Pa evo, prva hospitalizacija koja me dočekala na Vrapču, mislim da je to bilo nešto najgore moguće što mi se moglo dogoditi tada u životu.*
'So, the first hospitalization that awaited me at Vrapče, I think it was the worst thing that could have happened to me at that time in my life.'

HABIT IS AN UNOBSERVED MOVEMENT

(10) *Prije sam pio alkohol, čak i u pretjeranim količinama. To se uvuklo malo i na posao, što nije dobro.*

‘I used to drink alcohol, even in excessive amounts. It crept a little into work as well, which is not good.’

INTERNAL STATE IS A RELOCATING OBJECT

(11) *Prije sam uvijek htio biti u pravu, onda se to preselilo i na moju okolinu.*

‘Before, I always wanted to be right, but then that spread to my surroundings.’

INTERNAL STATE IS A PHYSICAL EXPERIENCE

(12) *Svejedno sam radio jer mi je bio potreban novac, no tu je došlo zasićenje od prodaje.*

‘I kept working anyway because I needed the money, but I became saturated with sales.’

(13) *I taj me događaj, ovaj, dosta opečatio.*

‘And that event, well, left quite a mark on me.’

(14) *Drugi put me ćopilo malo blaže.*

‘The second time it hit me a bit more gently.’

Given the nature of the structured interview, figurative language was mostly used in the context of the onset of their illness and a way of life that had led to psychosis. Participants demonstrated a preserved capacity for reflection on past events, as well as the ability to describe their current states, oftentimes linking obligations (e.g., medication intake or a due project) with notions such as a prison or a battle. Of the three identified clusters, containment metaphors were the only ones consistently produced across multiple participants. Additionally, they relied heavily on other conventional forms of figurative language, which is particularly evident in their significant reliance on phrasemes (*Sve mi se malo obilo o glavu* ‘But it all blew up in my face’ or *Kad se sve završi, kad sjedne sve na svoje mjesto, možda ću se prestati i znojiti* ‘When it’s all over, when everything falls into place, maybe I’ll stop sweating’). In contrast, the picture description tasks elicited very few examples of figurative language. Nevertheless, the figurative language used to describe the events and experiences of the depicted characters is contextually appropriate, yet of limited scope, creativity and function. For example, the metaphors produced by participants in the picture description task are less transparent than those in the structured interview:

(15) *Ona kao da ga miri dok je zamišljen u nekakvu problemu. Ona ima veliki oslonac na njega.*

‘She appears to comfort him as he is lost in thought over some problem. She relies on him greatly.’

The limitation of language production in the picture description tasks can further be seen in the participants’ use of metonymy (16) and hyperbole (17). It seems that conventional forms of figurative language tend to serve as an “escape” from further explanation of a particular stimulus. These results could potentially indicate that conventional forms of figurative language are preserved, but there may be other factors that influence the ability to infer a character’s (emotional) states:

- (16) *Ljudi su zabrinuti, kao da brinu za sutra.*
‘People are worried, as if they are worried about tomorrow.’
(17) *Čovjek vidi da dolazi neki brod i sve mu se počelo urušavati.*
‘A man sees a ship coming and everything starts to collapse.’

Individual figurative language production patterns and annotated figurative expressions can be seen in the Appendix A (Table 1–4). In the following section, we will examine figurative language production in acute schizophrenia–spectrum psychoses (F23) in the same way as we did within clinical population with schizophrenia (F20).

6.2. Figurative Language Production in Acute Schizophrenia–Spectrum Psychoses (F23) Across Structured Interview and Picture Description Tasks

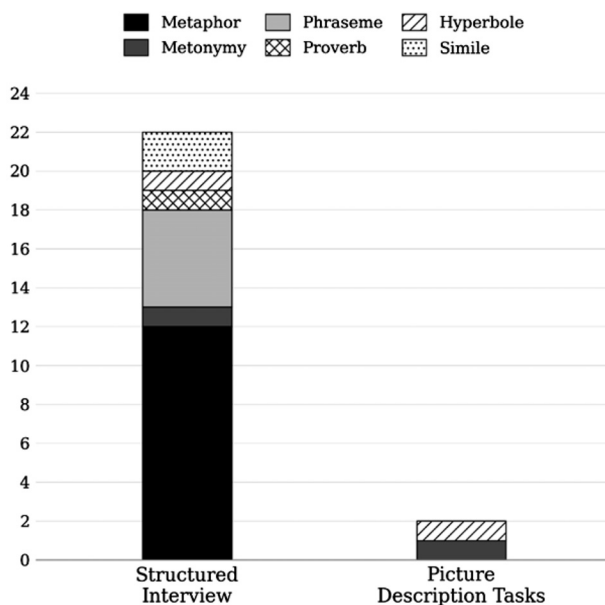
Across all participants with acute schizophrenia–spectrum psychoses (F23, N=3), a total of 24 figurative expressions were identified. Of these, 22 (91.7%) occurred in the structured interview, while only 2 (8.3%) occurred in the picture description tasks.

Table 3. Number of Figurative Expressions Produced by Participants with Acute Schizophrenia–Spectrum Psychoses (F23) Across Structured Interview and Picture Description Tasks

ID	Sex	Age	Episode number	Duration since first episode (months)	Figures (Structured Interview)	Figures (Picture Description Tasks)	Figures (total)
0–0–2	F	27	1	1	10	0	10
0–0–4	F	26	1	2	7	2	9
0–0–7	F	19	1	6	5	0	5

The analysis identified the occurrence of metaphors (12, found only in the structured interview), metonymies (one in each condition), phrasemes (5, found only in the structured interview), a proverb (found only in the structured interview), hyperboles (one in each condition), and similes (2, found only in the structured interview).

Figure 2. Figurative Language Production in Acute Schizophrenia–Spectrum Psychoses (F23) Across Structured Interview and Picture Description Tasks



The structured interview results are more diverse, with metaphors being the most prominent figure. The picture description tasks results are more limited, with figures produced by only one participant. Nevertheless, the figures produced by participants are contextually appropriate, even though they predominantly rely on conventional forms of figurative language (i.e., forms that are very common in the language). Two tentative thematic tendencies can be observed: a movement/flow cluster (18, 19, 20) and evaluative metaphors (21, 22):

LIFE IS FLOWING WATER

(18) *Pa evo iskreno ne znam što bih rekla o mom životu, koji ono, teče i prolazi.*

‘Well, honestly, I don’t know what to say about my life, which, you know, just flows and passes by.’

LIFE IS A JOURNEY

(19) *Došla sam do toga da ne mogu dalje, sve je crno.*

‘I’ve reached the point where I can’t go on, everything feels dark.’

THOUGHT IS A MOVING ENTITY

(20) *Volim plodove mora, ali kad bih morala birati iz prve, rekla bih da volim pizzu. To je ono što mi je prvo došlo.*

‘I like seafood, but if I had to choose right away, I would say that I like pizza. That is what came to my mind first.’

BAD IS DIRTY

(21) *On je uvijek bio ponosan na mene jer sam učila geografiju, ali onda mi je ta scena malo, znate, ostala u sjećanju kao nešto prljavo.*

‘He was always proud of me because I studied geography, but then that scene somehow, you know, stuck in my memory as something dirty.’

BAD IS BLACK

(22) *Došla sam do toga da ne mogu dalje, sve je crno.*

‘I’ve reached the point where I can’t go on, everything feels dark.’

It is also worth noting that one of the participants produced a metaphor directly referring to one of the parts of the structured interview. This finding is significant because it supports the view that not only conventional forms of figurative language are present, but also that participants are capable of producing novel forms of metaphors:

(23) *Sada korak po korak šaljem glasovne poruke i videe, to su za mene kamenčići koji će dovesti njegovu vodu do mene.*

‘Now, step by step, I send voice messages and videos, for me, these are pebbles that will lead his water to me.’

Furthermore, participants were able to provide commentary on their testing experience:

(24) *Plete mi se jezik od ovih riječi.*

‘These words are making my tongue twist.’

As in the case of the group with a diagnosis of schizophrenia (F20), despite the projective nature of the picture description tasks and the examiner’s prompts for more detailed interpretation, this condition remains limited to only two figures produced by a single participant. The shared knowledge on which participants rely somewhat eliminates the need for further interpretation of characters’ feelings or the stimuli in general:

(25) *Želi mu biti prava pratnja i želi da je pogleda u oči.*

‘She wants to be his **companion** and wants him to look her in the eyes.’

(26) *Ovaj čovjek ima puno briga na sve strane i ne stigne sve, ne stigne se posvetiti svojoj ženi.*

‘This man has **a lot of worries from all sides** and can’t manage everything, he doesn’t have time to devote himself to his wife.’

Individual figurative language production patterns and annotated figurative expressions can be seen in the Appendix B (Table 5–7).

In conclusion, both groups demonstrated a preserved ability to produce figurative language, producing a total of 65 figurative expressions (55 in the structured interview and 10 in the picture description tasks). The range of figurative expressions consisted of metaphors, metonymies, phrasemes, proverbs, hyperboles, and

similes. The primary function of these expressions was to convey participants' emotions or perspectives regarding past and present events that led to hospitalization, and they predominantly relied on conventional forms of figurative language. However, participants exhibited the capacity to generate novel forms of figurative language, and even to use figurative language to refer to the testing context itself. Certain thematic axes were identified in both groups. For example, movement-related metaphors were observed in both groups. Conversely, their ability to produce figurative language in the picture description tasks was limited, despite the projective nature of the visual stimuli and additional prompts from the examiner.

7. General Discussion

Despite the exploratory nature, this study offers several important contributions. Firstly, this is one of the few studies, alongside Billow et al. (1997), Elvevåg et al. (2011), Despot et al. (2021) and Mueller et al. (2025), that examines the production of figurative language in psychotic disorders. Secondly, this is one of the few studies, alongside Despot et al. (2021) and Mueller et al. (2025), that also includes picture description tasks in the research. Finally, this is, to our knowledge, among the first such qualitative analyses that includes two clinical groups (F20 and F23) and addresses this phenomenon in Croatian speakers. Regarding the RQ (1), which examined the types of figurative language clinical participants produce across tasks, our qualitative analysis showed that participants relied on a wide range of figurative expressions, such as metaphors, metonymies, phrasemes, proverbs, hyperboles and similes. In relation to RQ (2), which concerned the contextual appropriateness and comprehensibility of figurative expressions, the figurative expressions employed by participants were contextually appropriate and comprehensible. They mostly relied on conventional forms of figurative language but also demonstrated a preserved ability to produce novel forms, even directly referring to examining context. Although difficulties in understanding figurative language in this population have been somewhat confirmed in previous research, our study is in line with several studies on production that indicate a preserved ability to produce figurative language. These findings may suggest the need to distinguish between the ability to understand and the ability to produce figurative language in the assessment of speech and language abilities in this population. However, and this is the main concern of RQ (3), which asked whether there are observable differences in figurative language production between the structured interview and the picture description tasks, one of the clearest findings of this study is a difference in the use of figurative language between the structured interview and picture description tasks. It should be noted that the difference in quantity of figures used between the two types of tasks may be explained by task type, participant fatigue, attentional focus, and individual differences. We consider it important to emphasize that figurative language in the context of structured interviews within both clinical

populations serves as a tool for reflecting on past events and describing current emotional states, while figurative language in picture description tasks remains restricted and narrow regardless of the projective nature of the pictorial stimuli. Future research building on this study should prioritize the investigation of creativity in figurative language production, as well as place greater emphasis on pictorial stimuli as an elicitation method. Additional insights into (figurative) language, particularly in the context of projective picture description tasks, may help shed light on other potential difficulties that are often attributed to this population. For example, Gavilán & García-Albea (2011) conclude that deficits in theory of mind are best explored through the semantic–pragmatic level, which would therefore include the production of figurative language. Numerous previous studies emphasize that clinical populations diagnosed with psychotic disorders have difficulties verbalizing their own and others' states (e.g., Langdon et al., 2002, as cited in Gavilán Ibáñez & García-Albea Ristol, 2013; Parola et al., 2021). Research also highlights the importance of the ability to gain insight into one's own and others' mental states for the overall course and outcome of the illness (e.g., Roe & Davidson, 2005; Islam et al., 2011; Zhao et al., 2021). Overall, further research focusing on the pictorial stimuli could provide a clearer understanding of the processes of visual perception and information integration, which have been shown to exhibit significant alterations in schizophrenia (e.g., De Bustamante Simas et al., 2021). In line with this, exploring figurative language within the context of psychotic disorders may not only shed light on new psychotherapeutic approaches (e.g., Hains, 2014) that draw upon such findings, but also offer valuable insights for enhancing therapeutic interventions targeting deficits in information integration in clinical populations (Lysaker & Dimaggio, 2014).

8. Conclusion

This study provides new insights into figurative language production among individuals with schizophrenia (F20) and acute schizophrenia–spectrum psychoses (F23) by comparing structured interview and picture description tasks. The findings reveal that, while both clinical groups demonstrate a preserved ability to use various forms of figurative language in structured interview, their production remains limited in function and creativity when responding to pictorial stimuli. By extending previous research, this study highlights the importance of further exploration of figurative language production within the pictorial context.

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Proizvodnja figurativnog jezika kod shizofrenije i akutne psihoze iz spektra shizofrenije: psiholingvistička studija strukturiranog intervjua i zadataka slikovnih podražaja

Jezični deficiti kod psihotičnog poremećaja mogu se zamijetiti na gotovo svim jezičnim razinama, no posebno istaknuti postaju na pragmatičkoj razini. Jezični konkretizam ili nemogućnost razumijevanja i proizvodnje figurativnog jezika definira se kao jedna od značajki psihotičnog poremećaja. Međutim, broj istraživanja zainteresiranih za produkciju figurativnog jezika kod spomenute kliničke populacije vrlo je ograničen. Cilj je ovog rada stoga istražiti proizvodnju figurativnog jezika u kliničkoj populaciji sa shizofrenijom (F20) i akutnom psihozom iz spektra shizofrenije (F23), uzimajući u obzir strukturirani intervjui i zadatke slikovnih podražaja. U analizi jezika kliničke populacije oslonili smo se na kvalitativnu analizu, postojeće teorijske psiholingvističke postavke o figurativnom jeziku te kognitivnolingvističke postavke konceptualne metafore i metonimije. Figure koje smo zamijetili u ukupnom korpusu jesu metafora, metonimija, frazemi, poslovice, hiperbole i usporedbe. Rezultati kvalitativne analize pokazali su očuvanu sposobnost produkcije figurativnog jezika u strukturiranom intervjuu, bilo da je riječ o konvencionalnim ili novim oblicima. Njegova se uloga ogleda u verbaliziranju prošlih i sadašnjih emocionalnih stanja. Figurativni jezik, unatoč projekcijskoj prirodi slikovnih podražaja, svojim je brojem i funkcijom u zadacima sa slikovnim podražajima ipak ograničen. Buduća psiholingvistička istraživanja proizvodnje figurativnog jezika kod ove populacije svakako bi u većoj mjeri trebala posvetiti pozornost zadacima slikovnih sadržaja.

Ključne riječi: figurativni jezik; shizofrenija; akutna psihoza iz spektra shizofrenije; strukturirani intervjui; slikovni podražaji

Appendix A. Figurative Language Production in Patients with Schizophrenia (F20, N=4)

Table 1. Transcript & Figurative Language – Participant 001 (F20)

Structured Interview			
	Croatian	English	Figure
1.	Kad iz ovih cipela sve pogledam, to je najbolje što mi se moglo dogoditi.	When I look at everything from these shoes , it is the best thing that could have happened to me.	METONYMY: FOOT-WEAR FOR THE WEARER'S PERSPECTIVE.
2.	Loša stvar je bila od po-gona . Kako bih rekao, bila je to slava.	The bad thing was from the drive . As I would say, it was glory.	METAPHOR: MAN IS A MACHINE.
3.	Kako sam počeo raditi, odskočio sam visoko , što nije prirodno.	As I started working, I jumped high , which is not natural.	METAPHOR: GAINING POWER IS MOVEMENT.
4.	Kažu da tko visoko leti, nisko pada .	They say that he who flies high, falls deep .	A PROVERB: ⁷ <i>tko visoko leti, nisko pada</i> 'the bigger they are, the harder they fall'.
5.	Pa evo, prva hospitalizacija koja me dočekala na Vrapču, mislim da je to bilo nešto najgore moguće što mi se moglo dogoditi tada u životu.	So, the first hospitalization that awaited me at Vrapče, I think it was the worst thing that could have happened to me at that time in my life.	METAPHOR: THE EXPERIENCED STATE IS AN OBJECT THAT APPROACHES.
6.	Kako bi se reklo, kroz trnje, ali k boljem .	As they say, through thorns, but for the better .	METAPHOR: LIFE IS A JOURNEY.
7.	Volio bih više uhvatiti prvi vlak .	I would like to catch the first train more .	METAPHOR: OPPORTUNITY IS A MOVING OBJECT.
8.	Želim biti ja, onaj Ivan koji, jednostavno, vrišti iznutra: Budi ti, pusti me van .	I want to be myself, that Ivan who, simply, screams from within: 'Be yourself, let me out.'	METAPHOR: BODY IS A CONTAINER.

7 Hrvatski jezični portal. Retrieved September 22, 2025, from <https://hjp.znanje.hr>.

9.	Uvijek postoji taj jedan ili dva posto nečega, duše ili kakogod, svjesnosti, koji tješi .	There is always that one or two percent of something, a soul or whatever, consciousness, that comforts .	METAPHOR: CONSCIOUSNESS IS AN AGENT.
10.	Prije sam pio alkohol, čak i u pretjeranim količinama. To se uvuklo malo i na posao, što nije dobro.	I used to drink alcohol, even in excessive amounts. It crept a little into work as well, which is not good.	METAPHOR: HABIT IS AN UNOBSERVED MOVEMENT.
11.	Nisam bio slobodan čovjek, dok god moram piti tu terapiju.	I was not a free man as long as I had to take that therapy.	METAPHOR: THERAPY IS IMPRISONMENT.
12.	U tom trenutku aktivirale su se neraščišćene stvari iznutra .	At that moment, unresolved things from within were activated .	METAPHOR: THE BODY IS A CONTAINER.
13.	Stvari koje su ostale otvorene utječu na čovjeka i na svijest, otežavaju mu život ako nisu završene i bačene na stol.	Things that remain open affect a person and their consciousness, making their life more difficult if they are not completed and laid out on the table.	METAPHOR: UNSOLVED ISSUES ARE OPEN CONTAINERS.
14.	Stvari koje su ostale otvorene utječu na čovjeka i na svijest, otežavaju mu život ako nisu završene i bačene na stol .	Things that remain open affect a person and their consciousness, making their life more difficult if they are not completed and laid out on the table .	METAPHOR: UNSOLVED ISSUES ARE OBJECTS.
15.	Pa promijenio se tako da mi je dosta ljudi iz života, dragih, ili za koje sam mislio da su mi dragi, otpalo .	Well, it changed so much that a lot of people in my life, dear to me, or who I thought were dear to me, have fallen away .	METAPHOR: HUMAN RELATIONSHIP IS A BUILDING.

Picture Description Tasks			
1.	Ljudi su zabrinuti, kao da brinu za sutra .	People are worried, as if they are worried about tomorrow .	METONYMY : TOMORROW FOR THE FUTURE.
2.	Ona kao da ga miri dok je zamišljen u nekakvu problemu. Ona ima veliki oslonac na njega.	She appears to comfort him as he is lost in thought over some problem. She relies on him greatly .	METAPHOR : PHYSICAL SUPPORT IS EMOTIONAL SUPPORT.

Table 2. Transcript & Figurative Language – Participant 003 (F20)

Structured Interview			
	Croatian	English	Type of figure
1.	Pa možda dosta jedan veliki događaj je kada su mi se roditelji rastali.	Well, maybe a pretty big event was when my parents got divorced.	METAPHOR : IMPORTANCE IS SIZE.
2.	To mi je dosta u sjećanju ostalo .	That has been kept in my memory .	METAPHOR : MEMORY IS A STOREHOUSE.
3.	Pa, ja sam imao , sve skupa tri puta sam bio na liječenju, prvo sam imao psihozu u Bjelovaru, onda sam drugi put imao psihozu u Osijeku.	Well, I had , I was treated three times in total, first I had psychosis in Bjelovar ⁸ , then I had psychosis the second time in Osijek.	METAPHOR : EXPERIENCING A STATE IS POSSESSING AN OBJECT.
Picture Description Tasks			
1.	Čovjek vidi da dolazi neki brod i sve mu se počelo urušavati.	A man sees a ship coming and everything starts to collapse.	HYPERBOLE .

8 The names of the cities referred to by the participants were assigned randomly to protect their identities.

Table 3. Transcript & Figurative Language – Participant 005 (F20)

Structured Interview			
	Croatian	English	Type of figure
1.	Tamo mi je išlo dobro, malo sam ušao u depresiju nakon svega toga od cure i to.	I was doing well there, then I fell into depression after all that with the girl and everything.	METAPHOR: STATE IS A LOCATION.
2.	Htio sam upisati fakultet, ali sam bio četvrti ispod liste i to se izjalovilo .	I wanted to enroll in university, but I was fourth below the list, and it fell through .	METAPHOR: INTENTIONS ARE FRUITS.
3.	I to bi bilo ukratko ono što se meni dogodilo. Onda mi se dogodio stres od svega toga.	And that would be a summary of what happened to me. Then I got stressed out from all of that.	METAPHOR: EMOTION IS AN EVENT.
4.	Sve mi se malo obilo o glavu .	But it all blew up in my face .	A PHRASEME: <i>obiti se o glavu</i> ⁹ ‘it will blow up in your face’ (Bendow, 2009), lit. ‘to hit back to one’s head’.
5.	Drugi put me ćopilo malo blaže.	The second time it hit me a bit more gently.	METAPHOR: EMOTIONS ARE PHYSICAL FORCES.
6.	Htio sam se maknuti od prodaje jer mi je prodaje već bilo preko glave .	I wanted to step away from sales because I was sick and tired of it .	A PHRASEME: <i>preko glave je komu čega</i> ¹⁰ ‘you’re sick and tired of someone or something’ (Bendow, 2009), lit. ‘to have [something] over head’.
7.	Svejedno sam radio jer mi je bio potreban novac, no tu je došlo zasićenje od prodaje.	I kept working anyway because I needed the money, but I became saturated with sales .	METAPHOR: INTERNAL STATE IS A PHYSICAL EXPERIENCE.

9 Baza frazema hrvatskoga jezika. Retrieved July 21, 2024, from <http://frazemi.ihj.hr>.

10 Baza frazema hrvatskoga jezika. Retrieved July 21, 2024, from <http://frazemi.ihj.hr>.

8.	Kad se sve završi, kad sjedne sve na svoje mjesto , možda ću se prestati i znojiti.	When it's all over, when everything falls into place , maybe I'll stop sweating.	A PHRASEME : <i>doći na svoje mjesto</i> 'fall into place' (Bendow, 2009).
9.	Prije sam uvijek htio biti u pravu, onda se to preselilo i na moju okolinu.	Before, I always wanted to be right, but then that spread to my surroundings.	METAPHOR : INTERNAL STATE IS A RELOCATING OBJECT.
10.	Nisam ni znao da je došlo do zasićenja i onda je puklo.	I didn't even know I had reached saturation , and then it burst.	METAPHOR : INTERNAL STATE IS A PHYSICAL EXPERIENCE.
11.	Nisam ni znao da je došlo do zasićenja i onda je puklo .	I didn't even know I had reached saturation, and then it burst .	METAPHOR : EMOTIONS ARE CONTAINERS UNDER PRESSURE.
12.	Ne želim previše razmišljati o tome što mi nosi san .	I don't want to think too much about what my dream is bringing me .	METONYMY : DREAM FOR END OF THE DAY.
Picture Description Tasks			
1.	Stari je žrtvovao svoj mir , to jest svoju kuću.	The old man sacrificed his peace , that is, his home.	METONYMY : PEACE FOR HOME.
2.	Onda je stari zaspao mirne glave na kraju.	Then the old man finally fell asleep with a calm mind .	METAPHOR : THOUGHT IS A FLOWING SUBSTANCE.
3.	Onda je stari zaspao mirne glave na kraju.		METONYMY : HEAD FOR MIND/THOUGHT

Table 4. Transcript & Figurative Language – Participant 006 (F20)

Structured Interview			
	Croatian	English	Type of figure
1.	Moram nešto napraviti i unijeti u kompjutor i sad se borim s tim jer nemam baš nešto energije.	I have to do something and enter it into the computer, and now I'm battling with it because I don't really have much energy.	METAPHOR: PERFORMING A TASK IS A BATTLE.
2.	Do dvadeset i druge godine sam živio s njim i to je dosta ostavilo traga .	I lived with him until I turned twenty-two, and it left a significant mark on me .	A PHRASEME: <i>ostaviti traga</i> ¹¹ 'leave a mark' (Bendow, 2009).
3.	Nisam baš spavao i nije bila nekakva baš zdrava atmosfera i to je vjerojatno utjecalo i onda se to polako zakuhavalo .	I wasn't sleeping much, and the atmosphere wasn't very healthy, which likely contributed, and gradually things started to boil over .	METAPHOR: EMOTION IS A HOT LIQUID IN A CONTAINER.
Picture Description Tasks			
1.	Vidim kamenje, dosta još na početku i osobe mi ne djeluju povezano nekako jer svaka je u svom filmu .	I see the stones, quite a lot still at the beginning, and the people don't seem connected to me somehow because each one is in their own film .	A PHRASEME: <i>biti u svome filmu</i> . ¹²
2.	U svakom slučaju, te dvije osobe dominiraju slikom, zanimljiva je slika i budi zanimanje.	In any case, these two people dominate the picture, it is an interesting picture, and it arouses curiosity .	METAPHOR: ATTENTION IS A SLEEPING ENTITY THAT CAN BE AWAKENED.

11 Baza frazema hrvatskoga jezika. Retrieved July 22, 2024, from <http://frazemi.ihj.hr>.

12 Hrvatski jezični portal. Retrieved September 30, 2025, from <https://hjp.znanje.hr>.

Appendix B. Figurative Language Production in Patients with Acute Schizophrenia–Spectrum Psychoses (F23, N=3)

Table 5. Transcript & Figurative Language – Participant 002 (F23)

Structured Interview			
	Croatian	English	Type of figure
1.	Kada netko sam od sebe dobije malariju daje mu se taj lijek koji je napravljen od tvari koja to može prouzročiti i onda se to, ta dva vektora se poništavaju.	When someone contracts malaria on their own, they are given a medicine made from a substance that can cause it, and then the two vectors cancel each other out.	METAPHOR: CAUSE IS A FORCE.
2.	Plava laguna k'o iz filma.	A blue lagoon, just like in a movie.	A SIMILE.
3.	Volim plodove mora, ali kad bih morala birati iz prve, rekla bih da volim pizzu. To je ono što mi je prvo došlo.	I like seafood, but if I had to choose right away, I would say that I like pizza. That is what came to my mind first.	METAPHOR: THOUGHT IS A MOVING ENTITY.
4.	On je uvijek bio ponosan na mene jer sam učila geografiju, ali onda mi je ta scena malo, znate, ostala u sjećanju kao nešto prljavo.	He was always proud of me because I studied geography, but then that scene somehow, you know, stuck in my memory as something dirty.	METAPHOR: BAD IS DIRTY.
5.	Ali ja sam doživjela izdaju od jedne prijateljice jednom u životu i otad nosim tu traumu.	But I experienced betrayal by a friend only once in my life, and since then I have carried that trauma.	METAPHOR: EMOTIONS ARE WEIGHT.
6.	Govorila je svima da trčim za njom kao psić.	She told everyone that I was running after her like a little dog.	A SIMILE.

7.	Nisam naučila za test iz matematike. Uvijek mi fali vremena , ali zadnji put kad sam ga sanjala ispalo je da sam prošla.	I didn't study for the math test. I'm always short on time , but the last time I dreamed about it, it turned out that I had passed.	METAPHOR: TIME IS A RESOURCE.
8.	Sada korak po korak šaljem glasovne poruke i videe, to su za mene kamenčići koji će dovesti njegovu vodu do mene.	Now, step by step , I send voice messages and videos, for me, these are pebbles that will lead his water to me.	A PHRASEME: <i>korak po korak</i> (Filipović Petrović & Parizoska, 2022) 'step by step' (Bendow, 2009).
9.	Sada korak po korak šaljem glasovne poruke i videe, to su za mene kamenčići koji će dovesti njegovu vodu do mene.	Now, step by step, I send voice messages and videos, for me, these are pebbles that will lead his water to me.	METAPHOR: EMOTIONS ARE LIQUID SUBSTANCES.
10.	Ljudi moji, ubit ćete me u pojam .	Dear people, you're knocking the spirit out of me .	A PHRASEME: <i>ubiti koga u pojam</i> ¹³ 'knock the spirit out of someone' (Bendow, 2009), lit. 'you're going to kill me'.

13 Baza frazema hrvatskoga jezika. Retrieved September 29, 2024, from <http://frazemi.ihj.hr>.

Table 6. Transcript & Figurative Language – Participant 004 (F23)

Structured Interview			
	Croatian	English	Type of figure
1.	Pa evo iskreno ne znam što bih rekla o mom životu, koji ono, teče i prolazi .	Well, honestly, I don't know what to say about my life, which, you know, just flows and passes by .	METAPHOR: LIFE IS A FLOWING WATER.
2.	U životu sam radila jako puno poslova, i stvarno sam ih mijenjala brzina svjetlosti .	In my life, I've done a lot of jobs, and I really changed them at the speed of light .	A HYPERBOLE.
3.	Plete mi se jezik od ovih riječi.	These words are making my tongue twist .	A PHRASEME: <i>plete se komu jezik</i> . ¹⁴
4.	Napravila sam to iz razloga svojih malih milion .	I did it for loads of little reasons of my own.	A PHRASEME: <i>mali milijun</i> ¹⁵ 'loads of' (Bendow, 2009), lit. 'for a million little reasons of my own'.
5.	I taj me događaj, ovaj, dosta opečatio .	And that event, well, left quite a mark on me.	METAPHOR: INTERNAL STATE IS A PHYSICAL EXPERIENCE.
6.	Mačke se uvijek dočekaju na noge .	Cats always land on their feet .	A PROVERB.
7.	Bila je lagana kao perce .	She was as light as a feather .	A PHRASEME: <i>lagan kao pero</i> ¹⁶ 'as light as a feather' (Vrgoč & Fink-Arsovski, 2008).
Picture Description Tasks			
	Želi mu biti prava pratnja i želi da je pogleda u oči.	She wants to be his companion and wants him to look her in the eyes.	METONYMY: COMPANION FOR SPOUSE.

14 Baza frazema hrvatskoga jezika. Retrieved July 21, 2024, from <http://frazemi.ihj.hr>.15 Hrvatski jezični portal. Retrieved July 21, 2024, from <https://hjp.znanje.hr>.16 Baza frazema hrvatskoga jezika. Retrieved July 21, 2024, from <http://frazemi.ihj.hr>.

	Ovaj čovjek ima puno briga na sve strane i ne stigne sve, ne stigne se posvetiti svojoj ženi.	This man has a lot of worries from all sides and can't manage everything; he doesn't have time to devote himself to his wife.	A HYPERBOLE.
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Table 7. Transcript & Figurative Language – Participant 007 (F23)

	Structured Interview		
	Croatian	English	Type of figure
1.	Prije mi se već stvorio nekakav košmar u glavi.	A kind of nightmare has already formed in my mind.	METAPHOR: MIND/HEAD IS A CONTAINER.
2.	Bilo mi je dosta teško, pogotovo na satu anatomije jer nisam imala podlogu .	It was quite difficult for me, especially in anatomy class, because I didn't have a foundation .	METAPHOR: KNOWLEDGE IS A BUILDING/STRUCTURE.
3.	Većinom se uče opći predmeti, a preskočili smo čovjeka.	Mostly, we study general subjects, and we skipped human .	METONYMY: OBJECT OF STUDY FOR STUDY.
4.	Došla sam do toga da ne mogu dalje , sve je crno.	I've reached the point where I can't go on, everything feels dark.	METAPHOR: LIFE IS A JOURNEY.
5.	Došla sam do toga da ne mogu dalje, sve je crno .	I've reached the point where I can't go on, everything feels dark .	METAPHOR: BAD IS BLACK.