

P03-313

EMPTY WORDS IN SCHIZOPHRENIA. SEMANTIC SATIATION AS THE MECHANISM OF FORMAL LANGUAGE DISORDERS

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The aim of the research was to explain the cognitive mechanisms responsible for formal language disorders in schizophrenia by relating them to the semantic satiation effect.

The semantic satiation is the subjective and temporary experience of loss of meaning of words which are repeatedly and rapidly pronounced. Saying it aloud or fixating it the person ceases to understand the word's meaning still being able to recognizing its formal features. The loss of access to the meaning of words and building the utterances on the basis of formal aspects of words is a common feature of schizophrenic language. Therefore it could be assumed that schizophrenic patients would be prone to satiation effect more than healthy subjects.

Semantic satiation was determined for patients suffering from schizophrenia and for healthy controls. Participants task was to compare the meanings of two words presented on a computer screen and decide if they are semantically related. Negative, positive and emotionally neutral words were used as the first element for each pair and they were satiated by the prolonged presentation. It was expected that the loss of meaning of satiated word would delay participants' lexical decision and that this effect should be stronger for the schizophrenic than for control group.

The results confirmed that people suffering from schizophrenia are more susceptible for semantic satiation effect. Also it was observed that in this group the satiation effect depends on valence of words. Emotionally positive and negative words were satiated faster than neutral ones.