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MESS (Mimed Expressive Short Stories) Database: Showcasing the potential of pantomime for story transmission

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Abstract

Sometimes, stimulus preparation is the most resource-consuming stage of experiments on communication. We present an open ready-to-use database of mimed expressive short stories (150 .mp4 files, 03:34:56 of footage) funded by the National Science Centre of Poland under the agreement UMO 2021/43/D/HS2/01866. It can be used as a stimulus in experiments or for annotation or rating. We describe how the database was created: (1) preparation: we used Chat GPT 4.0. to create rich stories, with varying age, gender, number of characters, and themes; (2) recording: we worked with professional actors for maximum expressiveness; (3) editing: we synced front and side shots for maximum visibility; (4) annotating: we analysed representational strategies to argue that the database showcases the potential of pantomime for storysharing and discuss its implications for the pantomimic scenarios of language origins (e.g., Arbib, 2018, 2024; Zlatev et al., 2020).