



Metaphorical to whom? The Metaphoricity of Motion Metaphors in Music Criticism

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Background

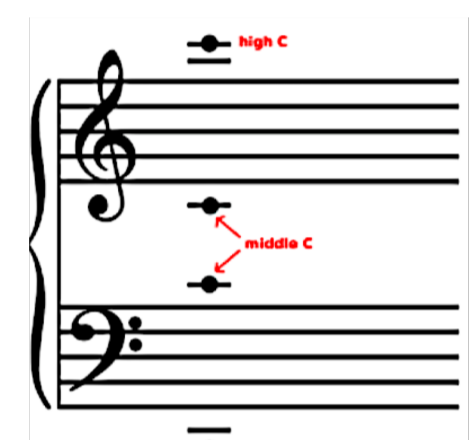
Metaphoricity

“metaphoricity is a matter of degree, [...] the boundary between metaphorical and non-metaphorical expressions is fuzzy.” (Semino 2008: 14)

Musical Motion

In the specialist discourse of music criticism, music is commonly and conventionally described in terms of motion:

➤ pitches are *high* and *low*



➤ melodies *fall* and *rise*



➤ chords *follow* a harmonic *path*



Is musical motion less metaphorical?

➤ Musical motion expressions are “music-literal”

(Guck 1991)

→ Variable influencing metaphoricity:

CONVENTIONALITY

“frequency breeds literalness” (Hanks 2006: 21)

➤ “What is metaphorical to some language users does not have to be metaphorical to other language users”

(Steen et al. 2010: 766f.).

→ Variable influencing metaphoricity:

METAPHOR ACCULTURATION

(Caballero & Ibarretxe-Antuñano 2013)

➤ Experiencing music literally involves motion

(Cox 2016, Gibbs 2006: 53ff.)

→ Variable influencing metaphoricity:

CONCEPTUAL CLOSENESS OF MOTION and MUSIC

(cf. Hanks 2006, Goatly 2011)

Hypotheses:

a) Musical experts perceive musical motion expressions as less metaphorical because musical motion expressions are conventional in music criticism

b) Musical motion expressions are perceived as less metaphorical because musical motion is conceptually closer to literal motion

Method

Metaphoricity Rating task

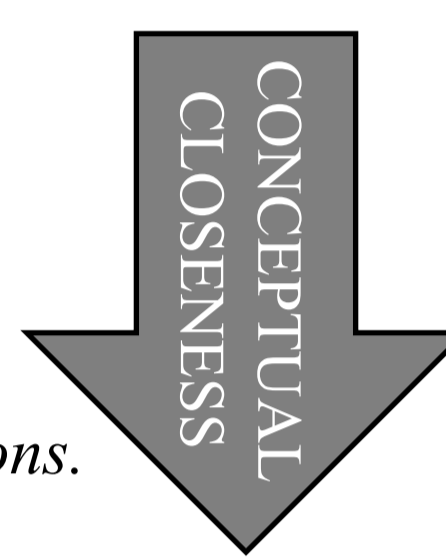
➤ Stimuli

Carl arrived at the concert hall.

The road arrives at an intersection.

The music arrives at the final chord.

The two studies arrive at different conclusions.



52 stimuli: 13 motion verbs x 4 conditions

-verbs range from infrequent (*meander*) to highly frequent (*arrive*) → different degrees of CONVENTIONALITY

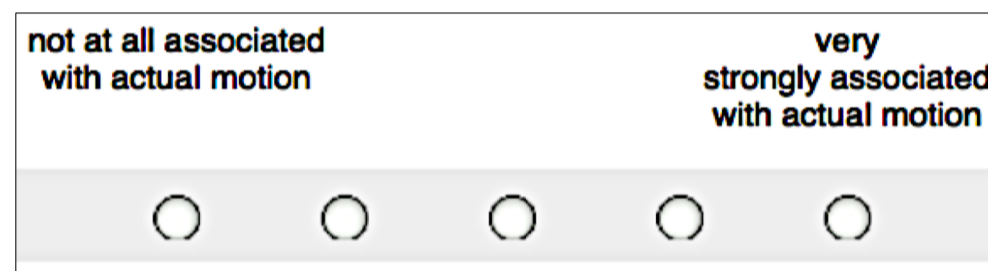
➤ Experimental task

In your opinion, how literal is the sentence?



Conventionality of verbal metaphor

How strongly do you associate the sentence with actual motion?



Conceptual closeness of domains

➤ Participants

- 82 (near) native speakers of English
 - recruited via Mturk, linguistlist.org, at the University of Birmingham, two amateur orchestras in Birmingham
 - repeated measurements design
 - self-assessment of musical knowledge
- METAPHOR ACCULTURATION

Degree of knowledge of (classical) music	1	2	3	4	5
N	28	18	19	12	5

➤ Statistical analysis

- mixed-effects ordinal logistic regression (Christensen 2015)

Discussion & Conclusion

HYPOTHESIS a) – supported

Musical experts perceive musical motion as more literal

HYPOTHESIS b) – not supported

Musical motion is only perceived as conceptually closer to actual motion by musical experts

→ supports acculturation of metaphor: importance of socio-cultural background on language use and perception

? low in metaphoricity = less relevant to thought ?

→ Rather: motion metaphors are deeply entrenched in musical experts' minds

! Metaphoricity as a gradable phenomenon !

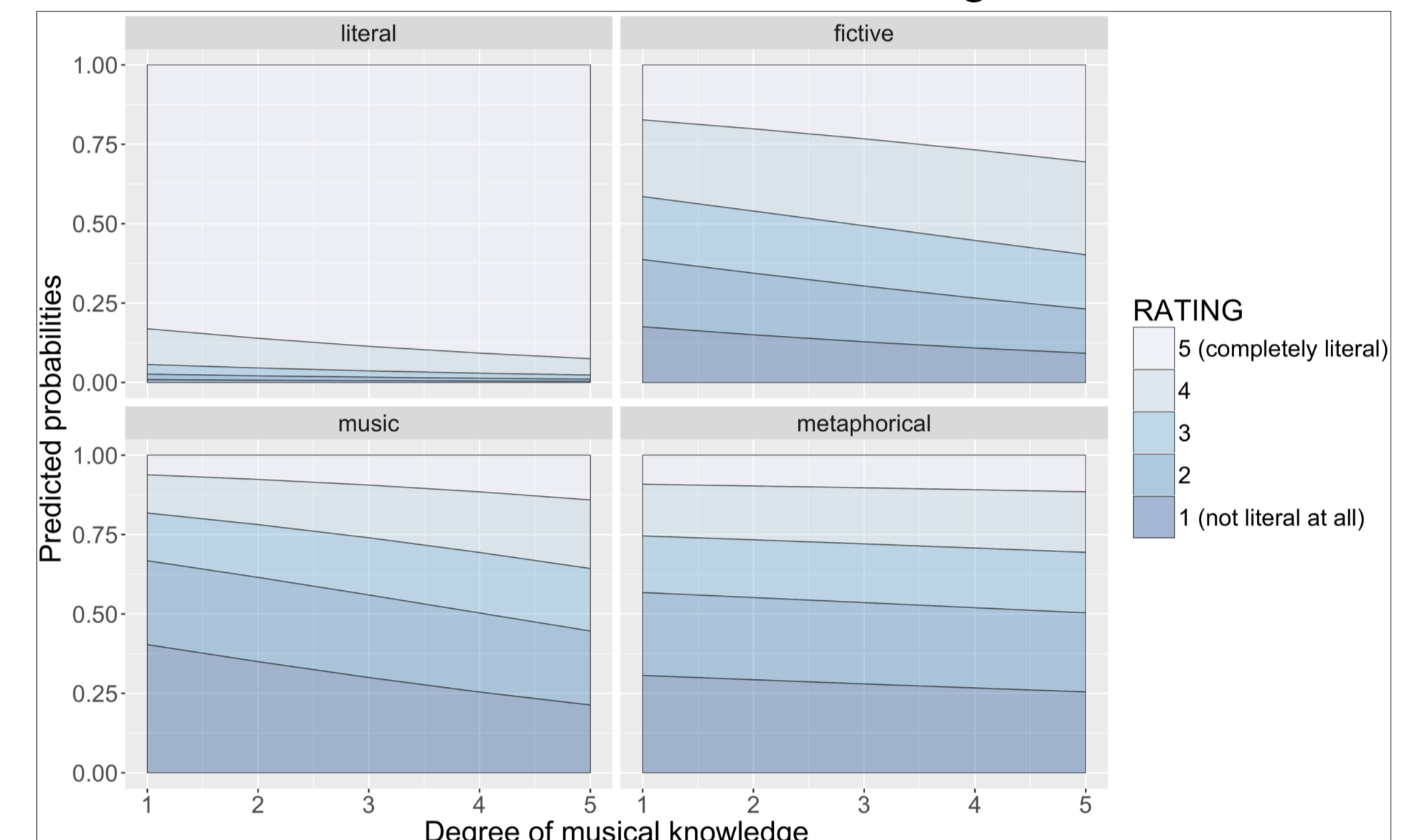
→ variables: conventionality, conceptual closeness, socio-cultural background of individual language user

! genre characteristic !: conventionalisation in specialised discourses, metaphorical terms fill a lexical gap (Gibbs 2017: 77)

Results

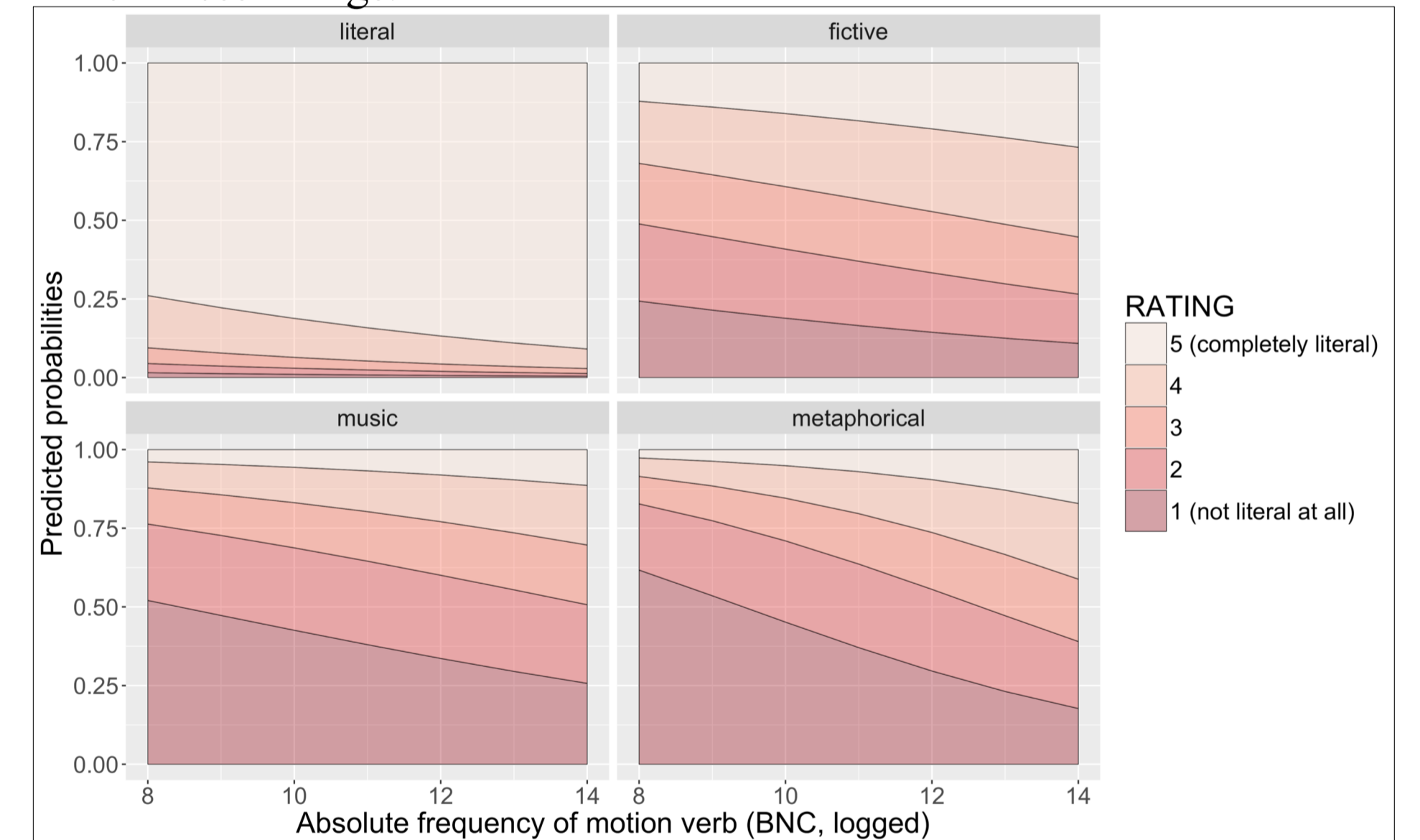
1. Musical motion is perceived as more literal with increasing knowledge of (classical) music

FIGURE 1. Effect of CONDITION and DEGREE OF MUSICAL KNOWLEDGE on the literalness ratings.



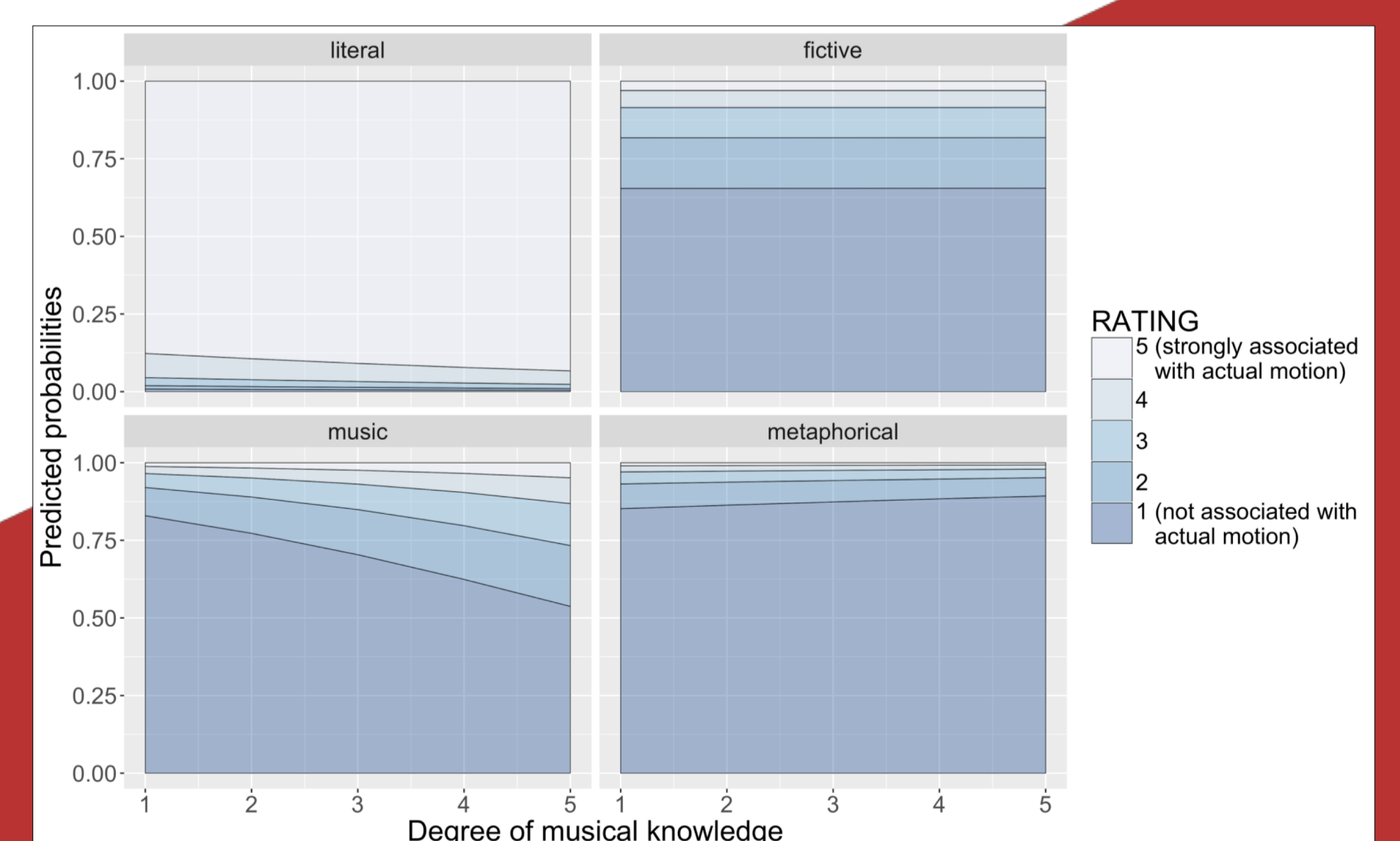
2. Higher frequency verbs are perceived as more literal (particularly in the metaphorical condition)

FIGURE 2. Effect of CONDITION and FREQUENCY on the literalness ratings.



3. With increasing knowledge of (classical) music, musical motion stimuli are perceived as more strongly associated with actual motion.

FIGURE 3. Effect of CONDITION and DEGREE OF MUSICAL KNOWLEDGE on the actual motion ratings.



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