



June, 2023

Joseph Jebelli, PhD, is a London-based neuroscientist and writer. He received his PhD in neuroscience from University College London and was a postdoctoral research fellow at the University of Washington, Seattle. His much-acclaimed first book, *In Pursuit of Memory*, was shortlisted for the Royal Society Science Book Prize.

Joe is currently working on *The Quiet Mind*, which will include a chapter on mind wandering and DES. As part of his background research for this book, he engaged in the seven DES sampling days that are displayed here.

Results

Joe participated in seven days of DES sampling. DES typically discards the first day as being primarily training. Each day nominally considers 6 samples, but sometimes for a variety of reasons he collected only five, and sometimes there was not enough time in the (typically one-or-more-hour expositional interview to discuss all of them. As a result, we nominally could consider $(7 - 1) \times 6 = 36$ samples; we actually considered 31; of those, Joe requested that we skip 8.

As a result, the observations described here are based on expositional interviews of $31 - 8 = 23$ samples across 6 days.

Sensory awareness

Of those 23 samples, 12.5 (54%) involved what DES calls sensory awareness¹—attending to an inner or outer sensory detail for its own sake, not for its instrumental significance. (DES counts as .5 those experiences where we were not sure whether an experience should be considered sensory awareness.) As is often the case with those who have frequent sensory awareness, Joe's sensory awareness were in a variety of modalities: color, temperature, hearing, geometric shape, and so on.

Inner seeing

Eight of the 23 samples (35%) involved inner seeing (AKA seeing an image). These inner experiences were sometimes quite detailed and often illustrated or were related to a project he was currently engaged in. Two of these inner seeings were of words (see below), fairly unusual in DES participants.

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Focus on words

A substantially noteworthy characteristic of Joe's samples involved the experience of words. Seven of his 23 samples (30%) involved some particular focus or consideration of an individual word. For example,

Sample 6.4: [Joe was walking down a very narrow street with his partner. She had just said, "this is charming" (in reference to the street).] At the moment of the beep, the word "charming" was present to Joe—he's thinking about the word "charming." The word was "just there" as part of Joe's directly apprehended experience; it was present without being spoken, heard, or seen. (Perhaps as part of the thinking-about-"charming," or as separate phenomena [we did not clarify this sufficiently]), Joe was agreeing with his partner's utterance about the charming-ness of the street—he's seeing the street and having a positive feeling towards the street.

Sample 3.4: [Joe was still on the phone with the travel agent.] At the moment of the beep, Joe heard the travel agent say "in the bush" [a chunk of a longer sentence/conversation]. At the moment of the beep Joe was hearing only "in the bush," (although Joe understood the larger sentence) with some particular focus on "bush" [Joe was confident that the focus on "bush" was directly apprehended as being particularly salient in some way, but had difficulty in describing how it was apprehended. He possibly innerly saw something bush-y that was undefined, or he possibly had a wordless thought about bushes, but he was unsure what exactly about the bush-y thing was present to him at the moment.]

Sample 3.2: [I was in a bookshop reading the first few pages of *Where the Crawdads Sing*. The beep occurred as I was staring at "rotted duff" (which was part of a longer sentence).] At the moment of the beep, (80%) the words "rotted duff" stuck out to him; he was surprised and confused (about "rotted duff")—somehow, the semantic strangeness (of "rotted duff") was directly present to him [Joe had difficulty in describing his experience, but was confident that his experience was centrally about confusion/strangeness (prompted by "rotted duff")].

Sample 4.6: [Joe was walking down a street and entered a coffee shop. He saw his friend Naz (who works at the coffee shop), who was smiling at Joe and was about to give Joe a fist-bump.] At the moment of the beep, Joe innerly whispered (and heard himself whisper "story." Simultaneously (and separate from the inner speaking/hearing), Joe was trying to make sense of what a story is—this was a musing about what constitutes a story in-general [that is: it was not aimed at whether any particular event is a story or not].

Sample 3.3: [Joe was sitting in his living room, on the phone with a travel agent (“Scott”) planning an upcoming trip to South Africa. Scott had just said, “when would you like to go?”] to which, at the moment of the beep, Joe responded by saying aloud, “Go?” (as if questioning the word itself—an uneasy confusion about what “Go” meant) and innerly seeing “Go” (uppercase G and lowercase o) in front of a plank of wood—the letters in “Go” are big and in black ink, the wood is a very dark brown; Joe innerly sees the grain of the wood (but the grain is not very well-defined) [note that “Go” is in front of (not on) the plank of wood]; and he sees the space around the wood is very dark [even though at the moment of the beep Joe is in a well-lighted room]. This inner seeing is very realistic, and is in front of and to the right (of Joe’s field of vision). The inner seeing is the most prominent thing in his experience. [On retrospection, Joe found this seeing or words floating above a plank very strange, but at the moment of the beep it was a simple matter-of-fact seeing.]

Sample 2.3: [Joe was riding the London Underground.] At the moment of the beep, Joe (70%) saw a small black mark (on a seat across from him). Joe focused on the blackness and shape of the mark [sensory awareness of color and geometry]. At the same time Joe (30%) innerly saw the word “L I G H T” in capital white letters in front of a plank of wood as if illuminated by a spotlight above the black mark [that is: it’s as if “L I G H T” were a sign and the sign was seen alongside or above the mark].

Perhaps surprisingly, even though Joe’s experience included a substantial emphasis on words, his experience did *not* including much inner speaking. The only instance of inner speaking was sample 4.6 (described above) where he innerly whispered the word “story.”

Commentary

There are conversations, comments about inner experience, and comments about descriptive experience sampling interspersed throughout and transcripts. The comments can be found by searching the transcripts for “Comment:” or scanning the transcripts for **green** text.

¹ Hurlburt, R. T., Heavey, C. L., & Bensaheb, A. (2009). Sensory awareness. *Journal of Consciousness Studies*, 16 (10-12), 231-251.