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Blending multimodal inputs (Theme session)

It is widely recognised that using simultaneously various sensory stimuli facilitates cognitive processing of information. Such multimodal processing has a largely positive impact on human cognitive system: it raises our attention, boosts our memory capacity and often engages us emotionally. Thus, in this theme session we undertake to examine the way how multiple sensory inputs participate in the process of meaning construction (semiosis) and how they influence it. In particular, we aim at looking into different forms of multimodal inputs (verbal, semiotic, visual, image schematic, etc.) that are dynamically integrated together to produce a conceptual entity that is both semiotically and semantically complex and which may have various physical representation (e.g. written text, verbal humour, cartoon, poster, talk).

A methodological tool developed in cognitive science that can be used for studying this phenomenon is Conceptual Blending Theory, both in the form proposed by its founding fathers, Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner (2002) and as its extensions elaborated by other cognitive linguists (cf. Brandt and Brandt 2005, Oakley and Coulson 2008, Brandt 2013, also Pérez Sorbino 2014). Whether classic or revised, CBT discusses, first and foremost, the mechanisms of conceptual integration understood here as a basic and simultaneously very dynamic mental operation which allows us to account for meanings of transient nature expressed in the form of the so-called multimodal blends by virtue of tracing and juxtaposing elements of input spaces. It also facilitates the understanding of processes which accompany the conceptualisers whenever they attempt to decode such blends.

In view of the above-mentioned considerations a few pertinent questions should be posed during our theme session:

- a) How do inputs belonging to different perceptual domains interact with one another?
- b) It is possible to assess the contribution of individual inputs to the actual meaning of the multimodal blend?
- c) To what extent does multimodal blending influence the process of meaning construal?

We claim that the proposed theme session will cast a new light on the phenomenon of multimodal conceptual integration not only from the perspective of cognitive studies upon language, but also with reference to other branches of science which deal with the aspects of human cognition.

References

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