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Embodied Intersubjectivity and Cognitive Linguistics

Is linguistic meaning grounded in bodily experiences or social-cultural practices? Traditionally, there has been a tension between those who have argued for (the primacy of) one or the other. Even in attempts to resolve this tension “dialectically” (Zlatev, 1997), embodiment and situatedness were opposed to one another. In cognitive linguistics, the emphasis has usually been on the body, as a physical (biological, neural) phenomenon (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999). More recently, there has been a growing “social turn” in the field (Verhagen, 2005). However, this gives little attention to the lived and living body.

First, I argue that embodiment and intersubjectivity should not be juxtaposed, especially if their understanding and interrelation is informed by phenomenology (Zlatev, 2010). In fact, Merleau-Ponty (1962) combined the two concepts in a single expression, coining the term *intercorporéité* translated as intercorporeality or *embodied intersubjectivity*. This emphasizes the central role of the sentient and active human body for relating to others and jointly constituting a shared meaningful world.

Second, I show the relevance of bodily intersubjectivity for central concepts in cognitive linguistics such as (image) schemas (Zlatev, 2007), (conceptual) metaphors (Zlatev, Blomberg, & Magnusson, 2012), and construal (Möttonen, 2016). At the same time, this casts new light on these phenomena, and suggests rather different analyses from the traditional ones in terms of cross-domain mappings and mental simulation.

References

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