

## SFB/TR 8 Spatial Cognition / IQN Video Conference

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# Grounding meaning in experience: Spatial compatibility effects in word and sentence processing

In language comprehension research many authors nowadays postulate that meaning is grounded in experience. The meaning representations that are utilized in linguistic cognition are considered to be similar in nature to those utilized in non-linguistic cognitive processes, such as perception, imagery or action planning: Comprehenders are assumed to mentally simulate the described objects, situations and events during linguistic processing (e.g., Barsalou, 2008; Fischer & Zwaan, 2008). According to this simulation view of language comprehension, each interaction with the world leaves experiential traces in the brain, and these are then partially re-activated when people later read or hear words referring to the respective entities. If words appear in larger phrases or sentences, the activated traces are presumably combined to yield simulations consistent with the meaning of the larger phrase or sentence (Zwaan & Madden 2005). Spatial attributes are crucial for almost all our daily experiences (Levinson 2003). It is, therefore, not surprising that much of the evidence in favor of the experiential-simulations view of language comprehension comes from studies investigating spatial aspects of experience.

In my talk I will report about an ongoing research project devoted to investigating the process of meaning composition in experiential-simulations during language comprehension. In particular, I will talk about a series of experiments in which implications of the experiential simulations view were investigated with respect to a spatial meaning dimension, namely the typical location of objects in vertical space. The experiments addressed word- as well as sentence processing. The results of these experiments will be discussed with respect to the question what role non-linguistic cognitive processes and representations play during language comprehension.

Freitag, 08. März 2013  
informelle Kaffeerunde: 15:15  
Vortragsbeginn: 15:30

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