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Who's Listening? Embodied Cognitive Science looks at Literary Blends and Metaphors

In this talk, I discuss the theoretical differences and contrasts between Conceptual Blending (aka Conceptual Integration) theory--widely seen as more successful for analyzing literature - -and Conceptual Metaphor Theory. I begin by reaching back to a pivotal moment in Mark Turner's theoretical outlook--his analysis of what he then termed "XYZ metaphors" collected from the history of rhetoric and literature, and later became "XYZ blends." I use this example to profitably contrast the notions of mental space and conceptual domain, vital relations and metaphor mappings, differing metaphors-for-metaphor (mappings vs. projections vs relations vs intuition pumps vs. analogies) and discuss the role human embodiment plays in these theories. I argue that both theories suffer from a myopic over-identification of the analyst's analysis with what must be happening in the original author's creative process, or in the listener/reader process of understanding the artwork. I discuss numerous variations of the go-and-look tests proposed by embodied cognitive scientists and contrast them with various French semiotic and philosophical writings on interpretation, enunciation and literary theory.

Money is a Liquid, or Why Embodied Cognitive Science Isn't Just Brain-Washing

Cognitive linguistics' primary finding--that not just metaphor but language use in general is embodied--has given rise to much broader methodological questions about how we should do linguistic analysis, the role of linguistics vis-a-vis the other cognitive sciences, and the general movement in cognitive science now known as "embodied cognitive science." However, and in all practicality, there are always dangers lurking in any new grand unifying scientific narrative. One all-too-frequent one is that the more physiologically-based studies of embodiment eclipse the more socioculturally-based studies of embodiment, either by asserting some form of a reductionism to the physical body, the brain, or genetics, or at other times by the sheer discrepancies in funding expenditures. Tracing research on language and metaphor through multiple levels of investigation, I show how this is a false dichotomy, and how socio-cultural forces are present even in the fMRI brain scanning room. My examples are drawn from studies of mental rotation, gesture, fMRI imaging, metaphor, developmental studies, research on turn-taking and other communicative practices in dialogic settings. I conclude by showing how all of these coalesce in the performance of the major US bank CEO's as they testified and attempted to "save face" (in a Goffman-esque sense) in front of televised US Congressional hearings into the "causes" of the 2008 fiscal crisis.