

Perspective Taking during Communicative Acts

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Humans are constantly engaged in social interactions, and many of these interactions are supported by language. In this talk I will be presenting a series of studies investigating how language and social cognitive mechanisms interact in order to facilitate communication. I will start by showing that embodied lexical-semantic representations are activated by words in a flexible manner that reflects both linguistic and pragmatic constraints. Secondly, I will show the results of studies that suggest that when pragmatic constraints affect semantic processing, this is supported by interactions between neural language and mentalizing systems. Lastly, I will suggest that language comprehension is affected by assumptions we hold about other co-listeners as well as speakers. One key mechanism supporting perspective taking between co-listeners may be simulation. Together the studies presented in this talk provide insight into how high level language and social cognitive processes work in concert during successful communicative acts.