

ESCOP 2017 Symposium: Symbolic or Grounded? Abstract meaning in mind and brain

Time: Tuesday, 5.9.2017, 14:30 – 19:15 h

Location: Universität Potsdam, Campus III – Griebnitzsee, Building 6 (Lecture hall building), August-Bebel-Straße 89, 14482 Potsdam

Is it enough to construe conceptual processes in terms of abstract symbolic mechanisms or is it necessary to link up symbols with information about objects and actions? If both symbolic and grounded information contribute to semantics, how is their emergence and interplay best explained? Can abstract information be extracted from concrete experience, and, if so, based on which mechanisms? What can mathematical models of cognition and neural function contribute to the explanation of concepts and meaning? And what is the role of cognitive and brain research in evaluating neurocognitive models at different stages? Are there recent breakthroughs in the understanding of abstract meaning processing as it occurs, for example, when subjects comprehend abstract words or negated sentences? This symposium will bring together expert theorists and experimentalists in the field of semantic and conceptual processing in order to address these questions and potentially develop new explanations for the unique human faculty to creatively use abstract symbols, with special emphasis on their biological basis in the interplay between neurocognitive systems for action, perception and cognition.

SYMPOSIUM SCHEDULE

Session 1, 14:30 – 16:20 h

Anna Borghi, Rome: Grounding of abstract words in sensorimotor, linguistic and social experience

Guy Dove, Louisville: Rethinking embodiment: Abstract concepts and the flexible mind

Martin Fischer, Potsdam: Why numbers are abstract concepts

Gabriella Vigliocco, Armand Rotaru, Alessandro Lenci, Marta Ponari, Courtenay Norbury, London/Pisa/Kent: Learning concrete and abstract semantics: Insights from developmental and simulated language disorders.

Session 2, 16:34 – 18:15 h

Art Glenberg, Phoenix/Tempe: Individual differences reveal the embodied nature of language comprehension

Michael A. Arbib, Los Angeles, San Diego: What sort of brain could build on the understanding that a cup is like a doughnut to develop a category-theoretic approach to program semantics?

Friedemann Pulvermüller, Berlin: Concrete mechanisms for abstract meaning

General Discussion (questions from the audience welcome!)