

Invited Lecture

Dennis: Hot language: The neurolinguistics of emotions, mental states, and affective rhetoric

Hot language is language with body. Language is an expression, not only of our body states, but also of our embodiment of the world. The term 'language with body' captures two ideas: that language is both a direct expression and a cognitively modulated expression of internal body states, including those concerned with emotion; and that language is an embodied representation of a constructed world that includes the motivations and emotions of its inhabitants.

Our prevailing view of language has long been dominated by what Lakoff termed the *container metaphor*. Essentially, the idea is that we have containers of information in our heads and language is a tool for moving my container of information to your head, and vice versa. Such information-transfer metaphors have fostered a view of language as a form of detached mental decoding, with emotion being an add-on. I propose that *emotion is central to language*. Using and understanding language involves not passive, detached code breaking, but rather the *active, affective construction* of meaning. Further, the embodied representations of language provide, not only a means for expressing the emotions we feel, but also mechanisms for a top-down modulation of the expression of emotions according to who can be shown which emotions and in which situations.

In this lecture, we will consider some topics related to hot language and its disorders. These include the semantics of feelings (how we use and understand words for emotional states); the language of desire (mental state verbs, a small but important subset of vocabulary, such as *want, think, know, believe, wish, hope, remember, forget, and pretend*); mindful language (understanding other minds through intentionality and recursive intentionality); cognitive modulation of emotional expression and social display rules for emotions; slings and arrows (rhetorical contexts for blame and praise, such as those involved in expressing and understanding sarcasm and empathy); and the language of embodiment (language as situated action and embodied motivational enrichment).