

Emblems between thought and language

Metaphoric thinking with body movement. A case study of the Italian “mano a borsa” and the German “Ätsche Bätsche” Gestures.

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Motivation

This poster gives an overview of how Emblems (Ekman & Friesen, 1972) work between cultures. Assuming the idea that Emblems are a kind of metaphorical embodied thinking, they are cultural embedded, and act as a bridge between language and thought (McNeill, 2005), we could say that emblems are a sort of embodied experience which activates our sensorimotor inferential structure in order to elicit the underlining metaphorical meaning but they are also in its gestalt the result of a cultural ritualization. From this point a view emblems are socially and culturally coded and shared. But how is their relationship with the spoken language? Are they strictly depended from the culture and the language in which they are born? Therefore the **hypothesis** is that gestures are learned in a specific culture but, as a result of a conceptualization are not strictly part of this culture. Namely, they are culture specific but not culture dependent.

Empirical Study and Results

In order to verify the hypothesis an empirical study was carried out in Italy and in Germany. Exploring the emblems of Italians living in Germany and Germans living in Italy we could observe that the transfer of culture specific emblems took place. This confirmed that emblems are not dependent on language but they are visible metaphors conveying a concept. After analyzing the data we could do these assertions:

- Gestures transfer across the cultures
- Cultural integration and cultural identification
- Gestures adaption and conservation
- Extension of gestures repertoire

Emblems and their Usage



link to language -> Culture

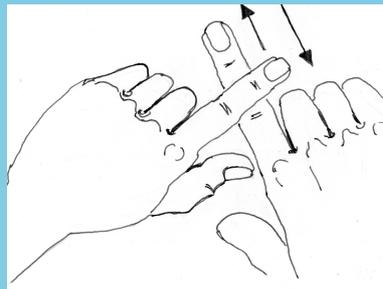
link to brain -> Conceptualization (embodied Metaphor)



Italian mano a borsa or tulip hand (Poggi, 1997)

Meaning: “What do you want/mean?”

Usage: to show the addressee that you need more explanation or that you want he to repeat.



German Ätsche Bätsche or Schadenfreude (Posner et al., in preparation)

Meaning: “you deserve this”

Usage: to demonstrate you malicious joy.

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