

Dr. Mike Masson

Compelling Actions

The contribution of mental simulation to language comprehension is a fundamental principle of the embodied account of cognition, but it remains a somewhat controversial idea. One approach to resolving this controversy is to understand the nature of action representations that are evoked by particular types of action intention. We assessed the following situations in which observers were presented an imperative sentence describing an action applied to a manipulable object: (a) intending to perform the described action, (b) comprehending the sentence without performing the action, (c) holding the described action intention in working memory for later execution, and (d) having just completed an action. Each of these situations evokes a different constellation of action representations. These findings help us to sharpen the idea of what mental simulation might mean for language comprehension.