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Authors

Xue, Yuyan

Williams, John

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Training-Induced Linguistic Relativity and Embodied Processing

Yuyan Xue

Cambridge University, Cambridge, United Kingdom

John Williams

University of Cambridge, Cambridge, United Kingdom

Abstract

Current theories suggest that linguistic relativity and language embodiment are two sides of the same coin and that language embodiment and “linguistic shortcut” are two alternative types of semantic processing. It can therefore be deduced that deep embodied simulation of linguistic labels may facilitate the corresponding linguistic relativity effect more than shallow linguistic-shortcut processing does. However, this theoretical deduction has not been tested empirically. Here, participants used two newly-trained labels of verb (in)transitivity in sentence contexts that were either simulated in a deep, embodied manner (visual imagery group) or processed via shallow linguistic-shortcut (linguistic associate group). Subsequently, the former group were more likely to categorize motion events based on motion transitivity than the latter group. We thus expanded the moderators of linguistic relativity to the types of semantic access. The findings are discussed in light of the relativist, the universalist, and the sociocultural view on language-cognition relationship.