

Stance-stacking in language and multimodal communication

ICLC 15 Theme Session

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Since the seminal work by DuBois, the concept of ‘stance’ has become an important term in a semanticist’s toolkit. While DuBois (2007) uses it in general terms, further work has proposed more specific types and expanded the enquiry into a range of linguistic phenomena. Stance thus now refers to a range of expressions, in language (verbs, adjectives, negation, constructions, etc.) and in multimodal and embodied communication (gesture, signed languages, eye-gaze, etc.). Broadly speaking, stance expressions align the speaker with a situation in evaluative, epistemic, or affective terms.

It has also been noticed that it is common for stance to appear in configurations which include multiple and hierarchically ordered expressions of stance. To refer to such structured patterns, Dancygier (2012) has introduced the term “stance-stacking” – a constructional phenomenon wherein multiple expressions of stance create a constructional cluster (for example, combining stance verbs with negation yields new, ‘stacked’, constructional effects). Linguistic constructions (morphological or sentential) thus often specialize in stance-stacking. Moreover, recent work on multimodality in interaction, gesture, and signed languages has also shown that embodied means of expression participate in complex construals involving multiple stances. Based on the general phenomenon of ‘body partitioning’ (Dudis 2004), studies have shown the embodied grounding of the need to express and organize multiple stances.

The session gathers presentations looking at various instances and effects of stance-stacking – for example, in constructions, signed language use, co-speech gesture, eye-gaze, grammar (especially of indigenous languages), internet memes, and other areas of communication. Such an overview should clarify the nature of stance as such, but also the need for multiple stances, and the conceptualizations underlying complex stance structures. Also, and perhaps more importantly, the studies to be presented will shed more light on the nature of multimodal constructions and the ways in which embodied, visual, and linguistic communicative modalities interact to yield complex hierarchical structures of meaning. The case studies to be presented will prompt a renewed consideration of the ‘division of semantic labor’ between multiple communicative modalities and refine the understanding of the concept of ‘multimodal constructions’.

References

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