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Annalisa **Baicchi**
University of Pavia

Emotions travelling across cultures. Embodied grounding of English vis-à-vis Italian prepositional phrases

Emotions are culture-related and their verbal expression differs across cultures, being some emotions more salient, or ‘hypercognized’, in one culture and underplayed, or ‘hypocognized’, in another. However, in any culture emotions serve a twofold communicative function: within the brain as a cognitive means to bypass complex inferences, and externally as a way of interacting with other people. While the former is commonly considered the field of psychology and philosophy, the latter is generally viewed as the field of sociology and anthropology. The cognitivist turn in linguistics has contributed massively to the study of emotions by establishing a fruitful research dialogue with neighbouring disciplines and by bridging between the two above-mentioned fields (Niemeier & Dirven 1997; Athanasiadou & Tabakowska 1998; Foolen et al. 2012).

This paper addresses emotive meaning from the perspective of Cognitive Semantics (Talmy 2000) and the cognitively-oriented strand of Construction Grammar (Goldberg 1995, 2006) and, dipping *inter alios* on Dirven (1997) and Radden (1997) pioneering works on the English language, focuses on the ‘Adj + PP’ construction in the English-Italian language pair. The collocational patterns of emotive adjectives, specifically adjectives of emotional reaction (*angry, ashamed, surprised, jealous, pleased, etc.*), plus prepositions will be analysed with a view to identifying the image schemas that motivate the ‘Adj + PP’ construction in the two languages. Contrastive analysis of corpus data will enable us to study how emotions are cognized in the two cultures, to pin down commonalities and differences in the embodied schemas evoked by the different collocational semantics, and to accommodate emotions along a cline of salience that we hypothesize is culturally-determined. Recent empirical investigation in Embodied Semantics has in fact not only provided evidence that, during language comprehension, there is a re-enactment of the same neural activation patterns as the one occurring when experiencing the cognitive or emotive event (Barsalou 2008; Gallese 2008), but it has also shown that cognition is situated in the cultural context (Smith & Semin 2007).

References

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