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EMBODIED COGNITION AND LANGUAGE COMPREHENSION: MOTOR CHAINS AND SOCIAL ASPECTS

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According to the neural exploitation hypothesis (Gallese, 2008; see also Glenberg, 2008) the linguistic system re-uses the structures and the organization characterizing the motor system. It follows that language comprehension is grounded in the perception, action and emotional systems. I will focus on two aspects which characterize action organization and the relationship between words and action. A major aspect of action organization is its goal derived structure and its hierarchical structuring in motor chains (Fogassi et al., 2005). I will discuss recent evidence on language comprehension showing that language shares with action the goal-directed structure and the motor chain organization. In addition, I will present results showing that the social context in which words are embedded influences the way in which these aspects are encoded. I will conclude that language re-uses and reflects action characteristics, but also modulates and constrains them.