



Figurative Language Across Cultures

Blending out of the Background: Collaborative meaning construction in children's play

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An approach to young children's symbolic play in terms of the theory of conceptual blending is presented, with an analysis of an episode of sociodramatic play highlighting the role of cultural material objects as crucial meaning-bearing elements in the blend. The focus in blending theory on the dynamics of meaning construction makes it a productive tool for analyzing cognition and communication in a developmental perspective. However, blending theory has largely preserved the traditionally mentalist and individualist assumptions of classical cognitive science. In this presentation, I argue for an extension of the range of both theory and data, to encompass the socially collaborative, culturally and materially grounded nature of the human mind. From a developmental perspective, conceptual blending can be viewed as a microgenetic process, in which not only cognitive strategies, but social roles, relationships and identities are negotiated by participants in social and communicative interactions.

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