Lecture Series on "Human Cognition and Mutimodality"

Lecture 1:

Lexical Meaning in Cognitive Linguistics: From Classical Semantics to Conceptual Metaphor to Conceptual Blending

5.11 Monday 18:00–19:40 G23

In this talk I will deal with an important problem in linguistic semantics: the acquisition and construction of (abstract) concepts. I will first present some classic approaches to concept formation (atomistic, probabilistic, and exemplar) and especially their application in linguistics by structuralist and generativist schools, which notoriously ended in the dispute between Noam Chomsky and the first generation of his doctoral students around 1970, today informally known as *The Linguistics Wars*. In the main part I will discuss how some of the participants in this dispute found a good solution to the problem of conceptualization by focusing on metaphor as an elementary cognitive process. This resulted in at least two today standard paradigms in cognitive linguistics – conceptual metaphor and conceptual blending theories. In the end I will present the basic methodological apparatus of the two theories and consider their applicability to domains as diverse as the conceptualization of time, numbers, or music.

Lecture 2:

Conceptual Blending and Multimodal Meaning Construction: How Musical Style Interferes with the Interpretation of Visual and Linguistic Content

6.11 Tuesday 12:00–13:40 B2.23, or 7.11 Wednesday 10:00–11:40 G32

In this talk I discuss the many ways in which music can "mean" and especially how this meaning blends with information from the visual and linguistic modalities (as in opera, films, cartoons, or commercials) to create emergent, often satirical effects. In the first segment, I will analyze frequent instances of musical meaning found in theoretical treatises, pieces of music criticism, but also experimental studies, arguing that they can be classified in at least six hierarchical levels, as in the following actual descriptions of a Wagner piece in an experiment: physiological ("tense music"), image schematic ("forces clashing"), connotational ("dramatic sentiments"), conceptual ("a battle at sea"), elaborated cultural ("sounds like gods coming down from Olympus") and individual ("reminds me of elementary school"). In the central part, I will focus on the "elaborated cultural level", showing how music can often be deliberately manipulated to produce a desired effect with the film audience, in specific instances of conceptual blending. Examples will include the Darth Vader theme from Star Wars and Simon and Garfunkel's El Condor Pasa satirized in war-time propaganda videos; music from Conan the Barbarian (ab)used for the purposes of fierce political struggle in election campaigns; and the use of music from previous films in new films to induce narrative and meta-narrative associations (with two examples from the James Bond franchise).