

Language, culture and cognition: Frames of spatial reference and why we need ontologies of space

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One of the many results of the "Space" research project conducted at the MPI for Psycholinguistics is that there are three "Frames of spatial Reference" (FoRs), the relative, the intrinsic and the absolute FoR. Cross-linguistic research showed that speakers who prefer one FoR in verbal spatial references rely on a comparable coding system for memorizing spatial configurations and for making inferences with respect to these spatial configurations in non-verbal problem solving. Moreover, research results also revealed that in some languages these verbal FoRs also influence gestural behavior. These results document the close interrelationship between language, culture and cognition in the domain "Space". The proper description of these interrelationships in the spatial domain requires language and culture specific ontologies.