

The Language of Vision

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Many have suggested that modules of the brain communicate in a language-like format. I will apply this proposal to vision and address several issues. Who is talking? Who is listening? Is there a grammar? How would you know? In a simple first pass, we see, among other things, a striking difference of processing of visual "nouns" and visual "verbs". The difference rests on the level of visual attention required to construct the descriptions for these two categories. The possibility of a visual language also raises the question of the acquisition of its grammar from the visual environment. Is there anything to be gained by interpreting visual function in terms of a language? One possible benefit is that this language is a window on the underlying code of mental function. We may never have a full theory of the mind but we may have a theory of the mind's code and this is as central to the neurosciences as DNA is to biology.

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