Action as starting point: insights of action representations in gesture and sign

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Iconicity, understood as the direct relationship between form and meaning, has been the focus of attention of disciplines interested in languages learning, processing, and evolution. In a series of collaborative experiments, we have explored if and how iconicity influences these processes in the manual-visual modality, namely, the sign languages of deaf communities and in silent gesture. Using a range of behavioural and electrophysiological methodologies, we have found that iconic forms that represent bodily actions are consistently favoured throughout. In this talk I will argue that action representations are an important type of iconicity because they resemble our motor schemas and therefore could be a default strategy to facilitate language learning, processing, and evolution.