

PhD Dissertation

# Epidemiology of Representations: An Empirical Approach

—original title may change—

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## **Chapter 1**

# **Introduction**



## **Chapter 2**

# **Brains Copy Paste**





## **Chapter 3**

### **Gistr**



# Chapter 4

## Discussion

### 4.1 Introduction

### 4.2 Empirical epidemiology of linguistic representations

#### 4.2.1 Synthesis of results

path taken

- initial question: empirical attractors in language
- approaches taken: MT, Gistr
- trade-offs in the process: simplification, engineering, no context
- results: consistent with convergence, detailed model providing first bridge between lower and higher levels

#### 4.2.2 Challenges

what limits progress, from examples blending into theory

- no grip on meaning
- examples of meaning change in Gistr
- example on twitter
- under-specified convergence problem
- divides into: content problem, context problem, dynamics problem

### 4.3 No theory of content

The problems of meaning

- no clear definition of meaning (beyond word meaning)
- varies with history, situation, attention

- many levels
- obviously comes from continuous interactions, but bears value, and the value can also be recognised and repeated

### 4.3.1 Contenders

expose the theoretical problem, and contenders: RT/Millikan and enactivism

- inside the representational approach, the problem is 1) the content of representations (Millikan), 2) how communication infers the content (RT)
- inside enactivism, you start with some content, but you need a way to arrive to structure communication and fleshing out the details

### 4.3.2 Outside the linguistic domain

show it's not limited to linguistics (Ingold critique)

- three layers
- three degrees of critique, relating to NCT/DST

## 4.4 Baby and bathwater: From theory to empirical study

ways to move forward

- further determine if they compete for the exact same space
- it's a productive contradiction to build from (without falling into scholasticism), which can inspire experiments

## **Chapter 5**

## **Conclusion**



## **Chapter 6**

## **References**