

## **Some Reflections on the Scientific Study of Spatial Construals**

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Humans, like other animals, live and navigate in space with impressive efficiency. Beyond these perceptual and motoric abilities, humans also think about and conceptualize space and spatial relations using cognitive resources for abstraction and symbolic reference. These fundamental conceptualizations, mediated culturally and linguistically, manifest as stable spatial construals that exhibit some basic universal properties, but that also present intriguing variations across cultures. Drawing on our research experience among the Aymara of the Andes, the Yupno of Papua New Guinea, and speakers of endangered languages from the Western Ryukyu islands, I will discuss how these phenomena can be studied scientifically in the lab and in the field via the integration of linguistic and socio-historical analyses with psycholinguistic experiments and studies of speech-gesture co-production.