



Can the Dilemma in the Definition of Pain be Explained by Theories of Embodied Cognition?

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Dear Editor,

In general, pain is recognized as an important public health problem that causes great economic and social burden. The definition of pain that researchers from many different disciplines can agree on has been proposed by IASP (International Association for the Study of Pain). According to the IASP definition, last updated in 2020, pain is defined as "An unpleasant sensory and emotional experience associated with, or resembling that associated with, actual or potential tissue damage." (1,2).

It is understood that the definition has two different dimensions; the subjective dimension with a 1st person epistemology and the objective dimension with a 3rd person epistemology. According to the dominant scientific paradigm, all phenomena in nature are tried to be defined according to objective 3rd person epistemology. Accordingly, the experience of pain is caused by the neuronal processing of objective tissue damage processes by objective central system structures. However, when pain is considered from a 1st person perspective, it is seen that the qualitative features of the experience are different from the features contained in tissue damage processes. The IASP definition attempts to overcome this difficulty by linking the qualities of subjective experience from a 1st person epistemology with objective tissue damage processes from a 3rd person epistemology. This endeavor seems to originate from the mind-body dualism that is frequently discussed in the field of philosophy of mind inherited from the past (3,4).

It can be argued that theories of embodied cognition, which have recently increased in recent studies, can be used to find a

solution to this dilemma. Basically, according to classical computational theories, mental processes are formed by processing the information received through internal and external perception through the processing of representations created by neuronal processes. According to embodied cognition theories, mental processes are formed as a result of the interaction of the nervous system with the body, environment and social processes (5).

It can be argued that explaining the experience of pain with embodied cognition theories may be more useful in explaining the difficulties brought by dualistic approaches arising from classical computational theories.

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