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Sommario/riassunto

The purpose of this book is to illustrate the relevance to linguistics today of Whitehead's philosophy of organism. Although largely ignored by linguists, Whitehead has in fact much to say as regards the cognitive processes underpinning language pattern. His theory of symbolism conceives of language as the 'systematization of expression', and relates meaning to feeling (in the broadest sense). The Whiteheadian perspective allows a synthesis of the psychological and the social approaches to language that does not fall into one or another fashionable form of reductionism. The volume represents a first application of Whitehead's thinking to a broad range of linguistic phenomena, ranging from speech act theory to the production and comprehension of texts, from language acquisition to historical change and the evolution of language. It is argued that Whitehead's holistic philosophy is uniquely suited to the view of language as an emergent phenomenon - regardless of whether one's approach to cognition is via the 'nativist' or the 'functionalist' route.
