

Anna Jelec jelec@amu.edu.pl

Małgorzata Fabiszak fagosia@wa.amu.edu.pl

Faculty of English, Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań

They say - I say. Shrugs, head tilts and palm up open hand gestures as markers of uncertainty in the context of collective memory.

Collective memory, a notion introduced by Halbwachs (English transl. 1980), proposes that there is a shared pool of knowledge and information in the memories of members of a given social group. Investigations of collective memory are by their nature interdisciplinary, and take place “at the meeting-point between history, sociology and psychology” (Kalinowska 2012:426). The present study is part of a broader research project on collective memory “Collective memory, collective identity and urban landscape”, and takes a multimodal approach to investigate the collective memory of four generations of Polish inhabitants of Poznań, focusing on epistemic gestural markers of doubt and uncertainty such as shoulder shrugs, lateral head tilts and palms up open hand (PUOH) gestures. Shoulder shrugs and head tilts are correlated with expressions of (1) uncertainty; (2) obviousness; (3) general knowledge (4) shared knowledge, (5) self-explanatory, (7) logical/chronological necessity (Debras and Cienki 2012), whereas PUOH are frequently used to express the fact of not knowing (Müller 2004).

We hypothesized that the number of such markers will be higher in discourse contexts related to some ethnicities (e.g. Jewish) than others (German, Russian/Soviet and Polish) to reflect disagreement and fractures in collective memory on some topics as opposed to others. In order to investigate the hypothesis we have conducted quantitative and qualitative analyses of the data. The material for analysis was 16 semi-structured ethnographic interviews that have been cut, transcribed and annotated using ELAN (Wittenburg et.al). While preliminary analyses roughly confirm our hypothesis, in the course of the study we have encountered a number of dilemmas regarding the use of interview data for quantitative gestural analysis, including the choice of unit of analysis, classification of movement as meaningful vs. reflexive and verbal referent for gesture. In this talk we are going to present the results of our study and elaborate on the methodological choices made in the course of the analysis and how these choices may influence the results.

References:

Debras, C., and Cienki, A. 2012. Some Uses of Head Tilts and Shoulder Shrugs during Human Interaction, and Their Relation to Stancetaking (pp. 932–937). Presented at the 2012 International Conference on Privacy, Security, Risk and Trust (PASSAT), IEEE.

Halbwachs, Maurice. 1980. *The collective memory*. New York, Harper & Row Colophon Books

Kalinowska, M. 2012. Monuments of Memory. Defensive mechanisms of collective psyche and their manifestation in the memorialization process, *Journal of Analytical Psychology*, 57:425-444.

Müller, C. 2004. Forms and uses of the palm up open hand. In C. Müller & R. Posner (Eds.) *The Semantics and Pragmatics of Everyday Gestures. Proceedings of the Berlin Conference, April 1998*. Berlin: Weidler, pp. 233-256.

Wittenburg, P., Brugman, H., Russel, A., Klassmann, A., Sloetjes, H. (2006). ELAN: a Professional Framework for Multimodality Research. In: *Proceedings of LREC 2006, Fifth International Conference on Language Resources and Evaluation*.