



Gesture and bilingualism in interaction: Research proposal

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Previous research has repeatedly pointed to a decreased sensitivity to metaphoric meanings presented in the non-native (L2) relative to the native tongue (L1; Cieślicka 2010; Mashal et al. 2015; Jankowiak et al. 2017). Yet, little attention has been devoted to examining how L2 users process metaphoric meanings expressed bimodally (e.g., gestures with a BAD IS DOWN generic metaphor and its linguistic equivalent). To this end, the present study aims to investigate how bilingual speakers process sentences containing metaphorical linguistic expressions for GOOD IS UP and BAD IS DOWN generic metaphor (cf. Lakoff and Johnson 1980, Santana and Vega 2010, Walker and Cooperrider 2016) in their L1 and L2.

The first part of the project includes a series of normative tests that have been conducted on the sentences as well as the short films, in which the sentences were accompanied by gestures. First, the sentences were normed in terms of their level of metaphoricity on native speakers of Polish (Polish stimuli), native speakers of English (English stimuli), and Polish L2 users of English (English stimuli). Second, the films were tested on whether the produced gesture is congruent with the accompanying sentence/the accompanying generic orientational metaphor.

The experiment proper will include a reaction time measurement, and will be conducted on highly proficient unbalanced Polish (L1) – English (L2) bilingual speakers. Participants will perform a congruency decision task in response to congruent and incongruent speech-gesture pairings containing either GOOD IS UP or BAD IS DOWN in their native and non-native tongue.

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