

Language and gesture: Introduction to gesture studies.

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Gesture studies are a relatively young field of cognitive studies, yet one that has grown exponentially over the last several years. Linguistic conferences begin to include panels on gesture and multimodal communication, and cognitive science embraces evidence from gesture research on par with that from other empirical studies. This workshop is going to try and explain the reasons behind the growing influence of gesture studies in linguistic research; in other words, it aims to show that language and gesture can often be seen as two sides of the same coin.

It is almost impossible for people to talk without gesturing (Goldin-Meadow 2005), and nearly impossible to define gesture without some reference to language. When gesture is produced spontaneously alongside speech, the two form an integrated system. In this way, both speech and gesture are manifestations of the same set of cognitive processes. Because they are not constrained like language, gestures provide a window onto the thought processes of the speaker/gesturer. Alongside language data, gesture provides the most important source of evidence for metaphorical thinking (Cienki 2008; Müller 2008; Langacker 2008).

It is clear that the study of gesture can make a number of important contributions to linguistic and cognitive research. The workshop will demonstrate the potential of gesture studies as a source of data regarding various conceptual phenomena, including – but not limited to – metaphor, metonymy, blending and foregrounding. We will present a number of examples from a variety of empirical studies, focusing on gestures with a varying degree of connection to spoken language. We will also introduce some gesture typologies with real-life examples of gesture, as well as discuss gestures in different disabilities.

References:

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- Langacker, Ronald W. 2008. 'Metaphoric gesture and cognitive linguistics', in: Alan J. Cienki and Cornelia Müller (eds.), *Metaphor and gesture*. Amsterdam, the Netherlands: John Benjamins Publishing, 249–251.
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