

STANCE-TAKING AND GESTURE

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The effectiveness of communication depends to a large degree on how successfully speakers coordinate their positions in the ongoing talk, share their experiences, and build a single intersubjective space (Buhler 1990; Harris 1996; Langacker 2008; Tomasello 2008; Wittgenstein 1953; Zlatev & Racine 1999). The ways in which interlocutors verbally take positions and show their stance(s) towards the ideas being discussed has been described in some detail in relation to linguistic phenomena—mainly pronouns, discourse markers and some syntactic constructions (Benveniste 1957; Biber & Finegan 1989; DuBois 2007; Jaffe et al. 2009; Verhagen 2007, 2008; Zlatev et al. 2008). However, the coordination of points of view in dialogue from a multimodal (verbal-gestural) perspective is still novel in many respects (Grishina 2017; Iriskhanova et al. 2021; Kendon 2004; Nikolaeva 2018; see Andries et al. 2023 for a systematic literature review).

By formulating and exchanging subjective viewpoints, communicators engage in stance-taking. This involves indicating the degree of certainty concerning entities, events, and their properties (epistemic positioning); the importance and prominence of information (positioning in relation to relevance); attitudes, including emotional attitudes, toward referents (evaluative positioning) (Biber & Finegan 1989); and explicit reference to the interlocutors' viewpoints, including (dis)agreement, viewpoint blending, and perspective taking (intersubjective positioning) (DuBois 2007; Verhagen 2007). The theme session will thus consider stance-taking in a broad sense.

Special attention will be given to the role of what have come to be known as 'recurrent gestures' in a given culture (e.g. Bressemer & Müller 2014). The limited literature we have on recurrent gestures suggests that they are the default gestures that speakers of a given language/culture often resort to in everyday conversation and interaction when expressing their attitudes and stances.

The session will consider both how a given stance can have different embodied manifestations, and in turn, how particular gestures often relate to more than one stance. The schematic nature of the forms and relatively underspecified functions of speakers' gestures allows them to pair with different verbal expressions—sometimes to nuance a verbal expression of stance, and sometimes to take the lead and serve as the more salient expression of stance. We see that stance-taking does not entail a simple one-to-one pairing of verbal and gestural expressions, but involves a complex, multi-layered system of possibilities which play out in various ways, depending on the speakers' affect, knowledge (shared or not), intentions, and contextual factors.