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The post-stroke hold: Speech-accompanying gestures and one of their phases

Speech-accompanying gestures have to be distinguished from sign languages. While sign languages are real languages, gestures do simply accompany and add information to spoken languages. This presentation looks at some formal and functional aspects of speech-accompanying gestures.

There are four different gesture types: iconic gestures, deictic gestures, discourse gestures and beats which can be realized in different ways like pointing, shaping, or grasping.

Like in language, there are phrases in gestures. One of those gesture phrases can be divided into up to five phases. The most important gesture phase, the *stroke*, conveys the gestures meaning. The phases *preparation* and *retraction* have the function of raising and lowering the hands to and from their *stroke* position. The *pre-* and *post-stroke holds* have generally been considered an optional hesitating before and after the *stroke* with no semantic meaning of their own.

However, more recent studies like Kendon (2004) and Harrison (2010) suggest that the gesture phase *post-stroke hold* is not merely a performance phenomenon, but rather that it assigns some kind of scope to the meaning conveyed by the *stroke*. This idea of scope assignment as a function of the *post-stroke hold* has already been touched in minor works like Klerke (2014) using the Speech and Gesture Alignment Corpus of the University of Bielefeld.

References:

Harrison, Simon (2010): *Evidence for node and scope of negation on coverbal gesture.* In: Gesture 10: 1, 29-51.

Kendon, Adam (2004): *Gesture. Visible action as utterance.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Klerke, Rebecca (2014): Die Bedeutung von redebegleitenden Gesten in der Topik- und Kommentar-Gliederung von gesprochener Sprache. Seminar paper, University of Stuttgart.

The Speech and Gesture Alignment Corpus SaGA of the University of Bielefeld's SFB 673: http://www.sfb673.org/projects/B1