

## The non-at-issue status of speech-accompanying gestures

In my talk, I will relate the study of speech-accompanying gestures (e.g. McNeill 1992, Kendon 2004) to discussions about ‘multidimensional meanings’ (e.g. Potts 2005, 2012) and argue that by default, gesture meaning enters into composition as non-at-issue material, and that demonstratives are semantically vacuous and only function as ‘dimension shifters’ from the non-at-issue to the at-issue dimension. I will furthermore sketch a formal analysis for the contribution of gestures and speculate on the question what makes gesture information non-at-issue by default.

Interestingly, the interaction of gesture and speech shows striking parallels to verbal phrases with so-called ‘multidimensional meanings’ (see Potts 2005), a particularly controversially debated topic in current linguistic research. It builds on the idea that information transmission is not uniform, but there is usually one part that is ‘at issue’ and another part that is ‘not at issue’. Research on verbal language has focused on two core phenomena for the investigation of second dimension meaning contributions, namely appositives as the underlined phrase in

(1) *Paul, a famous horse riding instructor, called yesterday*

on the one side, and expressives, such as the adjective *damn* or nouns like *cur*, on the other. These expressions and constructions are argued to bring in information that is not at issue at the time of utterance, but sneaked in as ‘secondary’ information, which the speaker wants to be understood as non-negotiable.

It can be argued that this division is also at work when it comes to multimodal phenomena: emblematic gestures, culturally determined conventionalized gestures, like e.g. the ‘thumbs down’ sign, being deeply emotional in nature and often expressing some negative attitude, can be seen as the gestural counterpart of expressives, while iconic (and possibly also pointing) gestures parallel appositives and contribute clearly truth-conditional meanings.

I will argue for the hypothesis that the meaning contribution of speech-accompanying gestures (emblematic, iconic and pointing gestures alike) is not ‘at issue’ in the above sense. With respect to the meaning composition with verbal at-issue meaning, it is predicted to behave exactly like verbal non-at-issue meaning.

There are at least three ways to interpret this hypothesis. The fact that gesture material is not at issue could be a property that is (a) bound to the nature of gesture as such, (b) structural and due to the speech-accompanying nature of the gestures at hand, or (c) resulting from the iconic nature of the gestures under consideration. All three possibilities will be briefly followed up in my talk.