

Attributive vs. referential readings: a closer look at the interplay of gesture and speech

In my talk, I will argue that speech-accompanying gestures come with their own semantics that enters into composition. By default, gesture meaning is treated as non-at-issue material. Demonstratives act as ‘dimension shifters’ that shift material from the non-at-issue to the at-issue dimension. Apart from this function, demonstratives are semantically vacuous.

The („lexical“) semantics of a gesture is taken to be a rigid concept. This treatment of a gesture plus the shifting function of a temporally aligned demonstrative finally *derives* Kaplan’s analysis of demonstratives + pointing gesture. In my approach, however, it is not the demonstrative expression that is responsible for the rigid interpretation, but the gesture itself.

I will argue that the formal treatment of (pointing) gestures and their interplay with speech finally also accounts for Kripke’s distinction between speaker’s referent and semantic referent and that it also has the potential to further our understanding of the attributive/referential distinction (Donellan 1966) by taking a fresh look on this longstanding problem from the gesture side.