

120. The family of Away gestures: Negation, refusal, and negative assessment

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Abstract

Departing from an overview of research on gesture families and, in particular, on “gestures of negation” (Kendon 2004), the chapter describes “the family of Away gestures” along with their structural motivations: shared formational features, shared motivations, and shared semantic themes. Building upon Kendon’s analysis of two gesture families, the Open Hand Supine (OHS) family and the Open Hand Prone (OHP) family, we present a systematized reconstruction of a structural island of interrelated gestures: the Away family. The family consists of four recurrent gestures (including Kendon’s Open Hand Prone family), which share one formational or kinesic feature “a (mostly straight) movement away from the body” and a motivation: The family is semantically based on a similar effect of different kinds of manual actions, which serve to clear the body space from unwanted objects. The chapter presents an account of how an action scheme may selectively be used to motivate gestural meaning. It also shows how such an action scheme may provide a semantic motivation for a structural island within the gestural mode of expression that is visible in both forms and functions of the gestures. In doing so, suggestions for embodied roots of negation, refusal, and negative assessments are made and a further pathway to the study of how gestures may evolve to signs within signed languages is outlined.

1. Gesture families: A concept and its research

In her study of French gestures, Calbris (1990) suggests that investigating form variants of a gesture may not only provide new insights into the relationship between the gestures’ form, meaning, and motivation but more importantly may “uncover a network of physico-semantic components whose points of intersection seem to determine the [semantic] nuances” (Calbris 1990: 134). Over the past years, a range of studies has addressed the question of whether variants of form go along with differences in form, meaning, and motivation. Those studies have shown, in fact, that gestures may constitute larger coherent groups, structural islands, which are based on common aspects of form and meaning. In the context of his research on Neapolitan and British gestures, Adam Kendon has put forward the concept of families of gesture, or “gesture family”:

When we refer to families of gestures we refer to groupings of gestural expressions that have in common one or more kinesic or formational characteristics. [...] Within each family, the different forms that may be recognized, in most cases are distinguished in terms of the different movement patterns that are employed. Each family not only shares in a distinct set

of kinesic features but each is also distinct in its semantic themes. The forms within these families, distinguished as they are kinesically, also tend to differ semantically although, within a given family, all forms share in a common semantic theme. (Kendon 2004: 227)

Such groupings of gestures have been identified for a range of gestural forms. Probably, an almost “classic” example of gesture families is the family of the open hand. “Open Hand Supine” (OHS) (Kendon 2004: 264–281) or “Palm Up Open Hand” gestures (Müller 2004) come with the shared semantic themes of “offering” and “receiving” (Kendon 2004; Müller 2004). They are based on basic actions of “giving, showing, offering an object by presenting it on the open hand”, which serve as the derivational basis for all members of the family and are used to present an “abstract, discursive object as a concrete, manipulable entity” (Müller 2004: 233, 236). By varying the form of the kinesic core through various movement patterns (rotation, lateral movement, up and down movement), the semantic core of offering, giving, and receiving of objects is extended to mean continuation and listing of ideas, and “a sequential order of offered arguments”, or to present “a wide range of discursive objects” (Müller 2004: 254).

Kendon distinguishes three members of the Open Hand Supine family: the Palm Presentation (PP) gesture, the Palm Addressed (PA) gesture, and the Palm Lateral (PL) gesture (Kendon 2004: 265) and assumes different motivations for their respective meanings. For Palm Presentation gestures (Open Hand Supine with simple wrist turn) these are the actions of presenting, requesting, or offering, for Palm Addressed (Open Hand Supine moves towards an interlocutor) these are actions of presenting or displaying for inspection, for Palm Lateral (Open Hand Supine with a lateral, sometimes backwards movement) this is the action of withdrawal. The shared semantic theme uniting the Open Hand Supine (Palm Up) family of gestures is that of offering, giving, presenting, topics of talk. (See Tab. 120.1 for an overview of the Open Hand Supine family and their family members, along with their shared formational features, shared motivations, and shared semantic themes.)

In recent studies, however, another group of gestures has received considerable attention among scholars of gestures. Kendon (2004: 248–264) has described them as members of the family of the Open Hand Prone (OHS) (palm down), which are used “in contexts where something is being denied, negated, interrupted, or stopped, whether explicitly or by implication” (Kendon 2004: 248) and which “share the semantic theme of stopping or interrupting a line of action that is in progress” (Kendon 2004: 249) or express “active physical refusal” (Calbris 2011) (see also de Jorio [1832] 2000).

Depending on the palm’s orientation, Kendon identifies two members of the family. In cases in which the palm is oriented downwards horizontally and the hand(s) are moved laterally (Open Hand Prone ZP), the gestures are assumed to be based on actions “of cutting something through, knocking something away or sweeping away irregularities on a surface” (Kendon 2004: 263). Kendon points out that these gestures are not derived from actions authored by the speaker but “*describe* something that has happened, is happening or could happen” (Kendon 2004: 263, emphasis in original) (see also Calbris 1990, 2003). The Open Hand Prone ZP gestures share in the semantic theme of “interrupting, suspending or stopping a line of action” (Kendon 2004: 262). They may serve various functions among them the negation, by presupposing something “in relation to which they act” (Kendon 2004: 263).

Is the palm oriented vertically (Open Hand Prone VP), the speaker uses the gesture to establish a barrier, push back, or hold back things moving towards him- and herself.

Tab. 120.1: The Open Hand Supine (Palm Up) family of gestures (Kendon 2004: 264–281; Müller 2004)

| Open Hand Supine (OHS) (Palm Up) Family | | |
|--|---|---|
| Shared formational features: <i>open hand supine, palm up</i> | | |
| Shared motivation: <i>offering, giving, showing, presenting objects in the hands</i> | | |
| Shared semantic theme: <i>offering, giving, presenting topics of talk</i> | | |
| Family members | PP (Palm Presentation) | PA (Palm Addressed) |
| | Shared formational features: <i>open hand supine, palm up</i> | Shared formational features: <i>open hand supine, palm up, move towards interlocutor</i> |
| | Shared motivation: <i>offering, giving, showing, receiving objects</i> | Shared motivation: <i>offering, giving, handing over of objects, requesting something</i> |
| | Shared semantic theme: <i>offering, receiving, giving topics of talk</i> | Shared semantic theme: <i>to present for inspection, display the object pointed at</i> |
| Family members | PL (Palm Lateral) | |
| | Shared formational features: <i>open hand supine, palm up, lateral (or backwards) move (sometimes combined with shoulder shrug)</i> | |
| | Shared motivation: <i>action of withdrawal from what has been presented</i> | |
| | Shared semantic theme: <i>withdrawal, unwillingness or inability</i> | |

The gesture indicates “the actor’s intent to stop a line of action, whether this be the actor’s own, the line jointly engaged in with others, or that of the interlocutor” (Kendon 2004: 262). Depending on the position of the hands, the gesture specifies the kind of action to be stopped (close to the body: stopping ones own action; in front of the body: stopping action of speaker and interlocutor; movement towards the interlocutor: stopping interlocutor). Although the two members of the Open Hand Prone family share in a common semantic theme (stopping or interrupting a line of action that is in progress), Kendon does not offer a shared motivation for them. On the contrary, he assumes them to be “quite different semiotically” (Kendon 2004: 263). By depicting a schematic act of pushing or holding something away, “Vertical Palm gestures constitute actions that the actor willfully performs. Horizontal Palm gestures are actions that *describe* something that has happened, is happening or could happen”, because they “*represent* some event or circumstance of which [the speaker] is not the author” (Kendon 2004: 263, emphasis in original). (Tab. 120.2 presents an overview of Kendon’s Open Hand Prone family.)

In accordance with Calbris (2003), Kendon assumes one function of the Open Hand Prone ZP gestures is negation, a “kinesic parallel to the denial, interruption or negation expressed verbally” (Kendon 2004: 255). Similar as negation in speech, the gestures act in relation to possible counter responses that might be implied by what is said and then act in relation to these counter responses. For the Open Hand Prone family as a whole, Kendon suggests that their members may in principle all serve as forms of negation, “if there is something presupposed in relation to which they act” (Kendon 2004: 263). Nota-

Tab. 120.2: The Open Hand Prone (Palm Down) family of gestures (Kendon 2004: 248–264)

| Open Hand Prone (palm down) Family | | |
|---|---|--|
| Shared formational features: <i>open hand prone, palm down or away</i> | | |
| Shared motivation: <i>none</i> | | |
| Shared semantic theme: <i>stopping or interrupting a line of action that is in progress</i> | | |
| Family members | VP (Vertical Palm) | ZP (Horizontal Palm) |
| | Shared formational features: <i>open hand prone, palm in vertical orientation, or palm away</i> | Shared formational features: <i>open hand prone, palm down, rapid, horizontal, lateral (decisive) movement away from midline of speaker's body</i> |
| | Shared motivation: <i>barrier</i> | Shared motivation: <i>cutting, knocking or sweeping away</i> |
| | Shared semantic theme: <i>halt a current line of action, to stop</i> | Shared semantic theme: <i>some line of action is being suspended, interrupted or cut off, negation (of implied assumptions)</i> |

bly, as Kendon points out in a historical survey, gestures that serve the function of negation have attracted the interest of various scholars for quite a long time (Kendon 2004: 249–251).

Picking up on Kendon’s account of the Open Hand Prone family, Harrison (2009, 2010) presents an analysis of the two members of the family and offers a systematization of their occurrence with negation in speech. By taking into account further variations of form (hand shape, handedness, type, and direction of movement), Harrison not only documents correlations of form and meaning in different contexts-of-use but also shows that members of the family of the Open Hand Prone or Palm Down gestures correlate with particular verbal expressions such as superlatives (e.g., *best, most amazing, sweetest*) and maximum degree marking adverbs (e.g., *totally, absolutely, completely*) for instance. More importantly, however, for particular variants of the Palm Down gestures, Harrison identifies a correlation with the node and scope of negation expressed in speech. Whereas the stroke of the gestures co-occurs with the negative node (e.g., the negating part of speech), the following holds coextend with the scope of the negation and thus gesturally highlight what is being negated. Based on these results, Harrison suggest that “a multimodal principle appears to determine the syntax of negative sentences and the kinetics of negation gestures, while regulating how speakers integrate the two modalities during negative speech acts” (Harrison 2010: 45).

In addition to Palm Down gestures, the Brushing Aside gesture has been described as a further example of gestural negation (Müller and Speckmann 2002; Teßendorf this volume). Based on the action of brushing something aside, the gesture is most often used to “brush aside” discursive objects. Depending on the place of the execution (mid-line level and shoulder level), the gesture either takes over modal and discursive function by “qualifying something as negative and marking the end of a certain discursive activity” or by expressing a communicative move it may function as a performative (Payrató and Teßendorf this volume; Teßendorf this volume). In the following, we will present a revised and extended analysis of the family of Open Hand Supine or Palm Down gestures.

2. The family of Away gestures: How action schemes motivate semantic structures

Based on results from a data-driven account of a repertoire of recurrent gestures of German, the present chapter reconstructs a structural island within a manual mode of expression: The family of Away gestures. This family is semantically motivated by the effect of actions of removing or keeping away of things. The effect that all actions have in common is that the body space is cleared of annoying or otherwise unwanted objects. Members of the family do not share in a particular hand shape and/or orientation, as in Kendon's four families but a particular motion. All members of the Away family show a movement "away from body" which is performed mostly in a straight manner. Semantically, the family is bound together by the themes of rejection, refusal, negative assessment, and negation, which are directly derived from the semantics of the underlying action scheme, in particular, from the effect that actions involving the clearing of the body space have in common: Something that was present has been moved away – or something wanting to intrude has been or is being kept away from intrusion. In any case, the effect of the action is that the space around the body is empty. The members of the family share this effect: Sweeping Away, Holding Away, Brushing Away, and Throwing Away.

The four members of the Away family are recurrent gestures (Ladewig 2010, this volume; Müller 2010). Recurrent gestures show a stable form-meaning relation, which "recurs in different contexts-of-use over different speakers in a particular speech community" (Ladewig this volume: 1559). Depending on their context-of-use, recurrent gestures show differences in form, which often correlate with variants of meaning and function. Characteristics of form are based on instrumental actions, from which particular aspects are mapped onto the structure of communicative actions. Accordingly, recurrent gestures often take over pragmatic function and either "display the communicative act of the speaker and act upon speech as 'speech-performatives'" or they may "aim at a regulation of the behavior of others as 'performatives'" (Teßendorf this volume: 1544). In addition, recurrent gestures may also serve referential function in depicting concrete or abstract aspects of the topic being addressed in speech. Although recurrent gestures are not translatable into words or phrases, like emblems or quotable gestures for instance (Kendon 2004), the fixed form-meaning relation that holds stable across a wide range of communicative contexts along with their mostly pragmatic functions makes it likely to assume that recurrent gestures undergo processes of conventionalization. It is assumed that only a limited number of conventionalized gestures with pragmatic function exists (see, e.g., Kendon 1995), which can be said to make up a possible repertoire of recurrent gestures widely shared by speakers in a particular cultural or social group (see Ladewig this volume and Müller 2010 for a detailed discussion of the notion "recurrent gestures").

The family of Away gestures was discovered in the context of an investigation of a repertoire of recurrent gestures of German. The repertoire consists of sixteen recurrent gestural forms altogether. It was identified by applying a linguistic analysis to the motivation of recurrent gesture's forms (their kinesic features, but also their movement gestures) and their distribution across contexts-of-use (Bressem and Müller this volume).

2.1. Sweeping away

The sweeping away gesture, in other studies referred to as "finished" (Brookes 2004), "cutting" (Calbris 2003), "Open Hand Prone ZP" (Kendon 2004: 255–264), and "PD

across” (Harrison 2010), is a recurrent gesture in which the (lax) flat hand(s) with the palm facing downwards are laterally and horizontally moved outwards, mostly with a decisive movement quality. The hand(s) are typically positioned in the central gesture space. Sweeping away gestures are used only in relation with speech and in so doing may serve either referential or pragmatic functions. When used with referential function, sweeping away gestures illustrate, for instance, a period of time, the action of smoothing a plane, or wiping off elements on a plane. When used pragmatically, they are used as manual forms of negation.

Given restrictions of space of this chapter, only a detailed reconstruction of the pragmatic meaning of sweeping away gestures can be provided. When used as gestures of negation, the meaning of sweeping away gestures is based on the effect of the underlying action. The shared motivation of sweeping away gestures is a completely cleared off body space. This clearing off is achieved by energetically and efficiently sweeping away something from a flat surface (e.g., a liquid, bread crumbs, or wrinkles in a table cloth), so that absolutely nothing is left. Sweeping away gestures create an empty plane around the speaker’s body and formerly existing objects or obstacles are completely swept away or are excluded from the body space. With this gesture, topics of talk (e.g., arguments, beliefs, or ideas) are energetically and completely rejected; they are (metaphorically) swept away from the center to the periphery, so that those objects or topics of talk are excluded from the conversation and thus are manually *negated* (see Fig. 120.1).

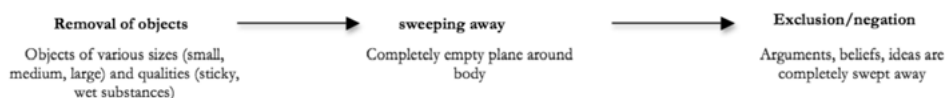


Fig. 120.1: Semanticization of an action scheme: The sweeping away gesture as negation

2.2. Holding away

Holding away gestures, also referred to as “wait” (Brookes 2004), “Open Hand Prone VP” (Kendon 2004: 251–255) and “palm vertical” (Harrison 2009) (see also Calbris 1990, 2011), are recurrent gestures in which the flat hand(s) with the palm vertically facing away are held in front of the speaker’s body. The hand(s) may be positioned in the center of the gesture space or in the upper periphery. Holding away gestures are used in relation with speech but also occur in contexts without accompanying speech. They may serve referential as well as pragmatic functions. When used with referential functions, they illustrate the pushing or holding away of objects or persons. When used pragmatically, they serve as refusal or as an indication to stop and they qualify the refused or stopped objects as unwanted ones. The meaning of the pragmatic holding away gestures is grounded in a shared motivation, namely the effect of actions that serve to maintain a cleared body space and that keep unwanted objects away from the body. This clearing of the body space is achieved by holding or pushing away an object, stopping an object from falling over, a door from smashing into the face, or an unwanted person from intrusion into the personal space. The vertically oriented hands create a

blockage, which either keeps objects from moving closer or pushes them away. Holding away gestures are based on a different manual action than the other members of the Away family but the effect is similar: An empty space around the speaker's body is created. In contrast to the other Away gestures, holding away gestures may either create an empty space around the speaker's body or they may maintain such an empty surrounding. Based on these different types of away actions shared semantic themes have emerged: Pragmatically used holding away gestures are used to reject topics of talk, to stop arguments, beliefs, ideas from intrusion into the realm of shared conversation, to stop the continuation of unwanted topics, and they qualify rejected topics as unwanted ones, in short, holding away gestures *refuse* and *stop* unwanted topics of talk (see Fig. 120.2).

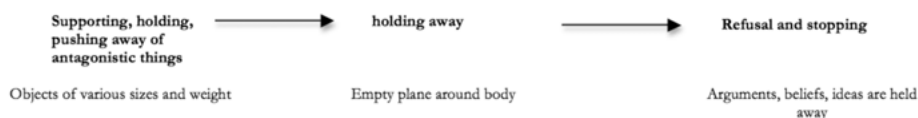


Fig. 120.2: Semanticization of an action scheme: Throwing away gestures as refusal and stopping of unwanted topics of talk

2.3. Brushing away

Brushing away gestures, in other studies referred to as “Brushing Aside” (Payrató and Teßendorf this volume; Teßendorf this volume) or “wiping off” (Müller 1998; Müller and Speckmann 2002), are recurrent gestures in which the lax flat hand, with a palm oriented towards the speaker's body, is moved outwards in a rapid twist of the wrist. They are used only in relation with speech. Speech-replacing functions were not found in the data. Brushing away gestures may serve deictic as well as pragmatic functions. When used with a deictic function, they illustrate paths and directions. The formational feature, which is being semanticized in these variants, is the direction of the movement. The gesture is performed in front of the speaker's body and in the center of the gesture space. When used pragmatically, the hands are positioned at the side of the speaker's body and in the periphery of the gesture space. In these cases, brushing away gestures are used as a negative assessment (and with a modal function, cf. Müller and Speckmann 2002; Payrató and Teßendorf this volume).

The meaning of pragmatic brushing away gestures is based on a shared motivation, or the semanticization of the goal of an action scheme that results in a cleared body space and that involves the removal of unwanted and annoying objects. This common effect is achieved by rapidly brushing away small, annoying object(s), crumbs from a sweater, a mosquito sitting on the arm, or sand from a towel (cf. also Teßendorf this volume). By brushing these metaphorical objects aside, the body space is cleared of unwanted, annoying arguments, beliefs, or ideas. Brushing away gestures share the semantic theme of getting rid of, removing or dismissing annoying topics of talk, by

rapidly brushing them away from the body. The clearing of the body space goes along with a qualification of the rejected objects as annoying, so that with this gesture any topic of talk is being *negatively assessed* (see Fig. 120.3).

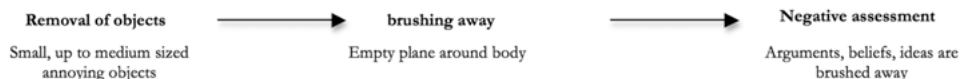


Fig. 120.3: Semanticization of an action scheme: The brushing away gesture as negative assessment

2.4. Throwing away

Throwing away gestures are recurrent gestures in which the lax flat hand with the palm facing away from the speaker's body is moved downwards by bending the wrist. The hand is positioned in a space around the body ranging from the center to the upper periphery. The gesture is used in relation with speech but also replaces speech. Throwing away gestures have a pragmatic (modal) function and either act upon speech or upon the behavior of others. They resemble brushing away gestures functionally, in that both gestures are used as *negative assessments*. (It is likely that the two variants are distributed differently across cultures. While throwing away gestures are very common in German, brushing away gestures appear to be more widely used in Spain and in Cuba.)

Throwing away gestures co-occur quite often with the German adjective *egal* ('never mind') as well as with interjections such as *ach* ('alas'). Brushing away and throwing away gestures have a similar action base, or a similar shared motivation: a cleared body space and the removal of unwanted and annoying objects. The difference between the two is apparent in the hand shapes and accordingly the removed objects. While the brushing away actions are used to remove really small objects, the throwing away ones are used to get rid of middle sized roundish objects: a rotten fruit, the core of an apple, or a crumbled piece of paper to be thrown into the wastebasket. The goal in both cases is to clear the immediate surrounding of disturbing and useless objects. These instrumental actions serve to create an empty space around the speaker's body that is used in discourse to mark arguments, ideas, and actions as uninteresting and void. Again the effect of the manual action is what motivates the meaning. The shared semantic theme of throwing away gestures can be characterized as follows: getting rid of, removing, and dismissing annoying topics of talk, by metaphorically throwing them away from the body. The clearing of the body space goes along with a qualification of the rejected objects as annoying, that is, a topic of talk is being *negatively assessed* (see Fig. 120.4).

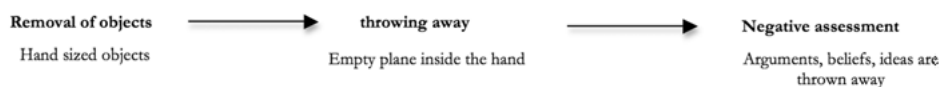


Fig. 120.4: Semanticization of an action scheme: Throwing away gestures as negative assessments

3. A shared motivation of the Away family: Semanticization of an action scheme

In this section, we will offer a more detailed cognitive-semantic account of how an action scheme can motivate the meaning of gestures and the shared meaning within a gesture family. So far, we have reconstructed the motivation of gestural forms by applying a semiotic analysis that takes into account the gestures' derivation from instrumental and mundane actions. In so doing, we "depart from the assumption that the meaning of gestures is motivated (see also Calbris 1990, 2011; Mittelberg 2006; Mittelberg and Waugh this volume), that their forms embody meaning in a dynamic and mostly ad hoc manner, and that manual actions are a core basis of gestural meaning creation (see also Streeck 2009, volume 1)" (Müller, Bressem, and Ladewig volume 1: 711). The discovery of the four Away gestures is a result of a methodological process of going back and forth between determining the motivation of recurrent forms (Modes of gestural Representation and the involved manual actions) and different contexts-of-use (Müller 1998, 2004, 2009, 2010, this volume).

Such a linguistic analysis of gestural forms and functions revealed that Away gestures share a particular formational feature (not hand shape and orientation as Kendon's Open Hand Prone gestures) but a movement away from body, which is mostly performed in a straight manner. Moreover, it was found that Away gestures are motivated by different types of reenacted actions which have in common one effect: keeping things away from the body by brushing, sweeping, throwing, or holding them away with the hand(s). This effect is what makes the shared motivation for the family of Away gestures: a cleared body space, e.g., the effect or goal of actions of removing or keeping away things from body space.

We suggest that a particular action scheme may serve as a systematic basis for the development of semantic and pragmatic meaning (see Teßendorf this volume). Gestures may reproduce perceptually salient aspects of instrumental actions and extract distinctive elements of the action by comparing, selecting, and recombining physically pertinent elements (see Calbris 1990, 2003; Müller 1998, 2010; Teßendorf this volume). By reproducing aspects of the action, gestures may evoke a particular element from the chain of action, namely, either "the actor, the action, the instrument used or its result" (Calbris 2003: 26). As a consequence, gestures are linked to a motivating action via metonymy (Mittelberg 2010; Mittelberg and Waugh this volume; Müller 1998), so that parts of the action stand for the action as a whole. Teßendorf (this volume) breaks down the action scheme for brushing away gestures into four main steps.

- (i) Point of departure: unpleasant situation
- (ii) Cause: annoying objects in the immediate surrounding
- (iii) Action: the back of the hand brushes these objects away
- (iv) Endpoint/goal: objects are removed; end of unpleasant situation and recovery of a neutral situation

Teßendorf shows that because different aspects of the underlying action scheme are highlighted metonymically, brushing away gestures may meet different communicative aims. When taking over modal function, for instance, by expressing the speaker's attitude towards the content expressed in speech, they may highlight the objects involved in the

action. Via metonymic relation, the action stands for the objects involved in the action. When used performatively to finish, for instance, an unpleasant situation, the gesture highlights the goal of the action. The action stands metonymically for the result of the action.

For an analysis of the family of Away gestures this meant that even though each Away gesture is based on a particular action (brushing, sweeping, throwing, and holding away) the goal or the effect of all actions is the same: the removal of annoying things. Accordingly, we have assumed that a *common* action scheme motivates the pragmatic meaning of all four Away gestures: All four are based on actions by which things are removed from or held off resulting in an empty space, plane or surface around the body (see Fig. 120.5).

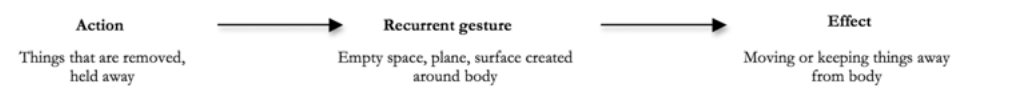


Fig. 120.5: A shared motivation for the Away family: The semanticization of the effect or goal of an action scheme

4. The Away family with pragmatic functions

Departing from a shared movement pattern (away) rather than on shared hand shapes, we found that Kendon’s Open Hand Prone (ZP and VP) gestures form part of the group of Away gestures: the Away Family. We have argued that this family consists of four members and expresses negation (sweeping away), refusal (holding away), and negative assessment (brushing and throwing away). The family shares a particular kinesic or formational feature “movement away” and the semanticization of the same aspect of an underlying action scheme, that is, the effect or goal of an action: “keeping the body space clear of objects”. This removal or the holding away of objects is what motivates the shared theme of the Away family: rejection, refusal, negative assessment, and negation. Tab. 120.3 shows an overview of the Away Family of gestures with pragmatic functions.

Tab. 120.3: The family of Away gestures with pragmatic function

| Away – Family | | |
|--|--|--|
| Gestures of negation, refusal, and negative assessments | | |
| Shared formational features: <i>away from body, mostly straight movement</i> | | |
| Shared motivation: <i>a cleared body space, e.g., the effect or goal of actions of removing or keeping away things from body space</i> | | |
| Shared semantic theme: <i>excluding</i> | | |
| Family members | Sweeping Away (Kendon’s OHP, ZP) | Holding Away (Kendon’s OHP, VP) |
| | Shared formational features: <i>flat hand(s), palm facing downward, move laterally and horizontally outwards</i> | Shared formational features: <i>flat hand(s), palm vertically away from speaker’s body, moved or held outwards</i> |

(Continued)

Tab. 120.3: *Continued*

| Away – Family | | |
|--|---|---|
| Gestures of negation, refusal, and negative assessments | | |
| Shared formational features: <i>away from body, mostly straight movement</i> | | |
| Shared motivation: <i>a cleared body space, e.g., the effect or goal of actions of removing or keeping away things from body space</i> | | |
| Shared semantic theme: <i>excluding</i> | | |
| Family members | <p>Shared motivation: <i>a completely cleared off body space.</i> <i>This is achieved by energetically and efficiently sweeping away something from a flat surface (a liquid, bread crumbs, or wrinkles in a table cloth) so that absolutely nothing is left.</i></p> <p>Shared semantic theme: <i>negation, e.g., completely rejecting topics of talk by (energetically) sweeping them away from the center to the periphery, so that they are excluded from the conversation and negated.</i></p> | <p>Shared motivation: <i>maintaining a cleared body space and keeping unwanted objects away.</i> <i>This is achieved by holding or pushing away an object, stopping an object from falling over, a door from smashing into the face, or an unwanted person from intrusion into the personal space.</i></p> <p>Shared semantic theme: <i>refusal, stopping something from intrusion, stopping from continuation, rejecting a speaker's or hearer's topic of talk, and a qualification of the rejected topic as an unwanted one.</i></p> |
| | Brushing Away | Throwing Away |
| | <p>Shared formational features: <i>lax hand, palm oriented towards speaker's body, moved outwards in a rapid twist of the wrist.</i></p> <p>Shared motivation: <i>a cleared body space and the removal of unwanted and annoying objects.</i> <i>This is achieved by rapidly brushing away small, annoying object(s), crumbs from a sweater, a mosquito sitting on the arm, sand from a towel.</i></p> <p>Shared semantic theme: <i>negative assessment, e.g., getting rid of, removing and dismissing annoying topics of talk, by rapidly brushing them away from the speaker's body. Clearing off body space goes along with a qualification of the rejected objects as annoying, e.g., a topic of talk is being negatively assessed.</i></p> | <p>Shared formational features: <i>cupped hand oriented vertically, palm facing away from the speaker's body, hand flaps downward from the wrist.</i></p> <p>Shared motivation: <i>a cleared body space and the removal of unwanted and annoying objects.</i> <i>This is achieved by throwing away middle-sized roundish objects, that one wants to get rid of: a rotten fruit, the core of an apple, a crumbled piece of paper for the wastebasket.</i></p> <p>Shared semantic theme: <i>negative assessment, e.g., getting rid of, removing and dismissing annoying topic of talk, by throwing it away from the speaker's body. Clearing off body space goes along with a qualification of the rejected objects as annoying, e.g., a topic of talk is being negatively assessed.</i></p> |
| | | |

5. Conclusion

This chapter has dealt with the motivation of a gesture family by one aspect of an underlying action scheme. A linguistic analysis of forms and meanings of gestures has documented processes of semanticization that lead to the emergence of a semantic field in the gestural modality (see also Fricke, Bressemer, and Müller this volume). By following

an embodied concept of gestural meaning construction, the chapter also shed some light into what might be considered embodied grounds of negation. The particular linguistic and semiotic focus of the analysis has furthermore served to uncover what could be considered proto-morpho-semantic structures in a manual mode of communication. With its focus on the systematic relations between groups of gestures, the chapter contributes to a systematic documentation of the nature of gesture forms and their motivations, it contributes to what we term a “grammar” of gestures (Müller, Bressemer, and Ladewig volume 1). By describing such a structural island in a gestural mode of communication, it may also offer valuable insights into the emergence of signs from gestures.

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