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Experiencing artworks from within: Simulated artifact immersion as viewpoint strategy in transmodal enactments of paintings and architectural sketches

Viewpoint, a flexible construal operation, may shape expressions and discourse structures in spoken and signed languages, as well as other modalities and media (e.g., Dancygier & Sweetser 2012). Being indexically anchored in rich semiotic contextures (Author et al. 2014), gestures and full-body enactments tend to reflect perspectivation: one may, e.g., describe an experience or film scene from within by adopting *character viewpoint*, or from a distance by assuming *observer viewpoint* (McNeill 1992). Communicative action typically not only exhibits subjective aspects of the gesturer's own bodily and mental disposition and what she profiles as particularly relevant; it also embodies others' experiences and perspectives intersubjectively. Speakers of different languages have been observed to combine multiple, often shifting viewpoints on a given scene using various viewpoint markers regardless of whether the scene is something they witnessed first-hand, part of a story told to them, or of an artifact such as a cartoon or a novel (e.g., Parrill 2009; Sweetser 2012; Stec 2013).

Exploring the transmodal dimensions of *simulated artifact immersion*, this paper investigates viewpoint strategies speakers employ when combining speech, manual gestures, full-body postures and actions when dynamically describing static visuo-spatial artifacts such as paintings and architectural sketches. The term *transmodal* goes back to Krois' (2011: 218) ideas on the connection between embodiment and enactivism in the visual arts, particularly to his claim that for the beholder images are not simply visual but transmodal phenomena (see also Johnson 2007). *Simulated artifact immersion* here is understood as a viewpoint technique by which speakers submerge into their mental representation of an artifact, e.g. through viewing and experiencing a painted scene or architectural sketch/model from within – without any artifact-inherent narrative structure to fall back on.

The first data set consists of multimodal American English descriptions of paintings by Paul Klee, in which human-like figures take center stage. In their descriptions from memory, participants elaborate the imagined scenarios through creatively interacting with the affordances offered by the image-internal elements and environments (Author 2013). Crucially, they systematically perform viewpoint shifts when – after detailing the composition and background of a given painting from observer viewpoint – they begin to describe the figures in the painting from character viewpoint, thus imitating their posture and enacting what they are wearing, doing and perhaps sensing from this picture-internal vantage point. In the second data set (multimodal German discourse), architecture students simulate moving through imagined spatial structures and landscapes that they either have already designed or that they see emerging in front of their mental eye while communicating their ideas in the early stages of the design process. Besides viewpoint shifts, varying techniques and degrees of simulated artifact immersion could be observed.

Interacting embodied operations such as gestural simulation (e.g., Hostetter & Alibali 2008), abstraction, and metaphor are discussed throughout the paper, while trying to reconstruct complex embodied cognitive-semiotic processes of imagining, conceptualizing, representing, and creating artifacts in an experientially grounded, multimodal fashion.

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