Chapter 28

Gesture

Andy Lücking
Université de Paris, Goethe-Universität Frankfurt

The received view in (psycho)linguistics, dialogue theory and gesture studies is that co-verbal gestures, i.e. hand and arm movement, are part of the utterance and contribute to its content (Kendon 1980; McNeill 1992). The relationships between gesture and speech obey regularities that need to be defined in terms of not just the relative timing of gesture to speech, but also the linguistic form of that speech: for instance, prosody and syntactic constituency and headedness (Loehr 2007; Ebert et al. 2011; Alahverdzhieva et al. 2017). Consequently, speech-gesture integration is captured in grammar by means of a gesture-grammar interface. This chapter provides basic snapshots from gesture research, reviews constraints on speech-gesture integration and summarises their implementations into HPSG frameworks. Pointers to future developments conclude the exposition. Since there are already a couple of overviews on gesture such as Özyürek (2012), Wagner et al. (2014) and Abner et al. (2015), this chapter aims at distinguishing itself by providing a guided tour of research that focuses on using (mostly) standard methods for semantic composition in constraint-based grammars like HPSG to model gesture meanings.

1 Why gestures?

People talk with their whole body. A verbal utterance is couched in an intonation pattern that, via prosody, articulation speed or stress, function as *paralinguistic* signals (e.g. Birdwhistell 1970). The temporal dimension of paralinguistics gives rise to *chronemic* codes (Poyatos 1975; Bruneau 1980). *Facial expressions* are commonly used to signal emotional states (Ekman & Friesen 1978), even without speech (Argyle 1975), and are correlated to different illocutions of the speech acts performed by a speaker (Domaneschi et al. 2017). Interlocutors use *gaze* as a mechanism to achieve joint attention (Argyle & Cook 1976) or provide social signals (Kendon 1967). Distance and relative direction of speakers and addressees

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are organised according to culture-specific radii into social spaces (*proxemics*, Hall 1968). Within the inner radius of private space, tactile codes of *tacesics* (Kauffman 1971) are at work. Since the verbal and nonverbal communication means of face to face interaction may occur simultaneously, *synchrony* (i.e. the mutual overlap or relative timing of verbal vs. non-verbal communicative actions) is a feature of the multimodal utterance itself; it contributes, for instance, to identifying the word(s) that are affiliated to a gesture (Wiltshire 2007). A special chronemic case is signalling at the right moment – or, for that matter, missing the right moment (an aspect of communication dubbed *kairemics* by Lücking & Pfeiffer 2012: 600). Besides the manifold areas of language use, the conventionalised, symbolic nature of language secures language's primacy in communication, however (de Ruiter 2004). For thorough introductions into semiotics and multimodal communication see Nöth (1990), Posner et al. (1997–2004) or Müller et al. (2013–2014).

The most conspicuous non-verbal communication means of everyday interaction are hand and arm movements, known as *gestures* (in a more narrow sense which is also pursued from here on). In seminal works, McNeill (1985; 1992) and Kendon (1980; 2004) argue that co-verbal gestures, i.e. hand and arm movements, can be likened to words in the sense that they are part of a speaker's utterance and contribute to discourse. Accordingly, integrated speech-gesture production models have been devised (Kita & Özyürek 2003; de Ruiter 2000; Krauss et al. 2000) that treat utterance production as a multimodal process (see Section 4.4 for a brief discussion). Given gestures' imagistic and often spontaneous character, it is appealing to think of them as "postcards from the mind" (de Ruiter 2007: 21). Clearly, given this entrenchment in speaking, the fact that one can communicate meaning with non-verbal signals has repercussions to areas hitherto taken to be purely linguistic (in the sense of being related to the verbal domain). This section highlights some phenomena particularly important for grammar, including, for instance, *mixed syntax* (Slama-Cazacu 1976), or *pro-speech gesture*:

(1) He is a bit [*circular movement of index finger in front of temple*].

In (1), a gesture replaces a position that is usually filled by a syntactic constituent. The gesture is emblematically related to the property of *being mad* so that the mixed utterance from (1) is equivalent to the proposition that the referent of *he* is a bit mad.

The gesture shown in Figure 1 depicts the shape of a concrete base, which the speaker introduces into discourse as an attribute of a sculpture:[1]

[1]The examples in Figures 1, 2, 3, 4, 9 and 10 are drawn from the (German) *Speech and Gesture*