

For those interested in how gesture can be described in terms of form features, it can be briefly mentioned that four parameters are taken into account: hand shape, orientation, movement, and location (Stokoe 1960). It should also be pointed out that there is as yet no conventional transcription system for the form of a gesture and its temporal unfolding. For some examples of how different researchers ↴ transpose the temporal unfolding of the movement in relation to the speech into a graphical representation, see Duncan's annotation and coding procedure described in McNeill 2005; see also Kendon 2004a: 362; Calbris 1990; Mittelberg 2007.

Figure 6.3.



ELAN screen. Example for a simple tier set up for basic gesture annotation. Note that the stroke tier for the left and right hand is inserted for those who are interested in more detailed annotation.

6.6 Summary

The first aim of this chapter was to show why gesture documentation is an important part of language documentation. The second aim was to describe the methodological issues, the procedures, and the results of gesture documentation within language documentation. A minimal approach to the documentation and later analyses of gestural practices has been suggested. This approach requires the researcher to follow certain recording standards, and to broaden the corpus ↴ compilation by including recordings of a range of topics and genres which are likely to evoke different types of gestures. A further step is making the video recordings accessible for later analyses by annotating the parts of the video in which speakers are found to be gesturing. This minimal approach should be possible as part of a fieldworker's normal recording and transcribing activities. The result, a record of gestural practices of a language community, is invaluable.

Much more can be said about the relevance of gesture in the study and documentation of communicative practices, the methods of data collection and analyses. This chapter provides a first overview of the approaches and the methods used in the study of gesture in communication, culture, and cognition. Gesture is an understudied phenomenon, despite its tight linkage with speech and its complex role in human communication. Accounts of gestural deployment in different cultures are still sparse, especially compared to the descriptions and documentations available for the verbal component of language. Gesture is integral