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Dual viewpoint gestures

Fey Parrill

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This paper examines gestures that simultaneously express multiple physical perspectives, known as *dual viewpoint* gestures. These gestures were first discussed in McNeill's 1992 book, *Hand and mind*. We examine a corpus of approximately fifteen hours of narrative data, and use these data to extend McNeill's observations about the different possibilities for combining viewpoints. We also show that a phenomenon thought to be present only in the narrations of children is present in the narrations of adults. We discuss the significance of these gestures for theories of speech-gesture integration.

Keywords: gesture, viewpoint

Dual viewpoint gestures

This paper examines hand and body gestures that simultaneously express multiple perspectives on an event or scene. These gestures, known as *dual viewpoint* gestures, suggest that a speaker is taking multiple spatial perspectives on a scene at the same time. Despite the fact that this is a rather impressive cognitive feat, relatively little has been written about the phenomenon (though see McClave, 2000). In an effort to provide systematic data on dual viewpoint gestures, we examine a corpus of approximately fifteen hours of narrative data (containing over four thousand gestures). We use these data to extend previous descriptions of the ways in which viewpoint can be combined in gesture. We also show that a phenomenon thought to be present only in the narrations of children is in fact present in the narrations of adults. The paper is organized as follows. We first explain what it means for gesture to express viewpoint, commenting on different uses of the terms viewpoint and perspective. We then describe dual viewpoint gestures, and provide examples from our corpus. We end with some open questions that may serve as starting points for future research.