

Grammatical aspect in multimodal language production: Using gesture to reveal event representations.

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Grammatical aspect is a pervasive linguistic device that, according to linguistic analyses, allows speakers to encode different ways of construing events. For instance, the progressive (*I am writing a book*) is thought to reflect increased focus on the internal details of an event, as contrasted with the perfect (*I have written a book*). However, there is to date no experimental evidence that speakers describing events using progressive versus perfect aspect are in fact thinking about the same events differently. We used co-speech gesture as a means to investigate what speakers' event representations are like when they produce progressive versus non-progressive utterances. We found that progressive event descriptions were accompanied by longer-lasting and more complex gestures, but only when participants described events originally presented to them in the progressive. This evidence suggests that people are actually construing events differently when they use different grammatical aspects, but that how they originally encoded the events plays a role as well.