

Constantly shifting: How gesturing speakers use role shifted space Kashmiri Stec, University of Groningen

Co-speech gestures often represent some aspect of the accompanying speech (Kendon 2004; McNeill 1996). For example, they may direct attention to details, such as the spatial relations between entities or the trajectory a character takes (McNeill 1996). They may also embody those characters, such that the speaker gestures from the perspective of the character who speaks or is described (McNeill 1996). This is called *role shift*, a turning of the body and eyes away from the addressee while character-viewpointed gesturing takes place. As a viewpoint marker, it physically shows that the speaker enters another conceptual space. It often accompanies quotes, but may appear even in cases where the viewpoint shift is not explicitly marked in language.

Because role shift is a viewpoint marker, it plays a prominent role in storytelling, and may help speakers and their addressees not only keep track of the physical locations of characters, but also mark the change from one character's conceptual space to the next. Signers are supposed to be quite good at this (e.g. McCleary and Viotti 2010). Previously, studies such as Fadjo et al. (2009) have established that role shift is a regular strategy used in gesture, but their work considers the situations under which it is used and how it is performed – the question of consistency is not addressed.

Here, I would like to do that. Using a set of videos in which 20 speakers recount personal narratives, I ask the questions: Are they consistent about using *role shift*? Are they consistent in assigning their characters to particular points in space? Do they regularly use certain body parts to display the role shift? Are there other cues in gesture that signal a viewpoint shift is taking place?

Results indicate that although speakers are consistent about using role shift to mark the change from one character to the next, they are not consistent about the locations to which characters are assigned: some speakers are consistent across their narrative, some only at a local level, but the vast majority do so only from one turn to the next, so that even within a quoted segment, characters “move around” the physical space surrounding the speaker. The head, especially eye gaze, appears to be the most often used body part to display *role shift*, while speakers may choose between vertical and horizontal character distributions.

This shows that although gesturers are less structured in their long-term use of space than signers, their short-term use matters. Consistently marking a role shift gives an additional, physical cue that a new conceptual space is being activated and so may help keep track of different mental spaces, even if it may not help in identifying physical ones.

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