

## Creativity, gesture, and the subjunctive: how co-participants use grammar and gesture in dis/integrating multiple realities in role-playing games

Imagination - as a collaborative process - plays an integral part in the production and interpretation of gestures in interaction, and thus should be investigated in research on cognition and gesture. In producing gestures in interaction, producers and recipients of gestures collaboratively come to treat the body as "...a cognitive artifact" that acquires meaning "...by virtue of its relation to the spatial structure of things..." (Hutchins, 2006). This relationship, however, is also embedded in processes of collective imagining -- as an embodied process -- and thus requires sequential, serial, and narrative structures as well. In this paper, I will focus on the role that imagination and creativity plays in interpreting gesture, and conversely the role that gesture plays in creating an imaginary reality during a table-top role-playing game (RPG).

RPGs are rule-based games in which individuals, consisting of players and a game-master, role-play in various fantasy worlds for long-term "campaigns". The games are phenomenologically evocative activities whereby players and game-master collaborate in an ordinary world so as to create an interactive narrative in a fantasy world, and in doing so, use game pieces (e.g., maps, models, figurines, dice, and manuals & rulebooks), talk, and gesture to describe, represent, and negotiate their collective imagining of the various beings, happenings, and doings of that fantastic world. The unique structure of the game and its imaginative goals present several constraints on the game-play.

As a collaborative game, simple taken-for-granted concepts like "event", "action", or even a character's percepts transform into 'contested objects' that are discussed primarily in the potential rather than their actual. As such, most of what is discussed in the game-play rarely constitutes an actual event in the game-world. Most of what talk occurs in game-play then follows what Murphy (2004) called "action in the subjunctive..." whereby speakers discuss possible realities before settling on their agreed-to indicative reality. In this paper, I will argue, using discourse analysis, that gesture plays an integral role in the process of translating action, events, or even "being" in game-play, and that in coordination with grammar, participants use gesture seamlessly move between multiple imagined worlds.

## References

Hutchins, E., 2006, Imagining the cognitive life of things. Presented at workshop, The cognitive life of things: recasting the boundaries of the mind.

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