

Gesture Studies (GS)

Gesture Studies aims to publish book-length publications on all aspects of gesture. These include, for instance, the relationship between gesture and speech; the role gesture may play in social interaction; gesture and cognition; the development of gesture in children; the processes by which spontaneously created gestures may become transformed into codified forms; the relationship between gesture and sign; biological studies of gesture, including the place of gesture in language evolution; and gesture in human-machine interaction. Volumes in this peer-reviewed series may be collected volumes, monographs, or reference books, in the English language.

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Volume 3

Metaphor and Gesture

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Introduction

Alan Cienki & Cornelia Müller

The German physiologist and psychologist Wilhelm Wundt (1832–1920) was perhaps the first to note that gestures could be used metaphorically. In his *Völkerpsychologie* (1922), Wundt discusses the “symbolic gesture,” which transfers the concepts being expressed from the perspective of one domain to that of another.¹ He cites the examples of time as space, and the transfer of the abstract to the perceptual. However, the interrelation of the topics of metaphor and gesture really only began to receive close attention at the end of the 20th century, after the boom in metaphor studies beginning in the 1980s, and the expansion of gesture studies starting in the 1990s. (See Cienki, this volume, for details.) The present volume is an overview of the current state of research on metaphor and gesture. Though it is a selective snapshot, we feel it is a representative one, at least of contemporary U.S. American, French, and German work at the intersection of these fields of study.

There are many approaches to the study of metaphor, and also many to the study of gesture. Consequently, the authors here consider each of them from a number of perspectives. Metaphor is viewed both in conceptual and semiotic terms. In this volume metaphor is sometimes discussed in terms of systematic cross-domain mappings, as is characteristic of some work in conceptual metaphor theory. But metaphor is also related to idiosyncratic, imagistic ways of thinking in-the-moment which may sometimes be reflected in gesture. The semiotic analyses focus on the metaphoric use of different forms of iconic structures in gesture. Gesture is itself also analyzed from different points of view. On one side, gesture is studied as a window onto the thought processes of the speaker/gesturer. It is argued that gesture can reveal metaphoric thinking, which may be taking place with or without accompanying speech. On the other side, we see how gesture can be used as a tool by the hearer/viewer in order to construct the speaker's intended meaning. Collectively the papers show how gesture can provide a valuable source of insight for metaphor scholars.

1. “... daß sie die auszudrückenden Vorstellungen aus einem Anschauungsgebiet in ein anderes überträgt...” (Wundt, 1922, p. 165).

The volume is structured in the following way. It begins with Alan Cienki's overview of findings from existing research on metaphor and gesture, including a consideration of the implications and questions that the study of each brings to the other. The next paper introduces some basic distinctions between the metaphoric and non-metaphoric in the context of a specific study: Geneviève Calbris explores how metaphoric notions are rooted in non-metaphoric, physical actions, through a detailed look at a set of interviews with a politician.

The three chapters which follow involve analyses of gesture as used in pedagogic contexts. While Robert Williams continues the theme of how abstract thought is grounded in physical action, he includes the role of object manipulation, and analyzes how it may serve to anchor a metaphoric blend in the process of teaching children to tell time with a clock. Rafael Núñez examines the specific domain of mathematics and how gestures by lecturers on the topic provide additional evidence of metaphoric conceptualization. Irene Mittelberg's study of lectures by linguistics professors shows the importance of different iconic modes in their metaphoric gestures, bringing together Peircean semiotic theory with conceptual metaphor theory in her analysis.

The following three contributions build specifically on the study of gesture as it has been developed by the psychologist David McNeill. In his own paper, McNeill considers gestures which at first might not be considered metaphoric, but which are revealed to function this way when considered in the larger discourse context. Jacques Montredon and colleagues apply McNeill's ideas of gestural "catchment" and "growth point" to analyze the metaphoric conceptualization of a core theoretical notion in postmodernism, that of deconstruction. Fey Parrill tests a claim about the idiosyncratic nature of spontaneous coverbal gesture through an experimental comparison of the degree to which people rate canonical versus non-canonical forms of two distinct gestures as natural.

In the final main chapter, Cornelia Müller points out that the study of metaphoric gesture highlights properties of metaphor which have seldom been addressed in the literature, leading her to argue for a dynamic approach to metaphor as a cognitive activity.

As this overview of the contents shows, the works here engage different kinds of data as well as various research methods. Some involve elicited data, while in others, the data are naturalistic. In the former category are responses recorded from participants who were invited to produce a narrative or engage in a conversation, or to respond to gestures which they were shown as stimuli. The latter group includes televised broadcasts of interviews with well-known speakers, and recordings of educators in the act of teaching (both in a primary school and at universities). Some studies concentrate on a substantial quantity of video recording of an individual speaker, and others look at a variety of speakers in different

contexts. A number of methodological approaches were taken to analyze the data. These include: statistical analysis; interaction analysis; blending analysis; semiotic analysis; linguistic analysis, i.e., closely tied to the lexical semantics of the accompanying speech; and types of hermeneutic analysis between the levels of spoken word and gesture. The volume, therefore, gives a sense of the variety of ways in which this topic can be researched.

A note on terminology is in order. "Metaphoric" is the adjectival form used in the chapters in this volume when discussing gestures as expressions of metaphor, so: metaphoric gestures. As discussed in Cienki's chapter, McNeill's (1992) examples focussing on one category of gestures as metaphoric—those which may reflect a discourse topic or genre as if an object in the hand—led some subsequent scholars to limit their use of the term 'metaphoric' to these types of gestures. However as the studies in this volume show, there are many kinds of metaphor which may be expressed in gesture, and many kinds of gestures which can express metaphors. The research presented here shows that there are multiple answers to the question of what can constitute a metaphoric gesture.

In addition, the chapters reflect two ways of listing conceptual metaphors that are currently common in the literature: either using all small capital letters (GOOD IS UP) or capitalizing the first letter of each main word (Good is Up); no theoretical distinction is intended in the chapters by the use of one system or the other.

The idea for this publication arose out of a theme session on metaphor and gesture which we organized for the Eighth International Cognitive Linguistics Conference, held in Logroño, Spain in July 2003. Some of the papers from that theme session provided the starting point for the current collection, and others were solicited. In the open discussion at the end of the theme session, several members of the audience pointed out the value of studying the intersection of these fields for their particular discipline, and how this was something they had not considered before. Following up on this, we sought commentaries from experts in different fields on that very question: What potential importance could the study of metaphor and gesture have for your field? The volume ends with these short pieces, which may inspire readers to pursue this area of research in new directions.

For those who are not acquainted with work on metaphor and gesture, this volume gives it a face; it makes this a recognizable topic of research. For those who are conversant with research on either metaphor or gesture, we hope that this book will provide useful insights on a familiar field from a new point of view.

References

- McNeill, D. (1992). *Hand and mind: What gestures reveal about thought*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
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Why study metaphor and gesture?

Alan Cienki

There are numerous ways to research gestures which represent abstract notions, and this paper begins with an overview of some of them which are represented in the current volume – from various semiotic approaches to experimental psychological studies. Then particular attention is given to metaphoric gestures studied as expressions of conceptual metaphors. This line of research has shown some of the similarities and differences between verbal and gestural metaphoric expression. The paper surveys some of the evidence provided from gesture studies which supports the view of metaphor as a cognitive phenomenon, and the notion that thought, even for abstract topics, is grounded in embodied experience. However, the study of gesture also raises some questions for research on conceptual metaphors and how it is conducted. Topics discussed include how one identifies metaphoric expressions, what counts as evidence of conceptual metaphors, how one labels them, and how gesture highlights the graded nature of metaphoricity.

1. Introduction

If we consider the study of metaphor in the tradition of works such as Lakoff and Johnson (1980, 1999) and Lakoff (1993), one of the basic principles is that metaphor stems from (at least potential) conceptual mappings between domains. If metaphor has as its basis cross-domain mappings in the conceptual system, then words should offer just one form in which they may appear. One should be able to find metaphoric expressions in various forms of human behavior, and not exclusively in language. And indeed, there has been some research on conceptual metaphor and its expression in visual media, music, and various forms of cultural practices and rituals (as examples see Fernandez, 1991; Forceville, 1996; Zbikowski, 2002). Since the 1980s, there has been an increasing amount of research which shows that spontaneous gestures during language production, especially gestures of the hands and forearms, can also constitute metaphoric expressions.

This paper offers an overview of some of the findings to date of work published in this area, as well as an introduction to some pertinent questions raised by this