

TUTTON, Mark
c/o Department of French
School of Modern Language Studies
University of New South Wales
Sydney 2052
AUSTRALIA
mark.tutton@student.unsw.edu.au

A language/gesture interface: encoding static, locative relationships in verbal discourse.

When speakers communicate, both verbal and non-verbal aspects of behaviour create and influence discourse. While linguistic components are obviously privileged in utterance analysis, isolating such components from co-occurring non-verbal phenomena only allows for a partial understanding of the complete picture. This paper looks at a PhD in progress which examines how speakers of English and French use *both* language and gesture to express static, locative relations in everyday situations. McNeill *et al.* (2001) point out that hand gesture is very prominent in verbal spatial discourse. However, previous work in this domain has largely focused on the role of co-verbal gesture when speakers describe dynamic motion events: As a result, little is known about how language and gesture are fused when speakers talk about the fixed location of objects in space. This paper firstly outlines the aim of the PhD, which is to provide an understanding of how language and gesture are used by speakers to encode static spatial relationships. The major hypotheses of the study stem from two theoretical concepts which are central to the lexical expression of spatial relations: the degree of *granularity* (Narasimhan & Gullberg 2006) in individual English and French prepositions, and the *frames of reference* (Levinson 2003) adopted by speakers to encode locative relationships. A link between language and gesture is proposed by examining the ramifications these concepts may have for a speaker's gestural behaviour. The pilot study undertaken to test the hypotheses is then addressed, with a particular focus on the presentation and justification of the visual stimulus selected.

Kendon (2004) proposes that gesture "contributes to the total meaning of the utterance of which it is a part." This paper uses this idea as a foundation for the hypothesis that static spatial relations are encoded not only through lexical units, but through gesture as well.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

KENDON A. (2004), *Gesture: Visible Action as Utterance*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

LEVINSON S.C. (2003), *Space in Language and Cognition – Explorations in Cognitive Diversity*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

McNEILL D. *et al.* (2001), "Catchments, prosody and discourse", in *Gesture*, 1.1, 9-33.

NARASIMHAN B. & GULLBERG M. (2006), "Perspective shifts in event descriptions in Tamil child language", in *Journal of Child Language*, 33 (1), 99-124.