

Visible communicative acts in the coordination of conversational interaction

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Coordination is at the heart of human conversation. In order to interact with one another through talk, we must coordinate at the level of our mental states, intentions and conversational contributions. In this talk, I will present findings on the pragmatics of multi-modal communication from completed and on-going experimental production and comprehension studies, as well as recent findings from a corpus study. The studies focus on English (and to a lesser extent on German and Dutch), and the units of analysis are dyadic and triadic interactions. The findings throw light on (1) how co-speech gestures are used for audience design and the coordination of meaning to allow interactants to arrive at a shared understanding of the things we talk about, (2) how gesture and gaze interact in the communication of meaning, as well as on (3) how multi-modal signals are employed in the coordination of speaking turns in spontaneous conversation, with special reference to the psycholinguistic and cognitive challenges that turn-taking poses. Together, these studies illustrate the gains of studying human conversational interaction multi-modally when aiming to more fully understand the psycholinguistic and social processes underlying language use and language comprehension in talk.