

# Managing Multiple Viewpoints

## Coordinating Embedded Perspective in Multimodal Narratives

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# Introduction

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- Linguistic and narratological descriptions of the coordination of multiple viewpoints often focus on embedded representational structures, such as the differences between Direct, Indirect and Free Indirect Speech and Thought (e.g. Genette 1980, Ehrlich 1990, Fleischman 1990, Fludernik 1993, Chafe 1994, Sanders and Redeker 1996, Dancygier 2012, Nikiforidou 2012).
- This sophisticated set of constructional blends has often been thought of as characteristic specifically of modern European and American literary texts, starting in the late 19th century. Structures manifesting, e.g. past tense and present temporal deixis, or third person subject and first-person-based descriptions, have been called “unspeakable sentences” (Banfield 1982).

# Introduction

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- In fact, complex embedding is linguistically marked in oral narratives in many cultures. But multimodality opens up more possibilities for the marking of relationships between multiple viewpoints in narrative.
- As tense, person, deixis and description choices can be combined to create viewpoint blends – so can different aspects of gesture. Hands, facial expression, gaze, and head and body direction are relatively orthogonal in articulation, and can represent aspects of different viewpointed entities.

# Background

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- Real space blends & body partitions (Liddell 2003; Dudis 2004; Sizemore & Sweetser 2008; Parrill 2009; Janzen 2012)
- Opportunistic use of the body to structure meaning (Bavelas & Chovil 2000)
- Shape & location of the gesture varies with narrative function (Enfield et al. 2007)
- Head tilts for viewpoint shifts (Maury-Rouan 2011; McClave, 2000); head shift for ASL quotative (Shaffer 2012)
- Gaze movement for explicit viewpoint shifts (Maury-Rouan, 2011) and to manage turn taking (Bavelas & Gerwing 2007) or indicate holding the floor when remembering (Chovil 1989)

# Main Questions

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- What is embedded multimodal viewpoint?
- What is “mixed” multimodal viewpoint (cases in which multiple mental spaces are simultaneously activated across modalities)?
- How is multimodal viewpoint distributed across modalities?
  - In particular, how “mixed” are the mixed cases of embedded viewpoint?
  - How are different spaces elaborated or maintained?
- What role does “perceptual presence” play?

# Corpus

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- 20 native English speakers (10 dyads)
  - Semi-structured autobiographical narratives; some pairs improvised, others used an optional topic sheet
- 20-30 minutes per dyad, approx.  
10-15 minutes per speaker, for a total corpus length of about 5 hours



# Method

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- 30 clips (14 speakers) were identified as instances of mixed multimodal viewpoint, and were further annotated for the following:
  - spatial info: mental space (linguistic info.), real space (gesture info.), combined spaces
  - cues: explicit cues used to signal the mixed space, body orientation
  - interlocutor's role: interlocutor response, and whether the real space was shared with the interlocutor
  - function of the mixed perspective in discourse



# Impossible Gestures

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- Like Banfield's "unspeakable sentences," mixed-viewpoint gestural patterns would be impossible as expressions of one character's single viewpoint.
- But – just like FIST - they are very much possible as expressions of embedded and combined viewpoints.
- They are easy to process: Viewers notice that this is "vivid" narrative, and are certainly not confused by the "conflicting" visual-gestural viewpoint markers.



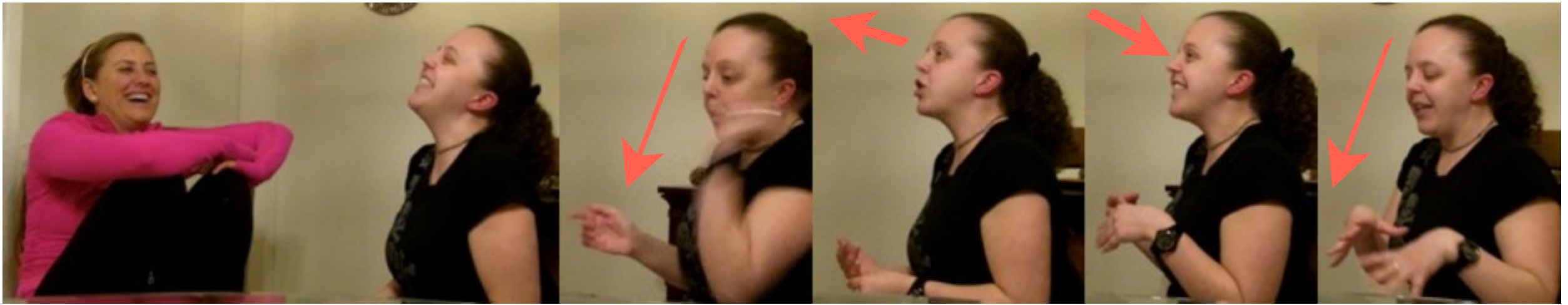
# Impossible Gestures (con't)

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- In our oral narratives, speakers create viewpoint simultaneously with the linguistic and gestural modalities.
  - Linguistic space-builders and transition-markers are present - shifts in tense (including some narrative present use), adverbs, resumptive markers (*anyway* marking return to narrative space).
  - Gesture and other non-verbal markers are, too. In fact, we see a whole narratological structure in the gestural modality, some of which is there *only* in the gestural modality.

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- Transition from narrative to aside, and back to narrative
- Body orientation anchors the narrative space - leaning, rather than turning towards interlocutor marks the “aside”
- Hands are poised for narration before it starts.

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- Long hand-position hold of “holding document” - this (i) keeps up one character’s viewpoint during expression of another character’s words, and (ii) maintains the narrative space while things (asides, interruptions) delay the completion of the narrative.
- The Clerk is not looking up and voicing the Past Self; the Past Self is not holding the document which the Clerk is examining.
- The current Speaker is not holding any document at all, but is answering the Real-Space interlocutor’s interruptions; the Clerk is holding the document, but of course is not in the same space as the Real-Space interlocutor.



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- Speaker is here voicing the interlocutor's Past Self, not his own Past Self - in enacting an event in which both took part.
- Immediately before and after the quoted portion, his eyes make contact with the interlocutor, “checking in” that she is right with him and OK with this. Which she clearly (non-verbally) indicates is the case.
- Only the gaze indicates this - there is no “right?” or “remember?” linguistic marker here.

# Mixed Multimodal Spaces: Combinations

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<b>Mental Space (Lx.)</b>	<b>Real Space (G)</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
Addressee	Narrative	12
Narrative Background	Narr.Foreground	5
Dual Vpt	(Dual Vpt)	5
Meta	Narrative	4
Memory	Narrative	3
Narrative	Quote	2

# Mixed Multimodal Spaces: Cues

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Non-verbal cues	Frequency
Body orientation	12
Head orientation	11
Direction of Gaze	8
Handshape changes	5
Holds	5
Repeat gestures	3
Nothing	3
CVPT changes	2
Dual Vpt	1

- Articulator orientation appears to be a more meaningful cue than gesture form

# Mixed Multimodal Spaces: Type and Function

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Type	Frequency
Placeholder	11
Multiple spaces	8
Dual Vpt	5
Anticipatory	4
Joint Attention	2

Function	Frequency
Transitions	13
Elaboration	8
Word Search	5
Meta	4

# Discussion

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- Gestural viewpoint is just as complex as linguistic viewpoint; both point to an underlying cognitive mechanism which tracks and expresses “ordinary” information in “extraordinary” ways.
- Head and body orientation, and gaze, *track* mental spaces accessed - speakers consistently use particular parts of gesture space in referring to particular mental spaces involved in the narrative.
- Since hands, body direction, head direction, and gaze are relatively separable, gesture (unlike spoken/written language, but like sign language) allows the *simultaneous* expression of material from more than one character or even more than one space.



# Discussion

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- Multimodal narrative has two complex, integrated streams of viewpoint information.
- Head and body orientation, and gaze, are preferentially used to visually signal complex viewpoint structures.
- Embedded multimodal viewpoint allows speakers to keep multiple mental spaces active simultaneously. Where the linguistic track might show a digression and a resumption of narrative space, looking at the speaker's hands might show clearly the ongoing connection to the narrative during the digression or interruption.
- Instances of “mixed” multimodal viewpoint are fairly common. They are often used to maintain a mental space (via perceptual presence) during access to another, or to transition from one mental space to another.

# Thanks

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