ISGS-HK talk

Michael Stevens Pérez

Title: Construal in depictive gesturing as a practice of sense-making for exposition

Abstract

My talk examines the notion of construal in depictive gestures, those that speakers use as they bring imagery to verbal expositions, such as in explanations and discussions. Construal, generally understood as the perspective, attitude, or interpretation that a person brings to their expression of an event, is specified by cognitive linguists as the structuring that is imposed onto conceptual content so that content can be portrayed in communication. Construal therefore involves certain cognitive processes that guide linguistic structures, and entails that alternate portrayals of events will differ in meaning. In gesture, a nexus of anatomical configurations, methods of depiction, and affordances of space, time, and imaginative relations further conspire in a portrayal. For instance, whether an object is depicted in terms of its shape or its use can have different effects on the meaning of a multimodal construction. In my research, I take an enactive view in showing how construal is an intersubjectively motivated cognitive practice. The basis for analysis is on reformulations of depictive gesturing, conducted by speakers as they explain and discuss concepts in second language academic settings. I argue that depictive gesturing, as a dynamic practice of construal for sense-making, participates in the analysis of a topic at hand.

Keywords: conceptual gesturing, construal, depiction by gesture, intersubjectivity, reformulation

Bio

Michael Stevens Pérez recently completed his PhD at the University of Nottingham Ningbo China in the School of Education and English. His research focuses on gesture and cognition in interaction at the level of concept development, specifically within learning environments that use a foreign language as an academic lingua franca. His approach brings together methods in Cognitive Linguistics, Conversation Analysis, and Enactive cognition, to the study of gesture and embodied actions in learning. Mike’s research, in turn, seeks to promote local, human-centered approaches to mind. His interests lie at the intersection of individual, interactional, and socio-cultural process of meaning-making. He is also a collaborator in the multimodal language diversity project, the corpus of Chinese Academic Written and Spoken English (CAWSE).