Editorial Board

Janet Bavelas
University of Victoria, Vancouver

Justine Cassell
MIT, Cambridge

Jacques Cosnier
Université de Lyon

Susan Goldin-Meadow
University of Chicago

Charles Goodwin
University of California, Los Angeles

Marianne Gullberg
Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics, Nijmegen

Uri Hadar
Tel Aviv University

C. Christian Heath
Kings College, University of London

Sotaro Kita
University of Birmingham

Reinhard Krüger
University of Stuttgart

Scott Liddell
Gallaudet University, Washington

David McNeill
University of Chicago

Rafael Núñez
University of California, San Diego

Isabella Poggi
University of Rome Three

Roland Posner
Technical University, Berlin

Francis Quek
Wright State University, Dayton

Monica Rector
University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

Herman Roodeburg
Meertens Institute, Amsterdam

Eli Rozik-Rosen
Tel Aviv University

Serge Santi
Université de Provence, Aix-en-Provence

Jürgen Streeck
University of Texas at Austin

Eve Sweetser
University of California, Berkeley

Michael Tomasello
Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology, Leipzig

Sherman Wilcox
University of New Mexico, Albuquerque

Katharine Young
University of California, Berkeley

Table of contents

Articles

Depicting by gesture
Jürgen Streeck

Linking parent input and child receptivity to symbolic gestures
Laura L. Namy, Rebecca Vallas, and Jennifer Knight-Schwarz

Gesture and melody in Indian vocal music
Matt Rahaem

Some reflections on the relationship between ‘gesture’ and ‘sign’
Adam Kendon

Book reviews

Reviewed by Pierre Feyereisen

Reviewed by Adam Kendon

Reviewed by Jeroen Arendsen

Workshop report

“Gestures: a comparison of spoken and signed languages”
Ulrike Wrobel, University of Hamburg

Books for review

Recent, new, and forthcoming books on gesture and related topics
Depicting by gesture

Jürgen Streeck
The University of Texas at Austin

This paper deals with ways in which gestural “pictures” are made, i.e., manual depictions of phenomena in the world. The view that “iconic” gestures uniformly function by way of some resemblance between signifier and signified is rejected, giving way to an understanding of depiction by gesture as the achievement of a heterogeneous set of practices, some of which rely on relations of contiguity or indexicality to evoke commonly known objects or scenes. Others seem to be derivative of other representation methods (e.g., drawing on surfaces). The paper reviews some existing work on gestural depiction methods, offers a working heuristics, and illustrates some of its categories. It is suggested that some of the basic ways in which actions of the hands evoke the world in gesture correspond to fundamental modes of existence and activity of human hands in the world: hands depict by enacting their familiar, “real-world” capacities as users, transporters, experiencers, assemblers, molders, and shapers of things.

Keywords: depiction, description, iconicity, indexicality, gesture

This paper deals with ways in which gestural “pictures” are made. Traditionally, these gestures are called “iconic”, and the fact that we can often see what a gesture refers to is explained by its similarity with what it depicts. Similarity (resemblance) is the core notion by which iconicity is defined. Thus, Ekman and Friesen in an influential paper (1969) suggested that an iconic gesture “looks in some way like what it means, its significant” (p. 60). In this they followed Morris, who wrote that “an iconic sign ... is similar in some respect to what it denotes” (1946, p. 191), that “the iconic sign ... is like what it signifies” (p. 201; emphasis J.S.)

But it is not evident how two hands can “be like” or “look like” such diverse phenomena as swimming-pools, polka-dots, or an acrobat’s routine, to name some random phenomena that gesturing hands can depict for us. Maybe in some language of theory, “similarity” can be given a definition that is so abstract that it is possible to accommodate even these visually dissimilar signifieds rendered visible by two hands. In this paper, however, a different approach is taken. It is assumed