

# CREATING AND MAINTAINING PERSPECTIVES AND IDENTITIES IN NARRATIVES WITH GESTURE SPACE AND GESTURAL HANDEDNESS

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The present article is concerned with the representation of viewpoints and identities in story telling performances. The analysis is based on video recordings of experimentally elicited narratives told during dyadic interactions. It is proposed that gesture, and in particular gesture space and gestural handedness, provide insight into how story tellers create different perspectives and identities while telling a story and how a shift in between telling and narrative frame is represented in catchments as proposed by McNeill 2000.

KEYWORDS: narrative, gesture, gesture space, handedness, perspective

Diese Studie basiert auf Videoaufnahmen experimentell erhobener Erzählungen, die während dyadischen Interaktionen stattfanden. Der aktuelle Artikel beschäftigt sich mit der Repräsentation von Perspektiven und der Schaffung von Identitäten im Erzählprozess. Gesten, im Speziellen die Verteilung von Gesten im Raum und die gestische Händigkeit, geben Aufschluss darüber, wie Erzähler verschiedene Perspektiven und Identitäten während des Erzählens schaffen und zeigen weiterhin, wie ein Wechsel zwischen den Rahmen des Erzählens und dem Rahmen des Erzählten sich in „catchments“ (McNeill 2000) widerspiegelt.

SCHLAGWÖRTER: Erzählungen, Gestik, Gestikraum, Händigkeit, Perspektive

## 1 INTRODUCTION

This study investigates experimentally elicited narratives told in dyadic interactions to demonstrate how story lines and viewpoints are brought across in speech and in gesture. Gestures can reveal information about a story and the development of a consistent story line that are not fully represented by utterances alone. According to McNeill et al. (1993) story tellers use gestures to create discourse cohesion. Gesture form, gesture space and handedness contribute to a cohesive story line and are also considered to be signals of viewpoints in narration: a story teller can either represent the perspective of an observer, a character or a participant in the events which is coded in speech and in gesture.

Stories usually have a past trajectory, reporting on events that happened at some time in the past. Casasanto et al. (2012) conducted a study with English speakers to investigate how time is expressed in speech and in gesture. The ways in which time is referred to differs greatly depending on whether it is represented in the verbal or the non-verbal mode. Investigating how people speak and gesture about time, Casasanto et al. (2012) present strong evidence that lateral gestures (on a left to right axis) significantly outnumbered sagittal gestures (on a back-front axis), even though the sagittal timeline is the predominant one in speech: aspects of time are expressed via space in spatial words, for instance when we look *forward* to something or look *back* on our childhood; and we say “The deadline lies ahead of us” versus “The deadline lies behind us” (Casasanto et al. 2012:644), again representing time in spatial terms. In two experiments, one investigating deliberate gestures, the other investigating spontaneous gestures, Casasanto et al. showed that there is strong evidence for an implicit mental timeline that runs along the lateral axis. Speakers employ gestures along this axis even when they are talking about back/front metaphors as the ones presented above. This is compatible with previous findings by McNeill et al. (1993) and a later study by McNeill et al. (unpublished). McNeill et al. (1993) report that tellers of film narrations, for instance, apply gesture space to create discourse cohesion. (Deictic) gestures can refer to an object and maintain this reference throughout the story telling. Beat gestures fulfill a highlighting function emphasizing the importance of other gestures and speech to index prosody, for instance (McNeill et al. unpublished). Gesture space, usually from left to right, is used to create cohesive linkages across texts where space can represent characters or stand for a person distancing himself/herself from an unwelcome topic. This notion is further developed in McNeill et al. (unpublished) in which they argue that space is a metaphor for something else, such as a shared space, a shared topic, an opposition, etc.

The aim in this study is to contribute to our understanding of how speakers generally employ gesture form, gesture space and handedness to represent and even contrast thematic units as well as viewpoints and perspectives in elicited narratives.

## 2 METHODS

In this paper examples of elicited narratives will be analyzed. The speakers report on an activity during which they imagine spending a day at a zoo. Forty-seven English native speakers, all university students, participated in the experiment. Written informed consent was given and all the names were anonymized. The participants were seated at a table, facing each other, and the experiments were recorded with two Canon Legria video cameras providing two vantage points to ensure that one camera was directed at each participant.

The examples presented here derive from the second half of a two-phase experiment. Participants were asked to tell a story about the first activity that they had

performed earlier. Based on a map of Brookfield Zoo<sup>1</sup> outside of Chicago and two versions (A and B) of an instruction sheet<sup>2</sup> listing several activities, such as visiting animal exhibits and attending a show at the zoo, dyads of participants were asked to jointly solve the given task, which was similar to a path planning task. In the second phase of the experiment participants were regrouped so that each participant (one had version A of the instructions, the other one version B in the first round) now had a new interaction partner. The researcher started each session with this scenario: “You were at the zoo yesterday. Today, you are meeting your friend (the person sitting across from you). Tell your friend what you did while you were at the zoo yesterday.” Both participants were required to tell a story. The events at the zoo were provided on the task sheet in the first round and hence, this was an imagined scenario. The recapitulation of the planning activities from the first round, however, are factual since the participants planned the routes through the zoo according to the task sheet. No further instructions were given unless the participants had any questions.

The data were analyzed according to gesture space, gestural handedness and catchments. Furthermore, the representation of narrative perspectives and the creation of identity, such as story teller, character, participant, etc., will be investigated. The results will be presented and discussed accordingly.

### 3 GESTURE SPACE

Before studying the representation of space as a metaphor for something else and looking at how it creates discourse cohesion (McNeill et al. unpublished), the actual physical space in which the gestures analyzed in this study occur needs to be described. Gesture space can be divided into the lateral and the sagittal axis, as it was defined by Casasanto et al. 2012. For the purpose of this study, gesture space needs to be differentiated even further. Space also means the elevation of gestures in space. A natural limitation in this study is the table at which participants were sitting. Their range of possible movements is limited as they cannot use the space below the table, below their torso, to gesture. The visual field does, however, allow for gesture productions above the table, to the left and the right of the body, to the front and possibly to the back. The gestures to the front include gestures directed to the map, frequently deictics, and gestures addressed to the interaction partner. Similar to Goodwin’s (2003) descriptions of a conversation between an aphasic patient and his family as well as the conversations of archaeologists at work, it is the aim of the interactants “to establish a particular space as a shared focus for the organization of cognition and action” (p. 2). Pointing to the map establishes a shared focus, and moreover, it helps the speaker to order the events while “retracing” routes through the zoo. The deictics further aid the listener in following and understanding the tellers’ story. It is one of the main findings of the current study that most gestures appeared on the lateral axis, confirming the

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<sup>1</sup><http://www.czs.org/CZS/Brookfield/ZooMap/Brookfield-Zoo-map-2010> (September, 2010)

<sup>2</sup> See appendix for the full version of the instruction sheets

results by Casasanto et al. Moreover space cannot be separated from gestural handedness, another important feature in narratives.

#### 4 GESTURAL HANDEDNESS

Gestural handedness describes the production of a gesture with either a single hand (left or right) or bi-manually as well as the shift from one hand to the other, from one to two hands, and vice versa. Gestures often occur at points of topic shifts (Levy et al. 1992) and changes in gestural handedness can occur at the start of a new topic, thereby marking (narrative) episodes and distinguishing new from old information. A continuation (and I will argue also a repetition) of the same gesture form and posture can further aid the speaker (and presumably the listener) in “keep[ing] alive the discourse theme while the problem of new information is being dealt with. In these ways, the speaker is able to maintain and strengthen topicality by marking change and then maintain cohesion via the gestural system” (McNeill et al. 1993:366).

In the data set, there is one predominant feature of handedness: speakers use one hand as the “pointing hand”, for example when saying “we went to Australia House”, indexing the location of the exhibit on the map and using the same hand throughout the story to reference items via a deictic. The direction of the pointing gesture(s) is generally oriented toward the map, in front of the speaker’s body and limited to the specific area on the table where the map lies. The other hand can then be used to accompany a comment on the meta-level, the level above the narration proper, for instance. It is usually with this hand (or even both hands) that speakers produce gesture outside the “pointing space”.

For example, Ben (MOV00BA) is pointing to entities using his right hand (RH) (e.g. in line 1) and he is using the left hand (LH) in line 2 when he says *we saw them like twice*, referring to the butterflies and further explaining in line 3 that the reason for seeing them twice was *cause Maggie liked them so much*.

|    | <i>Name</i> | <i>Intonation Unit</i>                      | <i>Gesture/ gaze unit</i>   |
|----|-------------|---|-----------------------------|
| 1. | Ben         | [oh (we) saw the butterflies yeah,]         | RH point                    |
| 2. |             | we saw them like twice.                     | LH extension of two fingers |
| 3. |             | °cause M- cause Maggie liked them so much.° |                             |

McNeill et al. (unpublished:4) write that “[g]estures are of course spatial but the spaces in which they appear are not filled at random”. As the example has demonstrated, the separation of front space and left space represents a separation in the story itself: the right hand is used to point at entities on the map in front of Ben, and, maybe even more importantly, it connects with the first part of the experiment, in which the actual planning occurred, to the activity in the second half of the experiment. It anchors the

previous planning to the actual telling and thus it even creates cohesion across temporally separated activities.

The left hand, in contrast, marks anything that is not related to the actual planning and can accompany explanatory remarks as the one above. According to a study by Kimbara (2007) a recalled stimulus, in her study a cartoon film, influences the gesture produced by the participant: the location of an object in the original cartoon film influenced the teller's gesture, i.e. if an object was located at the right of the screen, the gesture most likely occurred in the right gesture space (Kimbara 2007:213). The presence of the map in the present study certainly enhances the use of pointing movements toward the map. Nevertheless, the distinction between "pointing hand" and "other hand" and the separation of front space and left space, as seen in Ben's case, can provide deeper insight into the story teller's reconstruction of the past events.

## 5 CATCHMENTS

In this section McNeill's notion of catchments is related to handedness. McNeill (2000:316) writes

A catchment is recognized from a recurrence of gesture features over a stretch of discourse. It is a kind of thread of consistent visuo-spatial imagery running through a discourse segment that provides a gesture-based window into discourse cohesion. The logic of a catchment is that discourse themes produce gestures with recurring features; these recurrences give rise to the catchment. Thus, working backwards, the catchment offers clues to the cohesive linkages in the text with which it co-occurs. Catchments are recognized from two or more gestures (not necessarily consecutive) with partially or fully recurring features of shape, movement, space, orientation, dynamics, etc.

In this example (MOVOOCD)<sup>3</sup>, Cloe is in the middle of reporting to Dan about her day at the zoo, an event that lies in the past. This excerpt further develops the idea of handedness with regard to catchments and it also contains a so called *conduit metaphoric gesture*, which is a special kind of metaphoric gesture. A conduit metaphoric gesture can take the form of cupped hands representing the content of the narrative and offering it to a listener (McNeill et al. 1993).

|    | <i>Name</i> | <i>Intonation unit</i>        | <i>Gesture/ gaze unit</i> |
|----|-------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. | Cloe        | and then uhm we went up here, | LH tracing way up         |
| 2. |             | to the Fragile Kingdom.       | LH point                  |
| 3. |             | (1.0)                         |                           |

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<sup>3</sup> My gratitude to David McNeill for his comments on this example.

|     |      |   |  |
|-----|------|---|--|
| 4.  | Dan  | oh (we went there as well.)                                   |  |
| 5.  |      | (I just forgot about that.)                                   |  |
| 6.  | Cloe |   | gaze at Dan                              |
| 7.  |      | ((laughing)) it's even [drawn on here?]                       | LH point, LH extension of five fingers   |
| 8.  | Dan  | [[laughing]]  |  |
| 9.  | Cloe | okay then we came out,  | shift to RH                              |
| 10. |      | <i>video cut here</i>   |  |
| 11. |      | and then uhm .. it might be then that we went somewhere else? | RH above map, retracting hand            |
| 12. |      | difficult to say,   |  |
| 13. |      | (3.0)   |  |
| 14. |      | perhaps we did?   |  |
| 15. |      | oh we also had to go across the Bear Wilderness,              | RH point                                 |
| 16. |      | to get to the penguins,                                       | RH point                                 |
| 17. |      | cause you know that's . one of the things you gotta do?       | RH extension of five fingers to the side |
| 18. |      | and then well pretty much,                                    |  |
| 19. |      | those are involved with the fountain,                         | RH point                                 |
| 20. |      | and all around it,  | RH circle above map                      |
| 21. |      | so this is (pretty much) what we did,                         | cupped hands                             |
| 22. |      | and then-   | RH point                                 |
| 23. |      | and then we (took off) and went home.                         | retracting hands                         |

At the beginning, Cloe uses her left to indicate routes (line 1) and to point to entities (line 2) on the map. In line three, there is a pause after which Dan takes up the turn uttering that he now remembers that he and his friend had been to the Fragile Kingdom, too. His statement is echoed by a meta-level reference because Cloe is commenting on the fact that the Fragile Kingdom has been marked by them on the map, *it's even {drawn on here?}* (line 7). Dan's interruption, moreover, triggered a change in pointing hands, from left to right hand. Lines 1 to 7 can then be considered one

catchment, C1, all displaying left hand deixis. Until the completion of the story in line 23, Cloe uses her right hand to point to the map. From lines 11 to 14, Cloe retracts her (right) hand from the map and holds it up to her chin, thereby marking an interruption in the narrative flow. This is yet another catchment C2, representing a thematic unit started by a right hand deictic gesture and continued to line 14 without a gesture. In line 15 Cloe is signalling the continuation of the narrative events by a point to the *Bear Wilderness*. I consider lines 15 and 16 to be a single unit referring back to a prior stop along Cloe's way, the penguins, and there is a new identification (right hand point) to this particular entity on the map. Cloe had previously mentioned that she and her friends had been to the penguins (not transcribed here) and the statement in line 15 ties her previous explanation to the current moment of remembering. The repetition of *the penguins* creates verbal cohesion accompanied by a repeated point. The Bear Wilderness is identified as an animal exhibit that they visited before stopping to see the penguins.

In line 17, there is another comment above the actual narrative level, a kind of side remark that contrasts thematically and gesturally (five fingers) with the previous discourse. The utterance is accompanied by a gesture to the right, palm facing up. The movement to a new gesture space marks the speech as a side remark which deserves a gesture to the side. In line 18, catchment C3 begins. It is about the fountain, which is indexed in line 19 and continued in line 20: The word *around* is marked by a circling gesture above the map, highlighting the area in which most activities took place. Nearing the end of the unit, this idea is further carried out by a conduit metaphor. When Cloe is saying *so this is (pretty much) what we did* she holds her cupped hands above an area around the fountain, which again is represented as a central point in her narrative. This gesture not only identifies the area in which they spent most of their day, thereby establishing a shared space, but it also represents the activities and the actual planning that happened in the first part of the experiment, thereby referencing a prior activity, a shared activity. When concluding, Cloe uses a right hand deictic (line 22) before she retracts both hands to signal that she has reached the ending of her story, indexing the completion of the discourse unit. This is the fourth catchment, C4, representing the closing of the narrative.

## 6 VIEWPOINTS IN NARRATIVES

Norrick (2009) investigated the construction of multiple identities by elderly people when they tell stories. He writes that in stories by elderly tellers who are talking about past personal experiences, "the teller-*me* often differs greatly from the character-*me*", whereas younger tellers might not draw this distinction or feel that there is no significant difference between teller and character (Norrick 2009:905). Furthermore, Levy (2008) presents an analysis of repeated retellings of stories, both by children and by adults, showing that there is a narrative change along the life-span of a person. Based on Vygotsky's (1987:135) description of how children move from word meaning to the formation of connections and lastly reducing groups of objects into a single meaning, from *heaps* to *complexes* to *concepts*, Levy (2008) demonstrates how narratives by a five year-old, a ten year-old and an adult differ in terms of cohesion. Whereas the

youngest child creates deictic relationships, the ten year-old child “links utterances *anaphorically*, with each utterance presupposing aspects of utterances that have come before; and the older speaker uses *cataphoric* reference, linking his summary statement to utterances that follow (Levy 2008:279). McNeill et al. (unpublished) distinguish the so called “observer viewpoint” from the “character viewpoint”, drawing a distinction between a “detached observer” and “a participant in the action”. These viewpoints represent two kinds of perspectives that can be represented through gestures. In this study, the retellings of the events happened in close temporal connection to the planning task. Even though the study cannot provide for any developmental observations such as the ones by Levy, it can nevertheless give insight into representations of narrator-character-observer roles as well as first person singular versus first person plural perspectives.

In the excerpt (MOV00HG), Harry is the story teller, but also a character in the story. Gabriel is the listener. Norrick (2009) reports on how story tellers create different identities, for example by contrasting their present to their past ‘me’. Harry, however, is not only creating different identities via a present-past differentiation, but also by shifting in between first person singular and the first person plural, thereby including another character, his girlfriend, into the action of the narrative. Furthermore, Harry deploys cohesive devices across his story linking previous experiences to the current telling, for example in line 2: *last time* refers to a previous visit to the zoo and the circling gesture contains the things that they did not see during their last visit. The example contains three main units and some seconds of the video are omitted in this transcript as indicated in lines 20 and 32.

| <i>Name</i> | <i>Intonation unit</i>  | <i>Gesture/ gaze unit</i>             |
|-------------|---|---------------------------------------|
| 1. Harry    | ( ) and I came in through the North Gate,                               |                                       |
| 2.          | I-I-I was a lot closer uh to all the stuff we didn't see last time.     | RH circle                             |
| 3.          | so I headed straight over?  |                                       |
| 4.          | to uh the Dragonfly Marsh,  |                                       |
| 5.          | and had a look at those,  | RH point                              |
| 6.          | had a look at some dragonflies.   |                                       |
| 7.          | and there were loads of them,   | gaze up, both                         |
| 8.          | all pretty colors.  | hands into the air                    |
| 9.          | loads of dragonflies.   |                                       |
| 10.         | and then uh we wen- we went down the through the Salt Creek Wilderness, |                                       |
| 11.         | just because .. that's what my girlfriend wants to do,                  | turning left arm, gaze, head movement |



12. something a little bit romantic.
13. Gabriel ((laughter))
14. Harry wa- walk through the Wilderness,
15. saw some swans,
16. so we enjoyed that.
17. and then uh we were over here? RH point and RH  
circle
18. but there was nothing else we wanted to see,
19. so uh .. we went over to the Swamp. RH point
20. *video cut here*
21. then uh we were bored,
22. so we went over to the Children's Zoo, RH point
23. because we thought at least there we can feed gaze  
the animals.
24. so we fed some animals.
25. and I fed a llama, RH extension of  
five fingers
26. and it was really wet retracts hand
27. and I like [almost had a whole hand] in its RH/arm extension  
mouth
28. Gabriel [((laughter))]
29. Harry and when I pulled it out, pulling out RH
30. it was just covered-
31. shakes whole arm
32. covered in spit.
33. it was horrible.
34. *video cut here*
35. Harry and then uh .. we saw like dolphins. RH point
36. ()
37. (we go and see the dolphins) gaze

38. Gabriel yeah.
39. Harry and they did like jumping through hoops. BH “jumping through hoops gesture”
40. and then by by THAT time it was pretty late,
41. like we’d seen pretty much all we could have seen that day.

Harry uses his right hand, holding the pen, to point to entities. However, there are two moments in the story when he shifts from one hand to two hands, in lines 7 and 39. In the first example, he is speaking about the dragonflies stressing that there were *loads of them*, once in line 7 and again in line 9. Furthermore, he underlines the great number of dragonflies by raising both hands into the air. Similarly, when describing how the dolphins were jumping through hoops, he represents this action with his hands and repeats the gesture twice. Abstracting McNeill’s definition of catchment, I will argue that both cases represent one catchment: space and gesture form constitute features of catchments. The speaker uses bi-manual gestures moving upward and being elevated in space to mark additional information and to add emphasis to his verbal account.

In Cloe’s story it has been shown that speakers can mark side remarks through handedness as well. Similarly to the isolate in Cloe’s narrative, Harry mentions his girlfriend in line 11 and the non-verbal mode is heavily marked here. He gazes at Gabriel while turning his head slightly and he further uses his left arm to mark the utterance *just because .. that’s what my girlfriend wants to do*. This statement, moreover, is an invention of Harry’s presented as fact. To mark this, he attributes the left space to actions associated with his girlfriend and at the same time disassociates *character-* and *teller-Harry* from this action.

Bridgeman (2007:62) reports on the reader’s understanding of narrative with regard to temporal and spatial relationships and states that “[i]n our own worlds, we are physically confined to our bodily experience of the world, but we have the ability to shift this experiencing center to imagine ourselves in other people’s places, and in other locations.” Narrators just as readers of stories have the same ability and Harry is inventing feelings of and for his girlfriend, who wanted to do something romantic (line 12). Harry just as other characters of narrative texts who “move around, inhabit and experience different spaces and locations” (Bridgeman 2007:52), reports on different actions by different characters in his retelling of events. The separation and attribution of gesture space to individual characters is further apparent in lines 25 to 33. From line 24 *so we fed some animals* to line 25 *and I fed a llama*, there is a shift from first person plural narrative inclusive of the girlfriend to first person singular narrative. Harry now depicts himself as the sole actor, the protagonist, providing his viewpoint and (physical) experience. This section also represents a catchment associated with the feeding of the llama. Harry uses his right hand and arm to demonstrate the actual feeding. The gesture consists of various components: from a right hand, palm up, forward moving gesture describing the feeding, he moves back and then extends his arm to the right space to show how he *pulled it out* (line 29) and then shakes his whole arm to underline how *it was covered in spit*. By moving away from the central gesture space, the role of sole acting and

experiencing protagonist is clearly separated from the “*We-Harry*”, who experiences the day at the zoo together with his girlfriend. Thus he creates different identities for himself, contrasting the boyfriend with the individual person, and at the same time presenting himself as the funny guy, who makes the listener laugh (line 28). The change in perspective is again accompanied by a change in gesture hand and space.

#### 7 VIEWPOINTS AND META-COMMENTS IN NARRATIVES

One last example (MOV00GH) will be adduced to further investigate how story tellers represent different perspectives, how they create different identities, and how this is reflected in their gestures. Of particular interest are meta-utterances, understood as statements which are not part of the story events proper, but function as evaluative remarks of these events, for instance. Norrick (2009:915) writes that elderly tellers can shift in between “the story realm (or telling frame) and the tale world (or narrative frame)” to convey different identities. The same holds for the story tellers in the present study as the next example will demonstrate. Gavin is telling Helen about his day, presenting his story in the first person singular. Gavin is displaying a special kind of pointing which Goodwin (2003) has labeled “tracing”. He explains that in tracing “the moving finger and the target of the point are brought into a dynamic relationship in which each is used to understand the other (Goodwin 2003:16). Gavin points to an item, such as the *Australia House* (line 1) and continues his journey *through the Fragile Kingdom* (line 2) before indexing the arrival at the Fragile Kingdom by a deictic. Both speech and hand movement express the idea of walking from one place to another, passing through a certain area along the way. There are two more occurrences of pointing and tracing from lines 7 to 10 and then lines 16 and 17.

|    | <i>Name</i> | <i>Intonation Unit</i>                         | <i>Gesture/ gaze unit</i>                 |
|----|-------------|--|---|
| 1. | Gavin       | so I went from this Australia House down here, | RH point, tracing                         |
| 2. |             | through the Fragile Kingdom,                   | tracing, RH point                         |
| 3. |             | and ( ) saw some lovely dolphins.              | gaze, smile, BH raised palms up           |
| 4. | Helen       | oh I bet that was nice.                        |   |
| 5. | Gavin       | uhm it was fantastic [I must say].             | LH extension of five fingers, palm inward |
| 6. | Helen       | [[laughter]]                                   |   |
| 7. | Gavin       | uhm and then .. I decided to come down here,   | tracing                                   |
| 8. |             | and go on this motor thingamajig.              | RH point                                  |

- |     |       |   |   |
|-----|-------|---|---|
| 9.  |       | go to this bit here:.                           | tracing                                       |
| 10. |       | uhm to meet my friends for lunch at the .. la   | RH point                                      |
|     |       | gran cocina or something.                       |   |
| 11. | Helen | °hm:°   |   |
| 12. | Gavin | which was fantastic,                            | RH extension of<br>five fingers, palm<br>down |
| 13. |       | I'd like to add.                                | point at Helen                                |
| 14. |       | really good meal,                               |   |
| 15. |       | I recommend you try it some time.               |   |
| 16. |       | and jump BAck on the motor thing,               | RH point                                      |
| 17. |       | and went up to the butterflies,                 | tracing                                       |
| 18. |       | .t (cause) they're in season,                   |   |
| 19. |       | and uh I've actually got a butterfly thing at   | LH point at Helen                             |
|     |       | home,   |   |
| 20. |       | like a big .. pre- you know preservation thing. | BH in air                                     |
| 21. |       | (°whatever°)                                    |   |
| 22. | Helen | (oh nice,)                                      |   |
| 23. | Gavin | and uh .. quite nice,                           |   |
| 24. |       | then I went to this pachyderm house,            | RH point                                      |

Of interest in terms of handedness is the gesture in line 3 that accompanies *and () saw some lovely dolphins*. Gavin expresses that he likes dolphins by gazing up at Helen with a smile on his face and raising both hands palms up to the side as if he was presenting the dolphins to Helen. Helen acknowledges Gavin's evaluation by replying with a meta-utterance *oh I bet this was nice* (line 4) which in turn leads to an agreeing stance and another meta-evaluation *uhm it was fantastic [I must say]* by Gavin.

There is a similar meta-evaluative remark in lines 12 to 14, in which Gavin is telling Helen about a restaurant where he had lunch. Both events have in common that Gavin invents a scenario because neither has he actually seen the *lovely dolphins* nor has he been to the restaurant to have a *really good meal* (line 14). Considering the gestures accompanying these two accounts and comparing them to the previous gestural handedness presented so far, one could assume that they match in form, space and handedness. Both gestures bear resemblance in gesture form since they are produced with five fingers. In the first example, the left hand palm is turned inward, whereas in the second case the palm of the right hand faces downward, thus displaying a contrast in the use of hands. One possible explanation for this discrepancy can be found when

looking at line 19, where Gavin is again using a left hand point at Helen. In this case, he is reporting factual information, i.e., personal information. The common denominator between these two left hand gestures is Helen. Hence the left space and the left hand are associated with the person outside the story, Helen, whereas the right hand stands for the story and Gavin's perspective as a character. Thus, Gavin draws a distinction between the telling frame and the narrative frame and is presenting himself as a person interested in butterflies.

The different variations of gesture form and space mark themes within the story. The completion of the thematic unit and the ending of the story are once again marked by a retraction of both hands (not in the transcript).

## 8 CONCLUSION

This study explored how tellers portray narrative themes, establish narrative units, and express narrative perspective both in speech and in gesture in elicited narratives. One major differentiation was drawn between the use of a single hand versus two hands and the occurrence of gestures in different spaces, be it to the left, the front center or the right of the teller's body. Catchments provided a deeper insight into the teller's division of narrative units. The recurrence of themes mapped onto the recurrence of certain gestures. Tellers divide space as a reflection of the role they inhabit while they tell the story. Identities such as character(s) and sole actor frequently occupy one gesture space, differentiated from references and deictics to entities on the map. These deictic gestures further help the story teller to connect the story telling performance to the previous planning of the activities.

Furthermore the investigation demonstrated that story tellers can separate their own character from another character and attribute a separate gesture space to the receiver of their story. Thus, they create different identities within the narrative frame and the telling frame. The retraction of the hand(s) can coincide with a pause and mark an interruption, which in turn can lead to a change in hand and arm usage. Participants also retracted both hands to indicate that they were reaching the end of their story.

The present article supplements existing research and provides additional insight into the verbal and gestural representation of perspective and themes in narratives. Further research needs to be conducted to explain how deictics help participants in remembering and connecting the first and the second part of the experimental activities.

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## APPENDIX

### TRANSCRIPTION CONVENTIONS

#### *Transcription Conventions*

Each line of transcription represents spoken language as segmented into intonation units. In English, an intonation unit typically consists of about four to five words and expresses one new idea unit. Intonation units are likely to begin with a brief pause and to end in a clause-final intonation contour; they often match grammatical clauses. Each idea unit typically contains a subject, or given information, and a predicate, or new information; this flow from given to new information is characteristic of spoken language (Chafe 1994). Arranging each intonation unit on a separate line displays the greater fragmentation inherent in spoken language (Chafe 1982).

Capitalization is used for the pronoun *I* and proper names. Otherwise, capitalization, punctuation and diacritics mark features of prosody rather than grammatical units. Non-lexical items, for example pause fillers like *eh* and *um*, affirmative particles like *aba* or surprise markers like *oh* are included in transcripts. The specific transcription conventions are as follows.

|            |  |
|------------|--|
| she's out. | Period shows falling tone in the preceding element.  |
| oh yeah?   | Question mark shows rising tone in the preceding element.                                    |
| nine, ten  | Comma indicates a level, continuing intonation.  |
| DAMN       | Capitals show heavy stress or indicate that speech is louder than the surrounding discourse. |

|                   |   |
|-------------------|---|
| °dearest°         | Utterances spoken more softly than the surrounding discourse are framed by degree signs.                  |
| hɑ:rd             | The colon indicates the prolonging of the prior sound or syllable.  |
| bu- but           | A single dash indicates a cut-off with a glottal stop.  |
| [and so-]         | Square brackets on successive lines mark  |
| [why] her?        | beginning and end of overlapping talk.  |
| and=              | Equals signs on successive lines show latching  |
| =then             | between turns.  |
| ()                | In the case that utterances cannot be transcribed with certainty, empty parentheses are employed.         |
| (hard work)       | If there is a likely interpretation, the questionable words appear within the parentheses.                |
| ((stage whisper)) | Aspects of the utterance, such as whispers, coughing, and laughter are indicated with double parentheses. |
| RH                | Right hand  |
| LH                | Left hand   |
| BH                | Both hands  |

#### INSTRUCTION SHEETS

##### Version 1:

Start at the North Gate at 9 a.m.

You go visit:

- the Camels
- the Habitat Africa
- the Australia House

Describe in detail how to get there.

At 10.30 a.m. you go see the Dolphin show at “Seven Seas”. You have to pass “The Fragile Kingdom” to get there.

After the show you want to go on the “Motor Safari” and meet your friends for lunch at “La Gran Cocina” afterwards.

Make sure to find the closest stops to hop on and off the ride.

After lunch, you want to see

- the Pachyderm House and
- the Butterflies and

return to the North Gate at 4 p.m.

##### Version 2:

Start at the South Gate at 9 a.m.

You go visit:

- the Bear Grottos
- the Fragile Kingdom
- the Pachyderm House

Describe in detail how to get there.

At 11 a.m. you go to “The Living Coast” to see the feeding of the penguins. You have to pass the “Great Bear Wilderness” to get there.

After the show you want to go on the “Motor Safari” and meet your friends at the “Roosevelt Fountain” afterwards.

Make sure to find the closest stops to hop on and off the ride.

From there, you go

- to the Australia House
- to the Butterflies and

return to the South Gate at 4 p.m.

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