

Language and Cognition *University Seminar #681*

Meeting of April 26, 2012

“Semiotic Layering through Gesture and Intonation: A Case Study of Complementary and Supplementary Multimodality in Political Speech ”

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Face-to-face communication is multimodal. In face-to-face interaction we can observe the interplay of several semiotic layers, modalities of information such as discourse structure, gesture, and intonation. Information-transmission/encoding in any two layers may be complementary (present in both channels) or supplementary (present in one but not the other). We explored the role of gesture in structuring and aligning information in spoken discourse through a study of: 1) the complementary co-occurrence of gestural apices and intonational pitch accents; and, 2) the supplementary co-occurrence of metaphorical gestures and elements in discourse. In naturally occurring political speech, metaphorical spatialization through gesture is key in indexing contextual relationships among the speaker, the politicians/government and other external forces. The use of gestures simultaneously aligns with intonation and metaphorically manipulates political entities in space. We argue that gesture, intonation, grammar, and discourse structure provide complementary and supplementary information. The informational division of labor at the level of content and social meaning between the gestural and spoken channels works in tandem with the fine-grained structural alignment of intonation and gesture.

Place: Seminar Room #2
The Faculty House
64 Morningside Drive

Time: 4:00 PM

For directions to the Faculty House, please refer to the map at this URL:

<http://www.columbia.edu/files/columbia/content/morningsidecampus-2011-02-16.pdf>

RSVP: If you will attend the meeting on April 26, please send a note to:

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If you will join Dr. Mendoza-Denton for dinner at the Faculty House after the meeting, please indicate this in your note to the Rapporteur.