

# Linguistic deictic meanings beyond gestures: A contrastive study on motion event descriptions in French and Japanese

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## Background and aims

According to Talmy's typology of event integration (Talmy 2000), both French and Japanese are categorized as verb-framed languages. I revealed in previous studies (Morita 2011, for example), however, that they differ in the frequency of deictic expressions and the syntactic constituents used for deixis; Japanese speakers express deixis frequently by deictic verbs, while deictic expressions are not frequent and prepositional phrases with the first person pronoun are preferred in French. This paper aims to show that gestures can fill this gap, and to argue that gestures have a speech compensation function for spatial deixis. It also elucidates that Japanese deictic verbs have more psychological meaning that cannot be compensated by gestures or overt verbalization of the speaker.

## Data and method

The data was collected through a video elicitation experiment. The elicitation material consists of 52 video clips in which a person or an animal moved through various paths with a certain manner of motion. A session involved a pair of participants: one participant watched the video clips and explained the contents to the other participant who did not watch the clips. 12 Japanese speakers (6 pairs) and 20 French speakers (10 pairs) participated, and their narrations and gestures were recorded.

## Findings and discussions

French speakers hardly used linguistic deictic expressions. However, in order that the paired participant who did not watch the video may correctly understand the same scene shot under various angles, they used frequently iconic gestures (cf. McNeill 2005); for example, an arm or a hand iconically describes the direction of motion and differentiates the same verbal expression such as *un chien est sorti de sa cage* 'a dog exited its cage'. As long as the physical direction concerned, iconic gestures can compensate the lack of linguistic deictic expressions in French.

Some Japanese speakers used iconic gestures with contradictory verbal expressions. For example, when a dog moved away from the speaker, running out of the cage, it was always described by the movement of a hand from a position close to the speaker's body to a forwarded distal position. Verbal expressions accompanying this gesture have two options: *de-te iku* 'exit-CONJ go' and *de-te kuru* 'exit-CONJ come'. When the adative verb *iku* is used, the gesture meaning and verbal meaning are redundant because they convey the same information. The use of *kuru* is physically contradictory, but psychologically understandable; even though a dog moved away from the speaker as described by the gesture, it comes to the speaker's viewing field, which licenses the use of *kuru* (cf. Matsumoto et al. 2017). This extended meaning of deixis can be expressed neither by iconic gestures nor by prepositional phrases including the first person pronoun in French; the extended venitive meaning cannot be conveyed by *vers moi*, and expressions such as *en s'éloignant de moi* 'going away from me' are truth-conditionally acceptable, but do not convey a psychological meaning of deixis.

Thus, the parallelism between verbal expressions and gestures are limited to the physical aspects of motion events, and only verbal expressions may have extended deictic meanings.

## References

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