

## Visualizing discourse functions: The case of list constructions in Israeli Hebrew

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This paper aims to examine how speakers of Hebrew make simultaneous use of multiple interactional modalities to produce a stretch of talk as a *list*. *List construction* will be defined as a pattern consisting of a set of any linguistic elements (listees) that are syntactically and functionally parallel, while the structure as a whole has a single communicative intention (Inbar, in press). As noted by Selting (2007: 488), prosody is one of the constitutive means used by speakers to systematically construct lists and by recipients to identify them. For example, the listees in open lists usually have similar intonation contours, whereas in exhaustive lists, the last listee is marked differently than its predecessors. However, list constructions show a high degree of functional variation, and various functions of lists in discourse may be marked by various gestural patterns that make these functions visible.

The data for this study were primarily obtained from a 20-hour corpus of television interviews in Hebrew, including over 50 speakers. The constructions were recognized based on the syntactical and functional parallelisms of the listees. Then we indicated the recurrent gestural patterns associated with these constructions, and examined the functional distribution of these patterns.

It turned out that the revealed gestural patterns were systematically associated with particular functions of lists in discourse, such as detailing specific categories, emphasizing specific category members, and building ad hoc categories while focusing on the members of this category or on the category itself. Thus, the analysis of gestures coordinated with list constructions in spoken Israeli Hebrew reveals another strategy that makes list constructions visible, and allows the interlocutor to identify their discursive functions explicitly.

Moreover, the analysis of the visual track of these gestures is closely connected to the role of the construction in discourse. For example, cyclic gesture, used when the speaker is referring to an ad hoc category and focusing on that category rather than on category members, may be seen as a metaphorical delineation of the category boundaries. By listing on his fingers and as-if-counting them, the speaker focuses on category members in order to present a complete detailing of the specific category or to mark significant or unexpected category members.

In conclusion, the present study shows that syntactic, prosodic, and gestural features interact with each other during the production and interpretation of multimodal utterances. Different gestural forms may distinguish between pragmatic aspects of list constructions that are not expressed in Hebrew grammatically; thus, the study of gestures coordinated with lists can contribute to a systematic analysis of these constructions at different levels.

### References

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