

Verbal genericity and null instantiation in Italian and German cut and break sequences: a multimodal socio-cognitive approach

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Context and corpus - This talk takes further utterance construction grammar (UCxG, Cienki 2017) as the overarching multimodal association between lexico-grammatical valency patterns and head/hand co-speech gestures. The data set is composed of a dyadic elicitation task for instrumental cutting and breaking actions, inspired from cross-linguistic verb typology (Majid et al. 2008 a.o). German- and Italian-speaking participants jointly imagine causal events in which they associate images for instruments and for patient objects undergoing cut/break actions (Schoonjans et al. 2017). Such brainstorming (in 8 pairs of speakers) brings about complex causal event representations, in which participants word and gesture the use of hands or artefacts (knives, saws) in enacted instrumental causality (Sambre and Wermuth 2010, 2015) and update this information (Langacker 2008) sequentially.

Objectives - The general objective is to examine the systematics of the multimodal association of verbal and gestural information, along the axes of vertical schematicity-elaboration (i-ii) and sequential development (iii), in discursive stretches of several utterances, for breaking down complex causal event representations (Bohnenmeyer 2011). More specifically, we zoom in on form and frequency of co-speech gesture and temporal overlap of gestures with (i) generic verbs for cut/break GER *schneiden/brechen* IT *tagliare/rompere* (Streeck 2002); (ii) null instantiations (NI) in genre-based verb-argument structures, i.e. free omissions of NP argument roles (AG, PAT, INS) or Verbs (Ruppenhofer & Michaelis 2010, 2014) completed by gestural fillers (e.g. *puoi* [NI INF, vertical hand movement] *così, you can* [NI INF, vertical hand movement] *like*); (iii) the elaboration of generic verbs and/or NI verb-argument structure (in i and ii respectively) in subsequent surface structures, where overt spoken frame elements dynamically fill in (previously) generic or NI information (Langacker 2012; Ruppenhofer et al. 2012).

(Provisional) results – Genericity (i), NI (ii) and elaboration (iii) verbs on the level of simple (i-ii) or multiple (iii) utterances integrate conceptual representation of instrumental action both as composite a *form/product* of individual mental simulation. Abstract thinking structurally co-occurs with enacting concrete iconic affordances imposed by instrumental artefacts (Bergen & Feldman 2008, Masson-Carro et al. 2016), but also as an *interactive function*: hands and words are part of a socio-cognitive process where causal chains and subevents are visualized for, and stepwise elaborated or completed by participants (Gallagher 2008, Bohnemeyer 2011, Auer 2015). *Conceptually speaking*, complex utterances combine these dimensions synthetically or analytically: synthesis refers to the compact schematized base depiction of an instrumental macro-event in (i) a conceptually underspecified format (and sometimes with (ii) a grammatically incomplete form), whereas analysis concerns the step-wise sequential completion and/or elaboration of that baseline in processing time (Langacker 2016). Seen from an *interactional perspective*, generalized macro-events (i-ii) may act as interactive instructions to prospectively project (iii) sequential co-constructions (Stukenbrock 2014, Auer 2015, Streeck 2018). We will sketch which multimodal foci trigger for such co-construction and/or co-elaboration.

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