Common ground and shared gesture space: Interpersonal placing acts in English

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Previous research has shown that situational and pragmatic factors interact with the use of shared gesture space in face-to-face interactions. *Shared gesture space* refers to the region of gesture space where two interlocutors' personal gesture spaces meet. In experimental settings, the construal of shared space has been shown to depend on the location of the addressee(s) in relationship to the speaker-gesturer, suggesting that gestures performed in this situationally construed spatial region are designed for the addressee (Özyürek, 2002). Sweetser and Sizemore (2008) looked at pragmatic factors interacting with contrastive uses of gesture space in an extended conversation between two American-English acquaintances and found that the speakers used shared gesture space (also referred to as "interpersonal space") when making salient conversational moves (e.g., holding the floor, shifting topics). The current study builds on previous work by examining the systematic use of shared interpersonal space in multimodal (gesture-speech) expressions.

Specifically, our study was designed to gain further insight into how interpersonal space is used by English speaker-gesturers in interaction. Based on previous research, we predicted we would find unifying functional properties across formally distinct gestures performed in interpersonal space. To test this prediction, we compared the use of three formally distinct hand gestures performed in interpersonal space: (1) the palm-up-open-hand (PUOH) configuration, (2) the palm-oblique-open-hand (POOH) configuration, and (3) circular-rotational (Cyclic) movement gestures (see Figure 1 below for examples of each). Data were collected from televised American talk show interactions. Formal and functional properties of the gesture and speech for each token were annotated by two independent coders using ELAN. Disagreements were resolved by a third annotator. Functional similarities were found across the three gesture types produced in interpersonal space. All three types were found to repeatedly occur in one or more of the following contexts: with requests, with intersubjective stancetaking (in which the speaker-gesturer was seeking alignment on an evaluation or aligning with an interlocutor's evaluation), during moves to shift the line of talk, and during moves that uptake an interlocutor's move to shift the line of talk.

Based on our findings, we propose that shared interpersonal space functions as the physical manifestation of 'common ground', defining common ground as the "mass of knowledge, beliefs, and suppositions [interlocutors] believe they share" (Clark, 1996, p. 12). We use the term *Interpersonal Place* to describe this symbolic structure, adopting the technical term Place that has been used to describe meaningful locations in space in signed languages (Wilcox & Occhino, 2016). We argue that gesturing in shared interpersonal space (i.e., evoking Interpersonal Place) constitutes an act of "placing" (Clark, 2003; Martínez & Wilcox, 2019). Placing is a type of indicating act that attracts an addressee's attention to an "object of indication" through the placement of the object in the addressee's focus of attention (Clark, 2003). The object of indication in the case of interpersonal placing acts in English is not the (physical) gesturing hands but the discursive act that is indexed by the placed hands in shared space. Specifically, we propose that interpersonal placing acts indicate that the speaker-gesturer is making an on-record move to update the common ground. Using specific examples from the data, we illustrate how interpersonal placing acts in gesture are symbolically integrated with speech and suggest cognitive-functional motivations for their variable occurrence in interaction.

Fig. 1: Examples of each gesture type examined.

| Palm-up-open-hand in shared space | Cyclic gesture in shared space | Palm-oblique-open-hand in shared space |

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