CHAPTER 9 Gesture

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1 INTRODUCTION

People routinely gesture in interaction, and we commonly assume their gestures are meaningful. Interactants themselves may have explicit theories about gesture, which like all cultural productions probably contain grains of both truth and fiction. When and how people gesture seems to reveal something about what they are doing and saying, even though gestures appear to work in multiple ways, some intentional and some inadvertent. Gestures are clearly constructed from repertoires of bodily form derived from both individual idiosyncrasy and cultural tradition. Just as conventional emblematic gestures are undeniably part of communicative repertoires, even the more apparently haphazard, extemporized, and ephemeral movements that routinely accompany speech are often supposed to be significant. In conversation one often cannot avoid reading meaning into gesture, whether or not it seems intentionally produced or directed at someone. Gesture is thus a potential resource for interactants as they negotiate social worlds. It is also a resource that anthropology needs to understand, since no living linguistic tradition has been described in which gesture is absent.

Nonetheless, gesture has a dubious if not downright bad reputation, in common parlance. No matter how "dramatic" someone's occasional *beau geste*, it remains "a mere gesture," and thus suspect as only "token," or worse "empty." The *New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* cites the following characteristic use: "This was clearly a gesture rather than a seriously intended attempt at suicide." Particular societies may disparage gesture on intellectual, expressive, or class grounds. In linguistic studies, the bodily movements that routinely accompany speech are usually dismissed as irrelevant or, more often, simply pass unremarked.

In Western intellectual history gesture has not always been so readily pushed aside. Perhaps the first systematic treatment of the topic, published in Latin in AD 100 (Quintillian 1924), related oratorical persuasiveness to the effectiveness of the orator's gestural accompaniments (Graf 1992). Classical art of antiquity abounds

with symbolic depictions of gesturing bodies: stylized and significant handshapes, postures, facial expressions, and bodily attitudes that show how sensitive artists were to the communicative potential of gesture.

Since the Middle Ages, however, except for grand speculative programs in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries linking gesture to presumed universals in thought and to the rise of human language – programs that in less ambitious forms continue to the present day – gesture remained unincorporated into Western analytic thought. Furthermore, only with the rise of sound-film and later technologies for iconic recording in the twentieth century did it become possible to afford gesture serious empirical and theoretical attention as part of the human communicative repertoire.

Many authors mention a semiotic complementarity between gesture and its accompanying speech, noting that the four-dimensional, imagistic, embodied channel of gesture has communicative potential inherently different from that of the digital, linearized flow of words. As Kendon (Kendon 2000): 51) puts it, "[s]peakers often employ gesture in such a way as to make something that is being said more precise or complete," sometimes accomplishing this by "provid[ing] the context in terms of which a verbal expression is to be interpreted" (ibid., p. 53). Theorists have also identified other less single-mindedly referential contributions gestures can make to their surrounding discourses, including rhythmic punctuation, signaling of theme and rheme, bracketing metacommentary, changes of perspective, speaker's attitudes, and the like. Central research questions are: what semiotic properties can gestures have? From what do gestural "meanings" derive? How do these meanings coordinate with other aspects of utterances? And what sorts of resources do they thus provide for interactants? This chapter considers these questions by first developing an appropriate anthropological theory of gesture, considering proposed gesture typologies, then locating gesture firmly *within* language in terms of form, practice, and ideology. I draw illustrations from my fieldwork in Chiapas and Australia.

2   GESTURE IN LANGUAGE

When gesture *does* rise to analytical consciousness, the result is too often a "subtractive" account: gesture is whatever is left over after other phenomena which fall under more principled descriptions are subtracted. Gesture may be seen as involuntary bodily leakage that "betrays" inner states and attitudes that intentionally communicative channels may be trying to hide. Or gestures may be seen as scattered and only partly conscious bodily accompaniments to spoken language, largely involuntary excrescences of the speaking process itself as imagistic thought struggles to accommodate the digital linearity of language. Gesture is sometimes seen as primitive "attempted" language, grounded in presumed universal iconicity, and thus the first resort of would-be communicators who do not share a linguistic code. Other gesture theorists place an almost diametrically opposite emphasis on *codified* and *culture-specific* gestural substitutes for spoken language: compacted, learned, gestured holophrases known as "emblems."

A more appropriate non-subtractive view integrates attitudes and movements of the body, first, into the full repertoire of interactive human communicative resources

and, second, into the expressive inflections of language itself. One of the earliest and most eloquent formulations of such a view argues that "speech and gesture are produced together, and that they must therefore be regarded as two aspects of a single process . . . Speakers combine, as if in a single plan of action, both spoken and gestural expression" (Kendon 1997: 110–11).

Part of Kendon's argument for the "single plan" hypothesis derives from robust observations that verbal and gestural performances are mutually synchronized: when a gesture appears to be linked in meaning to a word or phrase (sometimes called the gesture's "lexical affiliate"), the gesture either coincides with or precedes the relevant speech fragment. Some theorists, most notably McNeill (1992; see also McNeill and Duncan 2000) have used such facts to motivate a theory in which both speech and gesture originate in a single conceptual source, whose joint "expression" in the different modalities produces the observed synchronicity between word and movement.

P, a Zinacantec cornfarmer from Chiapas, tells in Tzotzil about leaving a horse sick in a field. When he returned after searching for medicine, he found the horse dead, surrounded by buzzards. As he comes to the punch line, P twice repeats a counter-clockwise circling sweep of his right arm, evidently coinciding in meaning with the Tzotzil word *setel* "circular" (figure 9.1). The crucial detail is where these gestures occur in the temporal unfolding of the overall utterance.

(1) Buzzards circling[1]
k'al lik'ote kere
When I got there – damn!

[right hand circles once][circles again]
   1   2   3   4   5 6
            [downstroke]   [downstroke]
            chamem xa te xa setel   xulem
             dead   already   circular buzzard
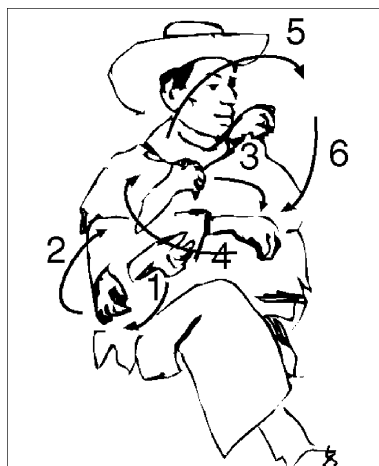 *It was already dead; the buzzards were in a circle.*

Figure 9.1 "Circling"

Both circling movements are similar: P's right hand turns palm downward, fingers slightly pursed, moves out to the right and circles up; P then makes an abrupt downward stroke, and finishes the circular movement down and back to the right, leaving his hand momentarily at rest. (See figure 9.1.) As can be seen in transcript (1), the first circling motion (positions 1–3) is begun well before P begins to speak his words, and it concludes (position 3) as he says "[it was] dead." He repeats the gesture (slightly higher and closer to the center of the interactional space he shares with his interlocutor) in the subsequent sentence (positions 4–6), producing the downward stroke (position 6) exactly as he says the first stressed syllable of *setel* – evidently the word which the circling gesture "depicts." His hand has returned to rest by the time he finishes the sentence, pronouncing *xulem* 'buzzards', the apparent grammatical subject of the predicate *setel*, with no accompanying gesture. Kendon remarks about a similar example, "[i]t is only by commencing the movements for the gesture in advance of the speech that the synchrony of arm swing and [the associated lexical item] could have been achieved" (1997: 111). Without some sort of expressive "plan," that is, the whole integrated performance could not have been accomplished in its synchronic perfection.

P's circling gestures also do more than "illustrate" his words. In fact, the Tzotzil root *set* has a wide range of meanings, all involving circularity, but in quite different senses; as an adjective, *setel* can apply to the fullness of the moon, the round completeness of a slice of fruit, or a large continuous garden plot, among other things (Laughlin 1975). The exact scene that P wants to conjure – the buzzards arrayed in a circle on the ground around the dead horse – is thus partly conveyed by the form of his gesture: the sweep around some central space (presumably where the horse is meant to be imagined), hand pointing slightly downward to suggest buzzards on the ground and not circling in the air.

3   GESTURE TYPOLOGIES

Modern gesture theorists have been preoccupied with gestural classification, perhaps because ordinary usage conflates under unexamined pre-theoretical labels what seem to be analytically separable phenomena. Returning to the NSOED, the origin of the English word "gesture" is to be found in Latin *gerere* 'bear, carry, carry on, perform' (via medieval Latin *gestura*), and its earliest usage accordingly meant a "manner of carrying the body; carriage, deportment" – a very broad notion which only later comes to be narrowed to "(a) movement of the body or limbs, now only as an expression of thought or feeling; the use of such movements as an expression of feeling or a rhetorical device," and still later to the typical twentieth-century meaning: "[a]n action performed as a courtesy, formality, or symbol to indicate an intention or evoke a response." Recent theoretical treatments question several aspects of these common usages: "manner" (which may imply something stable or established, as opposed to the apparent ephemeral nature of much gesture), "expression of thought or feeling" (which may conflate what might be presumed to be very different cognitive underpinnings), and perhaps most problematic, "intention" with all the attendant difficulties about the nature of the person, the will, and the emergent character of interpersonal interaction.

One influential typology of gesture distinguishes different varieties according to their "language-like" properties on the one hand and their relative integration with or emancipation from speech on the other. At one end of the spectrum are "gesticulations," movements especially of the hands that occur only in coordination with verbalization and are largely meaningless in isolation from speech. (P's circling movement, non-standard and relatively uninterpretable without the word *setel* and the verbal context, is a typical example.) At the other end of the continuum are full-fledged sign languages, in which the gestural channel serves as the vehicle for language itself, and where the movements involved have typical language-like properties: duality of patterning, conventional symbolism, syntax, and so on. Ranging in between are such phenomena as nonce pantomimes (meant to signal on their own, without speech, but non-conventionalized); culture-specific emblems which function as complete "quotable" (Kendon 1992) utterances, independent of or substitutable for speech (giving someone "the finger," for example); or "substitute" sign languages which replace speech in whole or in part under circumstances that require silence.[2]

Unfortunately this typology, too, is essentially subtractive: it gives priority to presumed independent properties of "language" – especially compositionality and conventional meaning – and arrays gesture against them. As a result, important complications in the semiotic modalities, cultural variability, and interactive significance of gesture can be easily overlooked.

Consider the three gestural "types" that have received the most empirical attention in recent literature: (1) conventionalized language-specific emblems, which in most ways are just like words or spoken expressions, except that they are performed in an unspoken modality; (2) gesticulations which "are characterized by an obligatory accompaniment of speech, a lack of language-defining properties, idiosyncratic form–meaning pairings, and a precise synchronization of meaning presentations in gestures with co-expressive speech segments" (McNeill 2000): 1), and of these especially those termed "iconic," that is, whose significations derive from some resemblance between gestural form (signifier) and signified; and (3) "pointing" gestures.

Typical and perhaps unfamiliar emblems from my own field research include the *guya* or "nothing" gesture used by Guugu Yimithirr speakers from Queensland, Australia. The gesturer displays an open, empty palm (figure 9.2), a non-spoken equivalent to the highly functional word *guya* which can mean "nothing, none, all gone" or just "not." In the example, J is describing how he tried to recover the cargo of a boat wrecked during a storm. He found some bananas, but the clothes and salted pork were lost. J presents the "nothing" emblem after talking about how the bananas were strewn around on the beach.

(2) "Guya"
3   mayi-ngay maalbiin-ngay nyulu   maani
    food-PL   banana-PL   3sNOM get+PAST
    He got the food, the bananas.

    . . a . . . .
4   thambarr-in guwaar
    throw-PAST west-R
    It had been thrown up to the west.

. . b . . . . c . . . . .
5   thambarr-in   yi:
     throw-PAST   here
     thrown all around.

                         R hand up, out to W, circles anticlockwise (fingers pointing S) at a
                         and b, then "*Guya*" hand at c

6   couldn't find the clothes
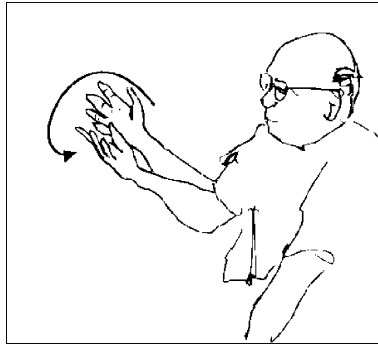
7   couldn't find the *minha* (meat)

Figure 9.2   *Guya* 'nothing'

A somewhat more lexical emblem in Zinacantec Tzotzil, formed with a curved index
finger approaching but not quite touching a curved thumb, the rest of the fingers
folded into the palm, represents a *copita* (shot glass for liquor). In the following
narrative this gesture provides semantic supplementation, as the corresponding
spoken word, *uch'bajel*, literally signifies any beverage, where what the protagonists
were asking for was *pox*, locally distilled cane liquor.

(3) "Uch'bajel"
17   k'u xak'an xi
     "*What do you want?*" *she said.*

     [. . 1] [2 . . . .]
19   mi oy   uch'bajel? o:y . mi mu oyuk
     "*Is there anything to drink?*" *"There is, (do you think) there isn't?"*

                         1. Right hand raised in shot-glass gesture, one stroke at *oy*
                         2. "Copita" hand drops into second stroke at *uch'*, then
                            down in same handshape to rest

   We have already seen an example of typical "iconic" but non-conventionalized
gesticulation in the circling buzzards story. Here is another sequence in Zinacantec
Tzotzil which illustrates first a pointing gesture and then an interestingly interrelated
iconic but non-conventionalized gesture. A man is talking about encountering a
supernatural demon, which he tried to catch. The demon ran off to hide behind
the house cross in the man's yard. First the narrator uses a pointing gesture to his
right to locate his protagonist in a narrated space which he constructs with the

Figure 9.3   *Uch'bajel* 'beverage'

gesture itself (see figure 9.4). He explains that the demon – only the size of a small child – tried to hide *behind* the cross, now using his right hand, its back facing outwards, fingers down, and moving slightly from side to side (see figure 9.5), to portray evidently both the cross and the position of the demon behind it.

    (4) "Ijatav"

            ba   j -tzak
            go(AUX) 1 E-grab
            I went to grab it.

            1 . . . . . 2 . . . .
            i -0   -jatav un
            CP-3A-run_away PT
            It ran away

                                1. Turn face to right and sight to spot some distance away, then return to front
                                2. Right arm extends out in point to R (SW), then back to rest at knee

Figure 9.4   *Ijatav* 'it ran away'

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3 . . . . .              4 . . . . . . . . .  . . . . . . . . a . . . . b
te     i -0 -bat         yo`    pat   krus -e
there  CP-3A-go          where back  cross-CL
```
It went there behind the cross.

3. Look quickly out R again, then back
4. R arm lifts out R and slightly to front, (a) circles anticlockwise, index finger slightly down, (b) moving all slightly L and held

Figure 9.5   *Yo` pat kruse* 'behind the cross'

4   GESTURE AS LANGUAGE

It is plain from these examples that gesture is ''language-like'' in several important respects. Emblems are conventional symbols, characteristically self-reflexive, glossable, and quotable (so that both narrator and by extension protagonist can be imagined to be making the *guya* gesture in figure 9.2) much like spoken words or expressions. Moreover, emblems are capable of limited syntax-like construction. That is, they combine with spoken expressions, as logical arguments or predicates. Words provide the subjects – ''clothes'' and ''meat'' – for the ''predicate'' *guya* in J's narrative. Similarly, the *copita* gesture can be understood as parallel syntactic subject (along with the spoken *uch'bajel*) for the existential *oy* 'exist' with which it first cooccurs in line 19 of example (3). Emblems can also combine with other gestures: J's *guya* hand is produced in conjunction with a sweeping, circular motion that can be seen as an iconic rendering of the rolling and tossing of the waves and the direction of the wind which carried the sunken boat's cargo away, suggesting that the loss of food and clothes was a consequence of the depicted movement of wind and waves.

There is also complete semiotic parallelism between gestures and other linguistic signs in terms of the familiar Peircean trichotomy of icon (e.g., an ''hourglass'' motion to suggest a particular human body shape, P's circling gesture mimicking the encircling buzzards), index (''pointing toward'' or even touching or holding a referent, or in the demon case pointing ''as if'' toward, and thus indexically creating, a virtual referent), and symbol (a purely conventional ''thumbs up'' gesture, for example, in addition to other emblems we have seen). The principles on which the signification of gestures and words is based, that is, are exactly the same.

The semiotic parallel between gesture and the rest of language extends to its ''arbitrariness'' – a degree of non-motivated conventionality – and to its indexical links to contexts of speaking, which display the characteristic range from relatively presupposing – that is, signaling aspects of context already present or taken for granted – to relatively creative (Silverstein 1976) – that is, bringing new aspects of context into relief.

Consider the pointing gesture in figure 9.4. It is easy to forget that the extended index finger pointing hand is pure convention, perhaps because it is such a widespread convention. But conventional it clearly is, as people can point with chin or lips (Sherzer 1972), or with a different finger or fingers, or with quite distinct and significant handshapes (Foster 1948; Poyatos 1983). (And why, as Wittgenstein asked, does one point *toward* a referent as opposed to, say, in exactly the opposite direction, or by placing the hand above the object, etc.?)

Notice the indexical complexity of the pointing gesture. While it may frequently be possible to point at a referent right where it is, when A points to the demon in figure 9.4 there is actually nothing there for him to point at. He creates a virtual location for the narrated demon, a complex layering of both the present space where A sits and the imagined space (his yard with a demon in it) which he invites his interlocutors to create with their minds. His pointing gesture itself ''creates'' the ''referent'' at which it points. Having thus established a location, jointly in the imagined narrated space and his immediate physical surround, A can then go on to populate the space further: he places the demon *behind a house cross*, using a representative gesture to show the spatial relation between cross (evidently represented iconically by the extended index finger in figure 9.5) and hiding demon (via a movement of the hand backwards). Indexical gestures are thus susceptible to the typical shifts of deictic center (the perspective from which, for example, direction is to be understood) called ''transpositions'' by Karl Bühler and characteristic of spoken deictics as well (see Hanks 1990). Transpositions of considerably more complexity are routinely managed in gesture (see Haviland 1996).

Insofar as gestural typologies ignore or minimize such semiotic complexity in the different gestural ''types'' they isolate, the classificatory impulse seems analytically obfuscating rather than helpful.

Varieties of gesture may instead be aligned against a different tripartite scheme which associates three analytical threads with any linguistic act: form, practice, and ideology (Silverstein (1985). Insofar as they are readily susceptible to such analytical decomposition, gestures again reveal their language-like character. I will concentrate in the next section on formal aspects of gesture, turning at the end of the chapter to practice and ideology.

4.1   Gestural form

First, observe that gesture exhibits highly structured formal articulation. The most influential characterization of the unfolding production of gestures is due to Kendon (1980), who describes three gestural "phases": **preparation**, where the hand or other articulator moves from rest to a position from which the main gesture, or **stroke**, can be produced, followed by a **retraction** to rest. Both preparation and retraction can be omitted, and the stroke may itself be parsed by one or more **holds**.

In the circling buzzards example, P begins with his right hand in his lap. The preparation phase of his gesture involves lifting the hand and moving it out to P's right, at the same time shaping the hand for the circling movement (by extending the index finger and turning the hand palm-inward – see the movement shown as 1 on figure 9.1). The stroke – the first circling gesture – is then performed, punctuated by a brief hold (between movements 3 and 4 on figure 9.1), and then the second circling motion. After the gestural stroke is completed, the hand begins to relax and move back to P's lap in the retraction phase.

Gesture also displays some degree of "morphology" – a systematic association of form with function. Gestural gestalts may often be profitably decomposed into distinct articulations (hand shapes, for example, or certain patterns of movement which are also among the formal primitives of developed sign languages). The typical pointing index finger is one example, and there are also standardized hand forms in emblems – the thumbs up, the "OK" hand and other related families of handshapes, such as that called "the ring", the "hand purse" (Morris 1977: 38; Kendon 1997, 2000), among others.

Conventions of gestural form are of course not limited to fingers and hands. Although the details may vary and the meanings frequently contrast from one cultural context to another, facial expressions (frowns, smiles, eye flashes, winks), gaze (staring and its direction, closed eyes, avoidance or engagement of eye contact), head movements (nods, shakes, tilts), and postures and movements of torso, shoulders, and other body parts may figure in a community's gestural repertoire. Consider the shrug, the haughty nose, the sigh, pointed or pursed lips (see Sherzer 1972), demurely crossed legs, and so on. Even the orientation of the body may have conventional communicative significance, a fact of some importance for recent studies of sign language morphology (see Liddell 2000). Or consider how, in some communicative traditions, one can refer to the time of day by gazing indexically at the zone of the heavens where the sun would appear. An example from a Zinacantec Tzotzil narrative appears in figure 9.6.

In this example, X is describing a fateful truck ride that ended in a crash. He uses his whole torso to illustrate how the truck was so overloaded it swayed ominously from side to side (figure 9.7).

The body itself can also be the indexical space on which gestures are performed. A frequent device in Tzotzil gesture is the use of interactants' own bodies as referents, indicated by pointing, touching, or otherwise rendering prominent certain body parts and bodily attitudes. "*Och i tan ta ssat.* (The ashes entered his eye)," recalls a Zinacantec, talking about a relative who survived a volcanic eruption in 1903. He simultaneously points to his own eye (figure 9.8). Similarly, X describes how another
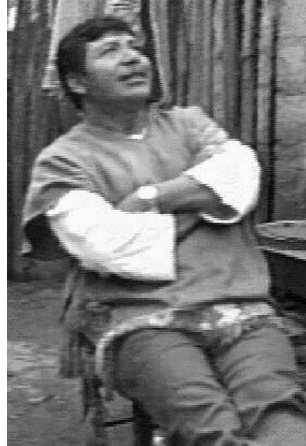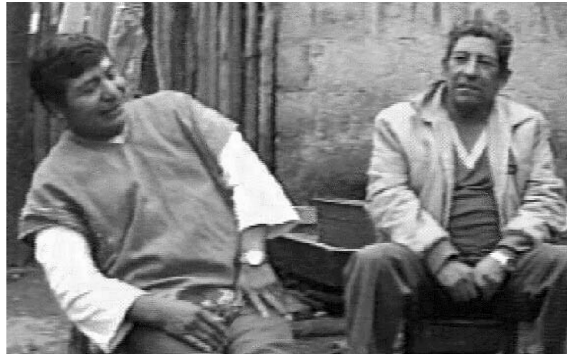
Figure 9.6   ''In the afternoon, about 2 o'clock''

Figure 9.7   ''The truck went this way''

Figure 9.8   ''Ashes entered his eye''

Zinacantec was hurt in the truck crash. He quotes the injured man and gestures to his own chest, doubly transposing his protagonist onto himself in both word and body. *'''Voch'em yàel ko`on,' xi''* (''My chest feels crushed,'' he said). (Figure 9.9.) In many gestures, a speaker's body provides the vehicle for representing the anatomies of others, protagonists and props alike.

Figure 9.9 "'My chest feels crushed,' he said"

Nor are speakers limited to their own bodies in gesture. They can also use props. Anthropologists have analyzed the manipulation both of trowels or brushes and of the ground itself together with the associated conceptual artifacts in the didactic gestures of archaeologists (C. Goodwin 1994), or the incorporation of the hopscotch board and stone into gestures about the progress of a children's game (see M. Goodwin 1995). My Zinacantec compadres routinely gesture with the tools in hand: hoes, sticks, and machetes.

In figure 9.10, P demonstrates to his interlocutor which weed to remove from the beanfield by selecting an exemplar and chopping it with his hoe, a kind of mediated "iconic" gesture that also depends obviously on Peircean indexicality.

Aspects of gestural morphology may be systematically deployed to express semantic inflections overlaid on the meaning of a gestalt (Calbris 1990; Kendon 1995). Performing a pointing gesture relatively higher than lower, for example, may systematically "inflect" the gesture to suggest a relatively more distant referent. In the following extract, J describes walking eastwards one full night to return to his community after the shipwreck. His gesture traces an eastward trajectory (here, east lies behind him), and it rises higher and higher, evidently to emphasize just how far he had to walk, before reaching his destination (shown by a swift final downward point).

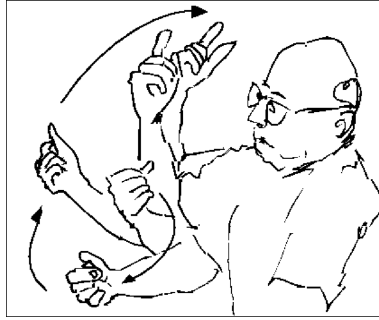**Figure 9.10**   Pointing out a plant by hoeing it

Figure 9.11   "Eastward, eastward . . ."

(5) Going East to Cape Bedford

       . . . . . .   a. . . . .   b . . . . . .   c . . . .

   . . nag   aalu nagaalu yi: (.)

      EAST-L   EAST-L   here

      (We kept going) East and East.

      R: up in "bent L," beats downwards at (a), rises to apex above right ear at

          (b) pointing upwards; head bends down and finger sweeps front and

          down to point at ground at (c)

I have examined a further aspect of conventional form in some gestural traditions: the fact that gestures are performed with what might be called the "correct" orientations (Haviland 1993, 2000b). If a narrative protagonist swims north, the gestures illustrating his motion also are performed toward the north, for example. Such highly regimented gestures allow analysts, and presumably interlocutors, to distinguish various "spaces" in which gestures (and their depicted referents) can be performed: those that are intrinsically oriented, and those that are free from such orientational precision, or which respond to different regimenting factors. For example, Guugu Yimithirr speakers such as J tend to orient precisely, in both word and gesture, all events involving directional vectors. However, gestures can also be freed from precise orientation, especially when they are placed in the "interactional" space, either immediate or narrated, between interlocutors.

J describes what he saw when he looked back toward the wrecked boat from the beach: a giant shark fin cutting through the water just where he and his companion had swum to shore. First he represents the shark fin – all three feet of it – in the interactional space between him and his interlocutors (figure 9.12).

(6) Shark fin

       > . . . . {gesture} . . . .

       three feet of.   gagan.gu wanggaar.

       (There were) three feet of fin standing up

When he goes on to describe the direction of the capsized boat, however, he places the fin precisely to the North (figure 9.13), just as it would have been from the vantage point of the beach on which he had been standing at the time.

Figure 9.12   ''Three feet of fin''

(6 continued)
        {gesture} . . . .
        thumbuurrgu **gunggaarr** thadaara-y ngali gada-y
        – *going straight north right where we had come.*

That some spaces in which gestures are performed can be precisely oriented in this way provides a further resource for interlocutors: it allows them to transpose, overlay, combine, and laminate various spaces to precise communicational effect. This is what J relies on in the pointing gesture in figure 9.13: his precisely oriented gesture in effect instructs his interlocutors to perform a complex mental calculation, imagining themselves at the narrated spot, and then transposing the current indicated direction onto the narrated shark fin. Here conventionally fixed features of the spaces in which gestures are performed are available for interactive exploitation and inter-pretation.

As a final example of conventionality in gestural form, it is worth mentioning that features of the verbal semantics or morpho-lexical typology of particular languages may be conventionally incorporated into gestural performances. Rather few studies have investigated such phenomena in detail, in part because there are few typological

Figure 9.13   ''Going straight north right where we had come''

models which provide adequate parameters for comparison in either the spoken or gestural domains. One exception is the typology of motion events proposed by Talmy (1985) and the predicted limited set of possibilities for the lexicalization of motion, a proposal which has inspired multiple cross-linguistic studies of both adult and child language. The gestural performances of speakers of languages which differ in how they lexicalize motion, path, and manner and where such aspects of a narrated event are represented in the clause may be compared (see Müller 1994).

More specifically, Kita (1993) compared Japanese and English descriptions of a scene which involved "spatial information that is difficult to verbalize in Japanese because of the lack of an appropriate lexical item" (Kita 2000: 167) – in this case, an idiosyncratic lexical fact rather than a more general typological pattern. He found an interesting asymmetry, in which English speakers use gestures that evidently correspond to the semantic features of the accompanying lexical item ("swing"), whereas Japanese speakers, lacking any such lexical item, tend to produce pairs of representational gestures, suggesting that different "forces" are at work in their production:

> One force shapes the representational gesture so as to make it as isomorphic as possible with a spatio-motoric model of the stimulus scene. The other shapes the representational gesture so as to make its informational content as compatible as possible with linguistic encoding possibilities. These two forces shape the gestures in the same direction in English utterances, but in Japanese utterances they are in competition. (Kita 2000): 168)

For Kita such phenomena relate to the cognitive processes at work as speakers "retrieve" information to produce linguistic renditions of events, classic "thinking for speaking" (Slobin 1987).

Moreover, languages may exhibit distinct expressive "styles," evidenced in typological patterns of grammar and lexicon. Mesoamerican languages are noted for the lexical hypertrophy surrounding concepts of shape, configuration, and position (Friedrich 1971). My comparative work on three Mayan languages from highland Chiapas suggests that the exuberant use of "positional" roots in spoken Tzotzil, Tseltal, and Ch'ol – part of the local linguistic aesthetic of "speaking well" – has a corresponding gestural expression: iconic gestures tend to cluster around lexical affiliates from the category of positional roots. The circling buzzards example, with which we began, illustrates the general point: the predicate *setel* "in a circle" which P chooses to elaborate in gesture is derived from a positional root *set* which suggests a disc-like shape, a closed arc in a single plane. The root forms the basis for dozens of full lexical forms; these derived words pepper proper Tzotzil speech and seem to attract gestures.

A parallel case from Tseltal offers a useful comparison. Retelling a cartoon episode in circumstances that seemed to constrain him from gesturing at all, a Tseltal speaker, A, makes only five representational gestures in 75 seconds of continuous speech. All five coincide synchronically with motion or positional verbs. Only one such gesture lasts more than a few tenths of a second, and it is illustrated in figure 9.14.

In the original cartoon sequence, an apple tree is shown with a fence in front of it. The cartoon character is unable to reach the apples because of the fence. The narrator's Tseltal phrase appears in example (7).

Figure 9.14   *Makal o joyul* 'closed or surrounded'

(7) "Enclosed tree"
makal   o   joyul   ta- ta mak-te`
CLOSED   or   SURROUNDED   by by FENCE
It was enclosed by a fence.

Here both *makal* (from the root *mak* 'close') and *joyul* (from *joy* 'surround') are members of the overall positional class in Tseltal. Although the cartoon image suggests a scene in which the apple tree is behind a straight picket fence running alongside a path, A's version clearly implies that the tree was encircled by a protective fence. He has apparently recoded the geometry – perhaps to coincide with a conventional Tseltal way of enclosing fruit trees – as is shown by his double choice of words, reinforced by the gestured image.

Kendon's (1988) study of the "alternate" sign language of Warlpiri speakers in Australia, where women in mourning forgo speech in favor of signing, sometimes permanently, also suggests semantic and structural links between spoken Warlpiri and the conventionalized sign language that replaces speech. An inverse case is that in which an aphasic person must rely largely on gesture to interact with his interlocutors (Goodwin 2000). The interlocutors, in turn, know that the aphasic person still "has language" – indeed, they knew his former verbal skills well – but has lost the ability to produce it orally. They interpret his gestured communications as homologous to something he *might* have said, or wants to say, that is, against the background of his customary patterns of communication.

5   GESTURE IN ACTION

In its formal properties, then, gesture is language-like. A further hallmark of language is its role in action, its performative character (Austin 1962). How language-like is gesture in this respect?

Emblems clearly involve their own miniature actions. Giving someone "the finger" is as effective an insult as most verbal imprecations, and the gestured pronouncements of the emperor or the umpire carry legislative force: they can order "off with her head" or declare "yer out," and gesturing makes it so. The priest makes the sign of the cross and thereby blesses; the Zinacantec shaman brushes her patient with a pine bough as she prays, and both words and motions are part of removing illness. None of

this is surprising, given the fact that emblems are functionally unspoken holophrases, that is, ''gesture acts'' equivalent to so-called speech acts.

There is an important line of research linking gesture in a more general sense to contexts of action. Much of the work mentioned so far draws conclusions about the *expressive* capacities of gesture from the coincidence of gesticulation and speech in *narrative* or *conversational* contexts: people (re)telling stories, discussing, arguing, reminiscing. However, when people are engaged in other kinds of activities, where the point of the interaction is something other than the talk itself – making things, cultivating gardens, fixing cars, planning and coordinating joint ventures, and the like – the relationships between gesture and word may reveal themselves in different ways. For one thing, the potential emancipation of gesture from talk may be clearer in situations where the hand rather than the mouth is doing the talking.

Consider the simple if controversial example of the common ''pointing'' gesture with outstretched hand and extended index finger. It has long been suggested that this conventionalized ''symbolic'' gesture develops out of a child's grasping and reaching motions,[3] and work of Lourdes de León and myself (Haviland 2000a) confirms a developmental sequence among Zinacantec infants beginning with real attempts to grab and ending with clearly symbolic pointing emancipated from real physical manipulation.[4]

Children's early gestural routines are often linked retrospectively with their motoric development and prospectively with their first words. Bates, Bretherton, Shore, and McNew (1983) make the strong claim that ''*all* of the child's first words . . . begin as actions or procedures for the child. The infant does not 'have' her first words; she 'does' them'' (p. 65). Lock (1993) characterizes some ''expressive'' or ''instrumental'' communicative gestures (clapping, for example, or ''asking'' with an outstretched open palm) as ''actions that are 'lifted' from [the child's] direct manipulation of the world'' (p. 280).

There is a striking parallel here with the perspective taken by some gesture researchers (see LeBaron and Streeck 2000), that adult representational gestures are linked to non-symbolic, practical, instrumental routines of the hands (and other gesture articulators). Recall P's use of a real hoe and a genuine hoeing motion to signal the sorts of weeds that require hoeing (figure 9.10). Or consider how M, another Zinacantec man, gestures as he describes how people have stolen pine needles from his forest tract, accompanying the highly specific Tzotzil verb *ni*` 'bend down (the flexible end of a longish thing)' with a sequence of motions (figure 9.15) like those one performs in stripping pine needles from a branch.

Teaching situations, playing games, and many other practical activities provide contexts in which one can ''explain'' or ''describe'' better by showing or ''demonstrating'' (Clark and Gerrig 1990) than by saying. Indeed, the teacher's use of diagrams, props, maps, and the blackboard tends to merge into her use of bodily gestures, as demonstrations move off the body and onto the wider stage of the teacher's environment (Ochs, Gonzales, and Jacoby 1996; Roth and Lawless 2002). The field, the court, the archaeological site, and the hopscotch grid become simultaneously field of action and context for demonstration. Moreover, as some authors have demonstrated with great elegance, the origin of many so-called iconic gestures can be directly observed in situations in which interlocutors first directly manipulate objects in the world, and gradually in the course of an interaction

Figure 9.15   ''Bend down the tops of the trees''

emancipate their gestures from instrumental action, concurrently often simplifying or stylizing the original manipulative movements as they acquire symbolic properties (LeBaron and Streeck 2000). The natural history here is reminiscent of the initial elaboration and gradual slimming down of complex referring expressions across the course of a collaborative interaction, a process documented semi-experimentally in Clark and Wilkes-Gibbs (1986).

Locating gesture's origins in the conceptual realm of action rather than that of pure symbolization brings us back to another theoretically interesting equivalence between gesture and the rest of language: not only do there exist gesture/speech acts, but the construction of context and the coordination of action (Clark 1997) is achieved in similar ways by both gestures and words. Clark (1997) argues that a family of gestures he calls ''placing'' – putting an object in a position within an interactive space as a deliberate communication – complements the kinds of indicating we call ''pointing.'' ''Placing'' one's desired purchase on the clerk's checkout counter is as good if not better a way to signal what one wants as pointing to it on the store shelf. Placing objects, via gesture, is an equally effective way of creating a context – a universe of discourse – within which further interactive communication, by word or gesture, is made possible, a device familiar in sign-language pronouns as well as in situations like the following.

Two Zinacantec neighbors are talking about the seating arrangements at a fiesta in a distant Tzotzil village. First M, the man on the right in figure 9.16, describes how

Figure 9.16   M sets up the scene: women in a circle, incense in the middle

women with ritual obligations are seated in a large circle, incense burning in the middle. He places the women around the space where he sits using both hands, and then he locates the incense with his right hand.

M's interlocutor X, who has witnessed the same ritual on another occasion, elaborates the description, in both word and gesture, building on the spatial scene which M has already initiated and placed onto the local interactive stage. He gives each woman her own incense burner, showing how these too are lined up in a wide circle, with the saint's image located in the center of the circle. (X draws the circle of women and incense burners with his right hand and then "places" the saint image in the middle with his left, partially mirroring M's original performance.)

Finally, X draws the scene once more, emphasizing with an arc traced nearly 360 degrees in the air just how many people are seated in the ritual circle.

Here M's initial gestures "create" a discursive context, and populate it with individual entities (much like the pronouns of American Sign Language). X's continuing description resumes the universe so created and elaborates it both verbally and gesturally. Gesture is action not only by virtue of its direct performativity, but by providing the contextual domain for further action, including the prototypical narrative "action" of reference.

Figure 9.17   X elaborates on the same scene: incense all around, saint in the middle

Figure 9.18   The great ritual circle traced in the air

6   GESTURE AND IDEOLOGY

The third "irreducible" aspect or "level" of a linguistic datum, mediating "the unstable mutual interaction of meaningful sign forms, contextualized to situations of interested human use" in the characterization of Silverstein (1985), is what he calls "the fact of cultural ideology."[5] Gesture – already shown to contextualize

"meaningful sign forms" to "situations of use" – further shares with the rest of language a susceptibility to ideological productions. A moment's reflection on what we have already seen shows how deeply ideologized gesture is, and how differential theories about and justifications for (or against) gesture are bound up with its very nature and form. For example, the earliest Western scholarly attention to gesture linked gestural use to purposeful persuasive oratory, on the one hand, and to the "natural" expression of human thought, on the other. At the heart of such approaches to gesture are powerful ideologies about expression, persuasion, appropriate communication, and human nature and its differential expressions. (Moreover, all the theories of gesture espoused in this brief chapter – including my own – are liable to a similar deconstruction.)

One such theory, inspiration both for many popular treatments of gesture and for McNeill's influential research program, is captured in McNeill's opening inscription to *Hand and Mind*, from Napier (1980): "If language was given to men to conceal their thoughts, then gesture's purpose was to disclose them." From pop psychological treatises on how to decipher people's body language to altogether more sinister theories about twitches, ticks, and fidgeting as evidence of culpability (in a criminal trial in which I was once involved as expert witness, a policeman testified that he knew the defendant was guilty because of a pulsating vein in his neck and the shifty way he used his eyes when he talked), there runs a consistent theme that gesture springs involuntarily from the speaker, betraying whatever his or her words may be trying to hide.

Another pervasive ideology of gesture is inherent in the injunction "It's not polite to point." Perhaps because pointing is indiscreet – perceivable, even by the pointee, whether or not the accompanying speech can be heard – or represents untoward attention, poor upbringing, or insufficient self-control, it falls into the clutches of cultural arbiters of value and good taste. (The Cuna "pointed-lip-gesture" has as one of its advantages, according to Sherzer (1972), that it is less obvious a way to point than using the hands.)

Moreover, if Roman orators sought to become more persuasive by choreographing their gestures, it is equally possible that the hyper-expressivity associated with gesture can be a motive for criticism and scorn: gesticulators are over-exuberant, too expressive, probably vulgar. Kendon uses the phrase "communication ecology": a relation between "communicational style – and the role of gesture within this –" and "the ecology of everyday life 'in public'" (Kendon 1997: 117). He notes that "gesturing, like speech, is influenced by cultural values and historical tradition, and its usage is adjusted according to the setting, social circumstance, and micro-organization of any given occasion of interaction" (Kendon 1997: 117). Indeed, Kendon hints at an "ecological" account for the celebrated (or, conversely, notorious) prominence of Neapolitan gestures (Kendon 1995).

There is little doubt that good talkers are often also expert gesturers. Consider the Guugu Yimithirr story-teller J, whom we met in figures 9.2 and 9.12. Here was a man whom everyone in the community knew to be a master story-teller. But what exactly makes a master story-teller? For me, much of J's effectiveness as a raconteur came from his exceptionally skillful gesturing. His gestures were invitations, spare and efficient instructions that elicited interlocutors' active and inferential participation in his narratives. That is, he made his gestures work for him.
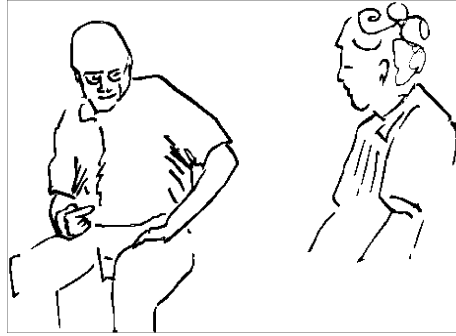
Figure 9.19   "Your father-in-law"

Here is one example. In Australian Aboriginal society in general people try to avoid naming the deceased. In recent Guugu Yimithirr history, some people's names were simply replaced when their bearers died, often erasing quite common words from the permissible lexicon. In one of J's narratives he needs to refer to a long-deceased but powerful old man, who happened to be the father-in-law of his interlocutor R. He accomplishes the reference by uttering an indirect referential noun phrase coupled with a pointing gesture to his interlocutor. The pointing gesture well precedes the spoken characterization that amplifies it, inviting all present – and especially R – to begin to work out for themselves who the intended referent was. The gesture is a discreet, culturally appropriate, and silent alternative to speaking a name that must not be spoken.

(8)   Your old father-in-law

                           {pointing gesture} . . . .

        ngali b   bada gaari gada-y   nhaa-thi ngaathiina

        1duNOM down not   come-PAST see-PAST father-in-law

        We didn't go down there with –

        = nhanu-mu-gal   nyulu nguba ngaliin gurra-ya

        2sGEN-CAT-ADESS 3sNOM perhaps 1duACC say-PRECAUT

        – with your father-in-law, see, since he was liable to scold us.

Let me end with two final reflections on gestural ideology. First consider how people learn to gesture in the first place – an important topic in its own right that is largely beyond the scope of this chapter.[6] My one-year-old Zinacantec goddaughter Mal, for example, had a large collection of stylized routines, including the deliberately communicative "sleep" gesture shown in figure 9.20. Notable here is the Zinacantec metatheory – that is, ideology – about such communications. Whereas the Western traditions referred to above distinguish between gesture and talk from the beginning, and then try in various ways either to bring the phenomena back together or to distinguish them at a more profound level, Zinacantecs talk about performances like that of Mal simply as speech. The same speech-act verbs used with verbalizations frame descriptions of such little routines: " 'I'm going to sleep,' she says." The same quotative evidential particles are applied to unspoken, or inferred, gestural communications as to words. And the same communicative intentions are attributed to pre-verbal, gesturing infants as to speaking adults.

Figure 9.20   Mal's "sleep" gesture

Finally, we may note in passing an entirely different interest in gesture with its own ideological underpinnings: ongoing efforts to make machines more "lifelike" or more "natural" by giving them "gestural" capabilities.[7] Robots, as well as avatars and intelligent agents for computer interfaces, are increasingly equipped to "gesture" in human-like ways, so as to be more effective communicators with human interlocutors. Here is a peculiarly Western notion of naturalness, since the gesturing body could never have been emancipated from the speaking soul except by technological decoupling. Quintillian, the grand ancestor of the whole field of Western gestural studies, lives again after two millennia.

7   CONCLUSION

I began this chapter with questions that grow out of a debate grounded in the sorts of ideologies just considered. Are gestures just involuntary excrescences of the speaking process? Are they inherently linked to language itself? Are they communicative, whether intentionally or despite the speaker's best efforts? What can and do interlocutors make of them?

I argued that gesture is taken as a communicative resource and exploited by interactants, whatever competing psychological theories may argue. Assuming such a position, I considered a range of proposals for classifying gestures and linking them to the rest of language. Working through a parade of examples, I illustrated how word and gesture exhibit complementary meaningfulness; how gesture may be regimented by convention, but also ephemeral, invented, and idiosyncratic; and how gesture shares semiotic modalities with speech. Further to underscore that gesture is part of language, I gave an inventory of the formal properties of gesture – its articulation and morphology – and linked the "meaningful sign forms" thus uncovered to the particularities of specific languages on the one hand, as well as to partially shared techniques of the body and human action, on the other. Finally I turned to cultural ideologies of gesture: linkages between gesture and values, standards of behavior, and

theories of language and mind. My conclusion is that gesture is part of language, in its full range of pragmatic functions, and that it is thus as insistently deserving of anthropological attention as spoken words and the deeds they constitute.

NOTES

1   Transcribed examples show the original language, sometimes with a morpheme-by-morpheme gloss, and a free English gloss. Above the speech appear verbal descriptions of synchronized gestures and gesture segments, sometimes labeled to correspond to parts of the accompanying illustrations or to more detailed descriptions following the transcript line.

2   David McNeill has elaborated the typology, breaking it into separate continua with different dimensions, in his seminal book *Hand and Mind* (McNeill 1992) and in McNeill (2000).

3   Vygotsky (1978): 56) calls this process "internalization," as Alessandro Duranti has pointed out to me; see the empirical studies in Carter (1975), McNeill (1985), Hannan (1992).

4   But see Lock, Young, Service, and Chandler (1990).

5   See Kroskrity (this volume).

6   In acquisition, it appears that universally gesture and spoken or other linguistic forms emerge together (whether shared or parallel processes are at work). Gestural routines in which stylized movements play central communicative roles appear before the first recognizable words. Moreover, the so-called "one word stage" is characterized by the production not of "words" alone but of combined gestural and verbalized routines at the earliest stages of language learning. Phenomena such as gestural "babbling" (Petitto and Marentette 1991) or the spontaneous language-like "home sign" systems which arise in contexts where deaf children are not exposed to a pre-existing sign language (Goldin-Meadow 1993) attest to the insistence of manual and other bodily "expressions" in human communication, waiting in the cognitive wings to be summoned on stage by appropriate social and interactive contexts.

7   There is a large relevant literature here beyond my professional expertise. I refer the interested reader to the MIT media lab (http://www.media.mit.edu) and to such volumes as http://www.TechFak.Uni-Bielefeld.DE/ags/wbski/gw2001book for further references.

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