

NOTES AND REPORTS

Nijmegen Lectures 2004: Susan Goldin-Meadow 'The Many Faces of Gesture'

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Every year in December, the Nijmegen Lecture Series is organised and hosted by the Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics (MPI) and Radboud University in Nijmegen, the Netherlands. A leading scholar is invited to talk about his or her research in detail for three consecutive days to a broad, multi-disciplinary audience. The series is organised in public morning lectures followed by seminar sessions in the afternoon where scholars representing different but relevant disciplines lead the discussions in which the audience participates. The Nijmegen Lecturer for 2004 was Susan Goldin-Meadow (henceforth SGM), from the University of Chicago, and her lecture series was entitled 'The Many Faces of Gesture'. The discussants of the afternoon seminars were Ulrike Zeshan (Sign Language Typology, MPI), Pieter Muysken (Linguistics, Radboud U. Nijmegen), Jan-Peter de Ruiter (Multimodal Interaction, MPI), Geoffrey Beattie (Psychology, U. Manchester), John Lee (HCRC, U. Edinburgh), and Harold Bekkering (NICI, Radboud U. Nijmegen). The lecture series gave the audience a comprehensive overview of SGM's work over the past 25 years ranging from her work on the communicative gesture systems invented by deaf children born to hearing parents, to her research on the relationship between gestures, learning, and thinking. With the growing interest in gestures across disciplines, the topic was very timely and drew a large and international audience. Some 200 participants came from all over Europe as well as from the US, representing many different disciplines, including gesture studies, Sign Language, language acquisition, communication studies, developmental psychology, and cognitive neuroscience.

The lectures were organised around three themes. In the first lecture, SGM demonstrated that when gestures are used *without* speech, such as in the case of deaf children with no conventional language input, gestures take on linguistic properties. The second lecture aimed to show that, in contrast, when gestures are used *with* speech, they are an integral part of language and lack such linguistic properties. The third lecture was devoted to showing that gestures used with speech can reveal something about thought and learning, and

index what SGM calls 'transitional periods' in cognitive development in both children and adults.

Lecture 1 The resilience of language: How children use their hands to create language

In the first lecture, SGM focused on the gesture systems of congenitally deaf children who have not yet been exposed to conventional linguistic input (i.e., homesigners). Drawing on large-scale cross-cultural data, SGM convincingly demonstrated that the gestures that these children use take on many of the forms and functions of language. In a detailed analysis she showed that these gestures constitute a stable lexicon whose items can be combined into sentences (gestures strings) with predicate frames permitting recursion, and that children use omission and order to mark who does what to whom. Furthermore, these lexical gestures were shown to be composed of morphemes and to function like grammatical categories (verbs, nouns, adjectives) in similar ways in deaf children in the US and China, even though such properties cannot be found in the speech-accompanying gestures that their caregivers use with them in their homes. SGM thus argued that all children, deaf and hearing, come to the language learning situation ready to develop precisely these language properties, and that children themselves therefore have a hand in shaping how language is learned. Finally, SGM gave a glimpse of her current large-scale studies on child and adult homesign systems in Spain, Turkey and Nicaragua, where the gestural systems accompanying speech that serve as potential input to homesigners have been shown to differ crosslinguistically.

The afternoon discussion was devoted to the implications of these findings regarding the nature of language, its genesis, and grammaticalisation processes. Ulrike Zeshan discussed how interactional dynamics in the home might influence the development of structures in homesigning children's gesture systems, especially in cultures with extended families, many siblings, etc. Another point concerned the influence of modality on emerging structures, that is, whether similar properties would emerge if we found hearing children who were not exposed to any language. She also discussed the implications of homesign for gestural theories of the origin of Language. Pieter Muysken further pursued the linguistic issues by questioning whether and how the linguistic structures in homesign systems compare with those in other emerging systems such as pidgins and creoles, and in L1 and L2 acquisition. He also raised the issue of how the 'resilient features' outlined by SGM relate to previously specified

'design features' of language, to properties of Universal Grammar, and what the implications for linguistic typology might be.

Lecture 2 The gesture-speech system: How hand and mouth work together

The first part of the second lecture was devoted to experimental studies showing how the gestures of hearing speakers can also take on language-like properties once they are freed from the "handcuffs" of speech, i.e. when speakers are asked to depict events they have seen using only their gestures. The analysis shows that, unlike gestures used with speech, such gestures are produced in strings and in certain orders that are influenced by the thematic roles of the referents, roles such as Action, Actor, Recipient, Patient, etc. SGM pointed to the similarities of these (types of) gestures to those structures found in the gestures of homesigning children.

The second part of this lecture made the point that when gestures are used *with* speech, the modalities form a unified communication system, as has also been argued by Kendon (2004), McNeill (1992), and Clark (1996), among others. The two characteristics that define gesture-speech integration in adult speakers are semantic coherence (combining gesture with meaningful and related speech) and temporal synchrony (producing gesture in synchrony with speech). This tight integration is further reflected by the fact that addressees cannot avoid understanding gestures when exposed to them, and that humans in all cultures gesture as they speak. They gesture even if they have not seen gestures performed by others, as shown by the studies of congenitally blind individuals who gesture as they speak.

However, speech and gesture do not form a single system at the earliest stages of language development, as shown in the final part of the lecture. The integration of language and gesture develops over time, indexing transitions in language development from the one-word to the two-word stage. Specifically, SGM showed that when children are ready to proceed to the two-word stage, their gestures and speech are more likely to convey different information (saying *open* and pointing at a box) than similar information (saying *box* and pointing at the box). That is, the types of gesture-speech combinations provide a first indication of change in toddlers as they learn language.

The afternoon discussion, led by Jan-Peter de Ruiter and Geoffrey Beattie, concerned the mechanics of how speech and gesture operate together. de Ruiter challenged the popular assumption that gestures, unlike speech, provide

'direct' access to the internal representations of the speaker. He argued that the relationship between internal representations and the gestures that express them is more complex than is often assumed, and relatively understudied. He also gave an overview of the extent to which the current language and gesture production models account for the relationship between gesture (with and without speech) and internal representations. Beattie elaborated on these issues, discussing how particular features of meaning tend to be expressed in gesture and others in speech due to modality constraints. He also questioned whether the notion of speech-gesture mismatches, frequently referred to by SGM (see below), can capture this complementary distribution between the two modalities. A final topic raised was the role of gestural information for addressees. Beattie discussed the general effectiveness of gestural communication, exploitable for instance in advertising, as well as individual differences in the ability to interpret gestures.

Lecture 3 Hearing gesture: How our hands help us think

In the final lecture SGM focused on how gestures relate to thought and learning processes. She first showed how gestures are associated with learning, reporting on the so-called mismatch studies where children and adults perform Piagetian conservation tasks or solve math problems. The crucial notion of a mismatch refers to cases where gesture and speech do not express identical information, but where gestures express complementary, but not necessarily conflicting, information to speech. Gesture-speech mismatches are seen as an index of knowledge transition, where two ideas are activated simultaneously, one of which may not be visible in speech. These studies reveal that mismatching children benefit more from instruction than matching children, since by virtue of already entertaining two different ideas, they are ready to learn.

SGM then turned to the possibility of a causal relationship between gesture and learning. In discussing how gesture functions as an indirect mechanism of learning through its communicative effect, she showed how teachers attend to children's (mismatching) gestures and adjust their teaching accordingly. Children then also attend to teachers' gestures and learn from them.

Gesture was also argued to function as a direct mechanism of learning through its cognitive effect. First, SGM suggested that gestures affect cognition in that they allow for experimentation with new ideas. Children who are encouraged to gesture appear to expand their repertoires of math solving strategies by adding new (gestural) strategies. Second, gesturing may reduce cognitive

load. When children and adults are asked to memorise words or spatial arrays while they explain a math problem, they perform better on the memory task when they gesture than when they do not. SGM argued that this suggests that it takes less effort to talk and gesture than to talk and not gesture. Preliminary results from a brain imaging study indicate that it also takes less effort to listen to talk with gestures than without, as shown by the reduced activation in the left medial frontal lobe while listening to speech with gestures in comparison to listening to speech without gestures. SGM concluded her lectures by speculating on the role of gesture as a second representational format, and as a link between the world, actions, and language.

In the afternoon session, John Lee discussed the relationship between gestures and other external representation systems, such as graphics, for reasoning and learning. He also raised the issue of how individual differences in spatial abilities might affect the benefits of such external systems. He exemplified such differences by showing that individuals made differential use of graphic representations in the learning of logic. Finally, Harold Bekkering drew on the literature on goal-directed actions and imitation to provide alternative explanations for the relationship between gestures and learning. He suggested that gestures might help learning, not necessarily because they provide additional external representations, but because they constitute goal-directed actions (i.e., to communicate and to interact) for both the speaker and the addressee.

Conclusion

SGM's engaging lecture series revealed a view on gestures that acknowledges the cognitive, the psycholinguistic, and the communicative importance of gestures, without downplaying the relevance of any of these aspects. The themes addressed by her research are directly relevant to a range of current theoretical debates such as the relationship between gesture and sign language, the role of innate categories and Universal Grammar in language acquisition and genesis, the impact of external representations both for speakers and addressees, and the relationship between language, action and consciousness. The lively discussions that characterised the three days in Nijmegen amply illustrated this relevance. SGM's enthusiasm and willingness to discuss and question both her own work and that of others was truly stimulating to witness. The audience came away from the three days of Nijmegen Lectures with plenty of food for new thought about the *many faces of gesture*.

References

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9th Conference on Discourse and Conversation Analysis —
9. Arbeitstagung zur Gesprächsforschung; Mannheim (Germany),
April 02–04 2003

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From April 02–04 2003, the 9th “Arbeitstagung zur Gesprächsforschung” (Conference on Discourse and Conversation Analysis) was held in Mannheim, Germany. This conference aimed at gathering researchers of different disciplines or paradigms of human face-to-face-interaction which includes verbal interaction as well as gestural and situational phenomena. Within the last years, an increasing number of research projects have explicitly focused on gesture in interaction or have tried to integrate visual and verbal aspects of communication with regard to more global research questions.

As this interdisciplinary meeting has constantly grown within the last years with regard both to the number of participants and to its importance for the research on discursive interaction in Germany, this year it received a new organizational structure. For the first time, the conference organization was shared by the *Institut für Deutsche Sprache* (IDS) and the *Institut für Gesprächsforschung* (IGF), and it was transferred from its original venue Freiburg (in former times accordingly called the “Freiburger Arbeitstagung zur Gesprächsforschung”) to the location of the IDS which is in Mannheim. The intention of the team of organizers (Arnulf Deppermann, Martin Hartung, Reinhard Fiehler, Reinhold Schmitt, Thomas Spranz-Fogasy) is to establish this annual conference as a continuous platform for discussion and exchange of ideas for all those concerned with the different facets of discursive interaction. As a means of networking

within this community, an information portal has been set up, which gives access to an online-journal as well as to an online-“publishing house” which offers pdf-publications of doctoral theses and pdf-reprints of out-of-stock-books (www.gespraechsforschung.de).

This year’s conference was framed by the topic of ‘processuality’, which was examined for verbal as well as gestural aspects of communication. The assumption that form and function of interactive events emerge in a communicative process is constitutive for the field of *Gesprächsforschung*. Through projection and retrospection, expectations and expected expectations, it becomes apparent that language is neither timeless nor static, but that meaning always emerges *in situ*, i.e., in a processual manner. This general topic has been approached in two different forms of contribution: traditional talks with extended discussions and data-sessions, which account for the specific manner of research within the field of *Gesprächsforschung*.

Instead of following the chronological order of the presentations the report will be structured along some topics presently under discussion in the field. These are (1) multimodal aspects of communication, (2) the reflection of concepts initially developed in Ethnomethodology/Conversation Analysis, (3) problems usually tackled by “traditional” linguistics and now being examined with an interactive perspective, (4) the application of interaction research to other disciplines and (5) to professional fields. As the multimodal aspects of communication (part 1) will be of direct interest to the students of gesture, they will be presented in some more details than parts 2 to 5 which may serve as an insight into the discursive framework in which the gesture-related studies are situated. A more detailed description of all contributions can be found in a report in the German language by Domke, Pitsch, & Schwabe (2003) published in the online-journal ‘*Gesprächsforschung*’ 4, 122–134 (www.gespraechsforschung-ozs.de).

Multimodal aspects of communication

A multimodal perspective on communication was put forward by **Jürgen Streeck** (Austin, USA) in his talk on the role of body movements for the sequential production of mutual understanding in conversation. He focused on the ‘palm-up-open-hand’-gesture, a so-called ‘pragmatical’ or ‘discursive’ gesture, which accompanies talk and which — in contrast to describing or pointing gestures — contributes to structuring the interaction and seems to embody some aspects of the communicative activities. On the basis of a video-recording of an informal everyday conversation between two female friends the speaker

analyzed the actual realizations — i.e., “2½ variants” — of the ‘palm-up-open-hand’-gesture, its sequential context and its interactive function. It turned out that this gesture is realized by the interactants both with one hand as well as with two hands and that it occurs not only as one single movement but also as a combination of repeated single- and both-handed movements. Streeck pointed out that this gesture is systematically used for closing a narrative sequence and, at the same time, requesting an evaluative uptake of the narration. This aspect is especially remarkable in those cases, in which, at the end of a communicative unit, the offering ‘palm up open hand’ is “frozen” in the gesture space between the two interactants until a hearer’s reaction is produced. Based on these analyzes, Streeck concluded his presentation with some further reflections on individual and physical aspects of gestures. He underlined the idea that body movements are related to the individual’s experiences in the world. Thus, not only are gestures a visual medium of communication, but they are also a kind of kinaesthetic phenomena that have to be acquired in a long process of bodily learning. As this tension relation between the individual shaping of gestures on the one hand and the process of socialization on the other hand has so far scarcely been taken into account in research, Streeck opened up the perspective that these topics may need to be explored in the future research on gesture and embodiment.

Ulrich Krafft and **Ulrich Dausendschön-Gay (Bielefeld, Germany)** initiated a discussion on the relationship of “text and body gestures” by inviting the participants of their data session to analyze with them the procedures and methods which are used by the interactants to build local units in communication. The presenters departed from the ethnomethodological idea that gestures are not refining or complementing additions to verbal communication but that they constitute the “visible and audible form of utterances which are produced and received holistically as complex communicative shapes (*gestalts*).” For the topic of communicative units, this means that they too are to be produced in a multimodal manner, i.e., they cannot only be heard but should also be able to be seen in the data. Following this line of argumentation, the two discussion leaders proposed as a way of proceeding for the analysis: starting observations on the video-recordings of an event merely by looking at the image-track and integrating into the analysis the audio-track of the data only in a second step. This manner of proceeding, which up to now does not figure among the established analytical practices in CA, makes it possible to focus on the visual aspects of communication and to analyze their holistic interrelation with the audible parts of communication more intensely than before. The data provided by the presenters comprised brief sequences of a mother–daughter-interaction

and a triadic situation of task-related text-optimization. The data was analyzed in a detailed manner: how speakers — while making use of prosodic elements, head movements, facial expression, gesture and posture — produce communicative units and thereby give the recipient orientating directions to process these utterances. This idea has been formulated by Dausendschön-Gay and Krafft in the concept of “on-line help” (*On-line Hilfen*). An object of interesting and controversial discussion has been the notion of unit as well as the relationship between gestures and body movements.

In her talk **Lorenza Mondada (Lyon, France)** examined turn-taking procedures in difficult settings and thereby highlighted the importance of a multimodal perspective. In her data — videotaped surgical expert-novice-interaction — a live picture of an ongoing surgical operation is transmitted into a lecture theatre where another expert surgeon as well as a group of doctors, who get some further training, can follow the operation. While the transmission into the lecture theatre visually only shows the surgeon’s hands performing the operation, all participants can verbally address each other at all times. Analyzing the manner in which the participants solve the problem of turn taking in this ‘transmitted’ communication, Mondada demonstrated how far the setting impedes on basic interactive tasks: First of all, the mutual availability cannot be taken for granted but has to be established for each communicational event. In her talk, Mondada was able to show that the different participants use different procedures for getting the operating surgeon’s attention. While the expert doctor tries to evoke attention by initiating a summons-answer sequence — denominated as the ‘recognitional format’, since both interactants position themselves as well known colleagues by addressing each other by their first names, the novice-doctors made use of apologetic addresses instead and thereby marked their contributions as interruptions. However, since the surgeon performs a complex manual activity, the viewers cannot fully rely on the verbal markers of transition relevance places. Furthermore, non-verbal cues for these places to take over talk are also scarcely available due to the limited visual transmission that doesn’t allow taking facial expression into account. Thus, the participants in the lecture theatre have to align their contributions to the ongoing operation by an online-analysis of the picture transmitted. On the basis of instances in which questions were treated as misplaced by the operating surgeon, Mondada argued that the analysis of such ‘transmitted’ interactions could offer fruitful insight into the projective force of gestural cues for the identification of transition relevance places. In this way, they may open a new perspective on a mechanism which has been at the centre of CA studies from the beginning.

In their data-session **Ines Bose** and **Martina Rudolph** (Halle, Germany) turned to the question of acquisition of communicative competences. In a joint analysis of a video-sequence of two boys playing together, they concentrated on the development of the ability to solve disputes and conflicts. While research so far has mainly focused on the verbal patterns of disputing and ending a dispute, the participants of this data session particularly examined the non- and para-verbal aspects used in fulfilling this task. The participants thus turned to the material from a more speech-analytical (*Sprechwissenschaft*) point of view. During the lively session, it became obvious how much the factors of voice modulation as well as gestures contribute to the task of solving disputes. In neglecting these aspects, one cannot fully assess the children's communicative competencies.

Concepts developed in Conversation Analysis

Jörg Bergmann (Bielefeld, Germany) turned to the basic ethnomethodological concept of "accounts" (Garfinkel) and analyzed the structure and sequential organization of *explicit* accounts — i.e., explicit explanations and comments which participants produce with regard to their behaviour at certain moments in the interaction and which differ from the *implicit* and continuously ongoing activity of making interpretable ('accountable') one's activities. It turned out that explicit accounts show some striking parallels to the organization of repair in interaction and that they are used by the participants as local procedures of normalization.

Harrie Mazeland (Groningen, Netherlands) described and analyzed a phenomenon, which he called 'inserted clarifications', i.e., instances of talk in which the speaker withholds the projected syntactical structure in order to insert a short comment or clarification. He was able to show that they are initiated by the use of specific causal conjunctions (in Dutch *want* and *omdat*) or markers of respecification such as *at least* or *in any case*, and that the recipients treat these insertions as something that demands a response and thus constitutes a sequence of its own.

In her talk "Closing as an interactive achievement" **Margret Selting** (Potsdam, Germany) also turned to a phenomenon that has been central to the CA paradigm for a long time. Highlighting that closings have to be dealt with on all structural levels of talk-in-interaction from turn constructional units up to whole encounters, she focused on the interrelation between cognitive sedimentations such as structural models and their local and interactive emergence.

In his talk “What comes next?” **Heiko Hausendorf (Bayreuth, Germany)** focused on the central communicative task of continuing interaction, of linking structures to preceding ones or, shortly, of sequencing. He presented a descriptive concept in which he distinguishes between the fulfilling of communicative tasks in the foreground and in the background. He argued that the more conditional relevancies are highlighted or become observable, the more the task is placed in the interactive foreground.

Linguistic problems reformulated

Elisabeth Couper-Kuhlen (Potsdam, Germany) focused on prosodic phenomena and thereby demonstrated how interactional approaches can open up new perspectives on traditional linguistic fields. While long-established research in phonetics/phonology has generally taken up an atemporal view on prosody, Couper-Kuhlen put forward a processual and emergent perspective on intonational phenomena. She argued that among the phonological parameters, especially intonation is likely to be used as a means of retrospective and prospective structuration of a conversation.

Just as Couper-Kuhlen did for the field of prosody, **Peter Auer (Freiburg, Germany)** suggested a reconsideration of syntactic phenomena. On the basis of various audio-examples, the presenter drew the audience’s attention to mainly three relevant points which were clarified with various audio-examples: (1) the idea of an “on-line”-syntax, which takes into account the temporally unfolding emergence of syntactical structures in spoken language, (2) the fact that emergent syntactic structures are generally co-constructed by several interactants and (3) the need to integrate the frequency of how often the different structures are used.

Situating her research at the intersection of syntax, semantics and interaction, **Susanne Günthner (Münster, Germany)** analyzed which meaning connectors can adopt in conversation and how their grammatical function emerges in the actual process of interaction. In an exemplary manner, Günthner analyzed the German connector *wo* and was able to demonstrate that it is used by the interactants in order to mark temporal, causal or concessive relations according to its co-occurrence with particular verbal (prosodical, syntactical, lexical) means and according to its sequential and contextual surrounding (speech acts, communicative genres).

In her data-session **Pia Bergmann (Freiburg, Germany)** focused on intonation contours in the regional substandard variety spoken in the German city

of Cologne. The researchers jointly analyzed how far the sequential context contributes to the interactive function of a specific intonation contour and for which different facets of meaning interactants seem to employ it.

In their talk 'Orientation to a model' **Ulrich Dausendschön-Gay, Ulrich Krafft and Elisabeth Gülich (Bielefeld, Germany)** presented a concept to describe communicative routines as the interactants' activities rather than in a classical linguistic manner as structural features of a language. Among a set of examples, they distinguished conventionalized models (all kinds of phraseological entities from single idioms up to the level of text types) from individual ones. For the latter type, they argued that the speaker is confronted with the task of showing that a certain utterance is indeed being employed by him or her as a model rather than as an individually locally produced token which is very often achieved by a characteristic link of form and content.

Language and development

Friederike Kern (Potsdam, Germany) and **Uta Quasthoff (Dortmund, Germany)** presented their research on the processes of the acquisition of competencies with regard to communicative structures and patterns of text types in younger children. Showing a possible link between CA methodology and developmental psychology, they demonstrated how the shape of familial interaction thoroughly influences the processes of discourse structure acquisition.

For the data-session organized by **Janet Spreckels (Heidelberg, Germany)** audio-material was presented from a research project in which the presenter accompanied a group of adolescent girls in their spare time in order to find out how they constitute themselves as a group and develop a shared group identity. Special attention was given to the parameters of age and gender, how far activities can be regarded as 'typically female,' and the role of jokes the girls made about group members or others.

Conversation Analysis and professions

Applying the methods of CA to research on professional interaction, **Peter Schröder (Sellebakk, Norway)** tackled in his data session aspects of "Negotiations in telephone calls between a German and an Italian business company." Analyzing audio-recordings of telephone calls, it was shown how the

participants use different procedures for leading — in an implicit manner — to the central topic of the telephone call, i.e., to negotiate the offer.

Andrea Teuscher's (Koblenz-Landau, Germany) data session provided an insight into the field of media analysis and offered a combination of analytical methods taken from semiotic approaches, conversation analysis and linguistic text analysis. The object of discussion was the topic of "Aggressive Humour on Television." It became apparent that its humouristic character resides mainly in the violation of common norms and in the different layers of the persons' 'mise en scène' like clothes, gestures, facial expressions and intonation.

The professional field of jurisdiction was at the centre of Stefanie Tränkle's (Freiburg, Germany) data session. She outlined that there is a trend in the German and French legal system to introduce new, and usually more informal manners of dealing with a case, e.g., the so-called *criminal law mediation*, in which a (legal) mediator tries to solve a legal problem with the people involved without having a large and expensive court trial. Tränkle discussed the verbal traits of informality that characterize this legal setting and the question how the mediator balances the informal atmosphere and the legal demands in situ.

In the data-session organized by Sigrid Behrend (Saarbrücken, Germany), the participants worked on the topic "interalloglottal communication — when native speakers interact/communicate with non-native speakers". On the basis of audio data the researchers tackled the question how language problems are treated by the participants in different constellations of native and non-native speakers.

Concluding remarks

In sum, the conference very well reached its aim of offering a platform for interesting and ambitious discussion and an exchange of ideas on the analysis of discursive interaction. This success shows not only in the vivid discussions, but also in the fact that the conference attracted about 100 participants from different disciplines and approaches. It is hoped for future conferences that this intensive and productive exchange of approaches will be just as fruitful for the shared object of interest: human face-to-face interaction.

The *Arbeitstagung zur Gesprächsforschung* 2004 was held again in Mannheim from March 31st to April 2nd 2004. The conference dealt with the concept of **participation**. Departing from Goffman's well-known concept of participation framework and research beyond that (Duranti, Goodwin, Hanks, Heath)

the focus was on the display of emotional participation on the one hand and the multimodal aspects of linking verbal, para- and non-verbal levels of participation on the other. More information on this conference and on future ones including a Call for Papers is available from <http://www.gespraechsforschung.de>.