
When words pause, eyes speak

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Human communication operates as a multimodal system where cognitive processes manifest through acoustic and visual channels. In spoken discourse, cognitive activity becomes observable through hesitation phenomena. This study examines the interaction between hesitation phenomena and their visual counterparts in formal German spoken discourse.

Hesitation mechanisms involve planning and monitoring during language production, manifesting through fillers (*also* "well"), vocalizations (*äh, ähm*), repetitions, self-corrections, pauses, and sound lengthening. Research has demonstrated systematic coordination between hesitations, gesture (Seyfeddinipur & Kita 2001; Bergmann et al. 2011), and gaze (Goodwin & Goodwin 1986; Bavelas et al. 2002), establishing hesitations as embodied phenomena.

This study addresses which gestural features contribute to meaning during hesitation patterns. The corpus comprises two episodes of *Sternstunde Philosophie*, a Swiss German philosophical interview program. Using synchronized audio-video transcription, the study examines how eye movements, hand shapes, and facial expressions align temporally with acoustic hesitation patterns among L1 German speakers.

Preliminary findings identify gaze direction as the primary gestural-phonetic cue signalling online language planning. Temporal alignment distinguishes hesitation-marking from turn-taking gaze: the former occurs mid-turn during extended holds, particularly at moments of high information load during lexical retrieval and utterance formulation the latter at transition-relevance points (Rossano 2012: 315). Hand and facial movements supplement hesitation marking.

My contribution aims to show how specific gestural-phonetic features support speakers' real-time discourse planning, advancing the understanding of how speakers coordinate multiple semiotic channels during complex linguistic tasks.

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