Pattern of form and function of bodily resources in listing practices in Romance languages and beyond

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Lists are frequently used in spoken language as a discursive resource and can be considered as a universal, cross-lingual practice for structuring ideas (Couper-Kuhlen & Selting, 2018, online chapter F). As such, they have been given attention in several fields of linguistics, mainly in intonation research (e.g. Couper-Kuhlen 1986), conversation analysis and interactional linguistics (e.g. Jefferson 1990, Selting 2007). Yet, until date, the role of gestural and bodily expressions in the production of lists has received little attention in descriptions and analysis and will therefore be the focus of this presentation. Following the principles of Interactional Linguistics, the analysis pursues a qualitative, praxiological approach and draws its conclusions from a perspective on listing as a sedimented practice in Talk-in-Interaction. Specifically, we tackle two main aspects: firstly, the role of gestural and bodily resources in establishing the format and in organizing the interaction in general (Dankel & Satt 2019); secondly, the leeway for different solutions different cultures may have for the integration and interrelation of different modalities in the practice of listing as a recurrent communicative task (Dankel & Soto Rodríguez 2021).

The dataset we rely on contains 557 examples of list constructions in Spanish (221), French (276), Italian (20) and Quechua (40). It was compiled from a corpus of TV broadcasts (different interview situations and types as well as discussion rounds) and video clips (explanations and instructions) collected by the author and colleagues on freely accessible video platforms (unpublished), and from Freiburg Sofa Talks Corpus (Pfänder, Satti & Schumann, in prep.), which contains video recordings of collaborative storytellings from couples, friends or family members. Drawing on interactional linguistic methodology, the data was transcribed and interactional patterns were documented by a qualitative sequential analysis of the datapoints. The gestural and bodily movements were measured and visualized via motion tracking.

Regarding the first aspect, we argue that lists in Spanish, French and Italian are multimodal and that bodily resources play a major role in establishing lists but also organizing the task of collaborative listing. We show that gestures shape the production of lists with varying granularity at the levels of cognitive planning and interaction control. Yet, the most routinized gestures also lose these functions again. From these observations, we can draw conclusions on the integrated relationship between language, bodily resources, cognition and interaction control for meaningful communication in face-to-face interaction. For the second aspect, based on lists from Andean Spanish and Quechua, we explore whether culturally particular modifications to list making can be documented in the bodily and gestural patterns but also in the prosodic, verbal and discursive configuration of lists. Our results show that, whereas the main structural and functional properties are similar, there are differences, functionally (the use of lists in communicative practices) as well as structurally (in terms of a quite different interplay between syntax, prosody and gestures, especially regarding information structure). This leads us to discuss the flexibility of the multimodal list constructions to adapt both to local contingencies of interaction and to specific regional manifestations influenced by the communicative needs of the speakers.

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