

L'ANALISI LINGUISTICA E LETTERARIA

FACOLTÀ DI LINGUE E LETTERATURE STRANIERE
UNIVERSITÀ CATTOLICA DEL SACRO CUORE

1

ANNO XVI 2008

SPECIAL ISSUE

Proceedings of the IADA Workshop
Word Meaning in Argumentative Dialogue

Homage to Sorin Stati

VOLUME 1

EDUCATT - UNIVERSITÀ CATTOLICA DEL SACRO CUORE

L'ANALISI
LINGUISTICA E LETTERARIA

FACOLTÀ DI SCIENZE LINGUISTICHE
E LETTERATURE STRANIERE

UNIVERSITÀ CATTOLICA DEL SACRO CUORE

ANNO XVI 2008

SPECIAL ISSUE

Proceedings of the IADA Workshop
Word Meaning in Argumentative Dialogue

Homage to Sorin Stati

Milan 2008, 15-17 May

VOLUME 1

edited by G. Gobber, S. Cantarini, S. Cigada, M.C. Gatti & S. Gilardoni

L'ANALISI LINGUISTICA E LETTERARIA
Facoltà di Scienze linguistiche e Letterature straniere
Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore
Anno XVI - 1/2008
ISSN 1122-1917

Direzione

GIUSEPPE BERNARDELLI
LUISA CAMAIORA
SERGIO CIGADA
GIOVANNI GOBBER

Comitato scientifico

GIUSEPPE BERNARDELLI - LUISA CAMAIORA - BONA CAMBIAGHI - ARTURO CATTANEO
SERGIO CIGADA - MARIA FRANCA FROLA - ENRICA GALAZZI - GIOVANNI GOBBER
DANTE LIANO - MARGHERITA ULRYCH - MARISA VERNA - SERENA VITALE - MARIA TERESA
ZANOLA

Segreteria di redazione

LAURA BALBIANI - GIULIANA BENEDELLI - ANNA BONOLA - GUIDO MILANESE
MARIACRISTINA PEDRAZZINI - VITTORIA PRENCIPE - MARISA VERNA

Pubblicazione realizzata con il contributo PRIN - anno 2006

© 2009 EDUCatt - Ente per il Diritto allo Studio Universitario dell'Università Cattolica
Largo Gemelli 1, 20123 Milano - tel. 02.72342235 - fax 02.80.53.215
e-mail: editoriale.dsu@unicatt.it (*produzione*); librario.dsu@unicatt.it (*distribuzione*);
web: www.unicatt.it/librario

Redazione della Rivista: redazione.all@unicatt.it - *web:* www.unicatt.it/librario/all

Questo volume è stato stampato nel mese di luglio 2009
presso la Litografia Solari - Peschiera Borromeo (Milano)

THE ROLE OF NONVERBAL EXPRESSIONS AS PRECURSORS TO ARGUMENTATIVE DISCOURSE IN FRENCH, JAPANESE AND AMERICAN ENGLISH CONVERSATION

CAROLINE ELISA NASH

1. *Introduction*

Numerous studies have been done on nonverbal communication with attention focused primarily on gaze behavior patterns. Extensive work has been done on the role of gaze and “gaze shift” in the “turn” of turn-taking in English (Duncan & Fiske 1977, 1985; Goodwin 1981; Schegloff *et al.* 1984). It is now widely accepted that the division between language and gestures is not as distinct as previously believed (Kita 2003; Kita & Ide 2007; McNeill *et al.* 2005). Studies in conversation analysis that incorporate the nonverbal component reveal important facts about the relationship between language and gesture.

The use of gestures in a natural and interactive conversation requires observable contextual phenomenon as well as assumptions or inferences about the speaker's beliefs and intentions. The mutually-shared background information of the speaker and addressee depends to a great extent on their cultural background. Although studies on gaze behavior describe observed patterns of predominantly American subjects, studies on culture-specific gaze behavior have been conducted since the early 20th century that reveal distinct cross-cultural differences in certain patterns of gaze behavior between interlocutors engaged in interactive conversation. Most notably, Whiffen (1915), who conducted studies on gaze behavior of American Indians, attested that Indians do not look at each other while speaking – neither the speaker at the listener, nor the listener at the speaker (Whiffen 1915: 254).

Yet, ethnocentric studies still dominate kinesic research and the constructed models and postulated rules are often generalized to apply to the social behavior and organizational structure across languages and cultures. Speakers and addressees across cultures do not use the same techniques in gaze behavior patterns and hand and head gestures that regulate the conversation as will be revealed by our study of argumentative discourse in French, Japanese and American English. We further seek to show that the role of the gesture as a conversation marker is significant in any model of talk-interaction, due to the fact that overt linguistic cues to regulate natural conversation and express interlocutors' attitudes are not usually expressed during natural conversation.

This study addresses the following research questions:

1. How do interlocutors communicate *intent* to disagree or argue?
2. Since nonverbal expressions convey more than is actually said, are there certain gestures which signal that the forthcoming discourse is argumentative? (i.e. non-verbal *regulators* that function as a precursor to argumentative discourse?)
3. Are there cross-cultural differences or similarities (perhaps universals) in the nature of these preverbal regulators?

In this paper I examine the means by which the addressee signals forthcoming argumentation as they effect their turn transition, and the means by which the speaker averts argumentation by the addressee. I discuss the role of gaze and assert that gaze avert is crucial in the argumentation process.

2. *Regulators defined*

Schiffirin (1987) uses the term *discourse markers* to cover a wide spectrum of discourse functions including those in the areas of pragmatics and conversation analysis. *Discourse markers* have defined functions in both written text and verbal communication. In conversation, the “participation framework” (Schiffirin 1987: 27) includes “the way in which speakers are related to their turns: claiming them, fighting for them, and relinquishing them”. Fraser (1996: 168) defines *pragmatic markers* as “linguistically-encoded clues which signal the speaker’s potential communicative intentions”. According to Fraser, these *pragmatic markers* correspond to four different types of messages but he clearly makes a distinction between the first three: *basic*, *commentary*, and *parallel markers*, and the fourth: *discourse markers*. For Fraser, *discourse markers* are only those markers that specify how the message is related to foregoing discourse. Based on this refinement of the definition of *discourse markers*, regulators cannot be classified accordingly.

Manoliu (1999) argued for the necessity of further refining the categories of pragmatic markers and proposed the term *conversation markers* as a sub-category of pragmatic markers whose functions are to organize the talk-interaction. These functions include their role in negotiating the turn, their role in controlling the addressee’s attention and understanding, their role in accepting or rejecting the speaker’s topic, and crucial to this study, their role in conveying speaker-addressee attitude. Since regulators function to control and maintain the flow of natural conversation, in my view, regulators fit under the rubric of *conversation markers*.

3. *Data collection and method*

The data for this study were collected via video recordings of native French speakers residing in various regions throughout France, Japanese native speakers residing in Japan and American English native speakers residing in California in the United States.

All participants were taped while engaged in natural interpersonal and interactive conversations and were not at any time aware of the nature of the study and the specific topic of research prior to or during the taping. The subjects are of five different sociolinguistic groups: 1. French speakers 30-65 years of age; 2. Japanese speakers 30-65 years of age; 3. Japanese speakers 20-25 years of age; 4. American English speakers 30-65 years of age and 5. American English speakers 20-25 years of age.

4. *Addressee signals of argumentative discourse*

In this section we examine some nonverbal expressions displayed by the addressee that serve as precursors to argumentative discourse. These signals communicate intent to disagree or argue on the part of the addressee. The abbreviations used in this section and their corresponding referents are as follows: S = Speaker; A = Addressee; A→s = Addressee-turned-speaker (i.e. addressee took the speaker-turn); GD = Gaze Direct; GA = Gaze Avert; HT = Head Tilt.

4.1 The French addressee

The French addressee displays the head tilt as a turn-taking strategy but crucially, the head tilt bears the meaning of a certain degree of disaccord. The head tilt gesture conveys the addressee's intent to argue or disagree to the speaker, and precedes verbal expressions of disaccord. In example (1), a French addressee displays the head-tilt preceded by gaze avert prior to his argumentative discourse.

1. (A averts his gaze, displays head-tilt, then interjects S)
 A→s: (GA→HT) "Oh...mais je me fous de ce que vous et les autres en pensent! Ça vous regarde pas! Il m'a dit ce matin même: (GD) "J'aime bien ma vie ici à Paris avec toi!"

 A→s: (GA→HT) 'Oh ... but I don't give a damn about what you and the others think! It's none of your business! He said to me this very morning, (GD) "I like my life here in Paris with you!"

The addressee-turned-speaker redirects his gaze at his interlocutor as he quotes an absent referent.

In example (2) shown in Image I, a French addressee uses the head-tilt to signal forthcoming argumentative discourse in response to what the speaker has just said and prior to explaining or justifying his disagreement. The addressee averts the gaze just prior to uttering "mmm...", then pauses, and begins to tilt his head prior to uttering "ah" and continues tilting his head as he utters "non!". The addressee-turned-speaker then commences his argumentative discourse.

Image 1.

2.

A→s: (GA) “mmm...”



(HT) “ah”

(→ HT→ HT) “non!” (‘no!’)

Other French verbal expressions that signal forthcoming argumentation preceded by the addressee head-tilt extracted from the data are “alors, là...” (‘now that there...’); “ben, écoute...” (‘oh now, listen...’); “pas forcément...” (‘not necessarily...’); “pas spécialement...” (‘not particularly’); “oui, mais...” (‘yes, but...’). These utterances respond to what a speaker has just said and prior to explaining or justifying his disagreement.

Addressee gaze avert and head-tilt may also bear the additional meaning of negative attitude on the part of the addressee as shown in example (3). In this example there are two addressees who take the speaker-turn argumentatively and clearly express a negative attitude towards the speaker’s discourse:

3. S: (GD) “En tout cas [unintelligible]... de venir récupérer tes affaires!”

(GD) ‘In any case [unintelligible]... to come get your things!’

A¹→s: (GA→HT) “C’est bon! Commencez pas!”

(GA→HT) ‘That’s enough! Don’t start!’

A²→s: (GA→HT) “Ohhhh!”

(GA→HT) ‘Ohhhh!’

Other French expressions of negative attitude uttered by the addressee preceded by gaze avert and head-tilt extracted from the data are as follows: “n’importe quoi” (‘(you just say) whatever/anything!’); “tu te racontes!” (‘you daresay!/oh really?’); “je m’en fous!” (‘I don’t give a damn!’); “c’est pas beau!” (‘that’s not nice!’); “il comprend rien!” (‘he doesn’t understand anything!’); “j’avais rien compris de ce que tu as dit!” (‘I hadn’t understood anything you said!’); “moi, j’aime pas trop!” (‘I don’t like it much!’).

Gaze avert followed by the head tilt performed by the French addressee are also displayed preceding expressions of sarcasm such as, “ah bon!?” (‘oh really!?’) and “ah... tu vas prendre ça là-bas!?” (‘oh... you’re going to take that over there!?’).

French verbal expressions of disagreement, negative attitude and sarcasm on the part of the addressee are almost always uttered in conjunction with gaze avert followed by a head gesture, one of which is the head tilt as presented in this discussion.

4.2 The Japanese addressee

A side head tilt by the Japanese addressee conveys disaccord to the speaker. The addressee is in disagreement with the speaker’s opinion, comment or topic. If the speaker yields the floor at the head tilt display, then the addressee has succeeded in taking his turn to counter the speaker. Otherwise, the head tilt is held longer and firmer until the addressee successfully takes his turn. The initial head tilts may be unaccompanied by verbal utterances, or pre-verbal followed by the utterances, “mmm...”, “saa...” (expression of doubt) or “demo...” (‘but...’), as shown in example (4) and Image II.

The expressions “saa...” and “mnn...” are never uttered without first averting the gaze then tilting the head, whereas “demo...” is uttered either following gaze avert or the head tilt, or both.

Image II



4. “mnn...”



“saa...”

In example (5) shown in Image III, the addressee who is in disagreement with the speaker, averts the gaze and displays the head tilt just prior to his discourse.

Image III



(a)

(b)

5. (a) S: “Meiji ka nan ka.”
‘Like Meiji or something.’
- (b) A→s: “Meiji ja naku te yo,…”
‘Not Meiji…’

The Japanese addressee head tilt and gaze avert are also displayed when expressing negative attitude and sarcasm. Some expressions extracted from our data with approximate glosses are as follows: “ii jyanai!” (‘so what!/you should be pleased!’); “jyoodan jyanai yo!” (‘you’ve got to be kidding! /no way!’); “yoku yuu yo!” (‘you exaggerate!/you just say whatever!’); “kankei nai yo!” (‘that’s got nothing to do with it!’); “komaru yo!” (‘that’s problematic!/that’s an imposition!’); “mata yuu!” (‘there you go (saying that) again!’).

4.3 The American addressee

A very common American gesture used by members of certain socio-linguistic groups is the “Talk to the Hand” open palm gesture displayed by the addressee preceding the utterance, “Whatever!” to convey to the speaker that she or he wants the speaker to stop talking, and is usually followed by another contentious utterance leading into mutual argumentative discourse. This gesture is performed by a twist of the wrist and circular hand motion, partially extending the arm towards the speaker’s face, positioning the tense open hand between the interlocutors as illustrated in Image IV. The addressee precedes the hand display with gaze avert.

Image IV

Gaze avert is the primary means by which an addressee signals forthcoming argumentation in American English. In example (6), when the speaker offends the addressee by uttering "...show off your talents...", the addressee immediately averts his gaze and then counters by denying that he was showing off, all the while averting his gaze. He redirects his gaze towards his interlocutor when he corrects the statement made by the speaker.

6. S: "... show off your talents..."
 A → s: (GA) "I didn't want to show off, (GD) I just wanted to stay awake."
 ← Gaze Avert →

American English verbal expressions of negative attitude, sarcasm and disaccord on the part of the addressee are often uttered following gaze avert. Some examples extracted from the data are as follows: "what is her problem?", "I have a problem with what she's wearing!", "hell no!", "who cares?", "what the heck?" "you're/she's hella dumb!", "you're retarded!", "you're smoking dope!", "in your dreams!", "oh yeah, I forgot, you were dropped on your head when you were a baby!", "yeah, right!", "don't think so!".

5. Speaker means of averting the argument

In the previous section, we examined certain nonverbal expressions that serve as precursors to argumentative discourse. These signals communicate intent to disagree or argue on the part of the addressee. In this section we examine some means by which the speaker averts the addressee's forthcoming argument which oftentimes serves a dual purpose, i.e. not merely to avert an argument, but also to signal forthcoming argumentation on the part of the speaker. The abbreviations used in this section and their corresponding referents are as follows: S = Speaker; A = Addressee; GD = Gaze Direct; HD = Hand Display.

5.1 The French speaker

A regulator used by the French speaker to signal that it is still his or her turn to speak and that he or she is not yet willing to yield the floor to another participant at a transition relevance place, comprises the index finger vertically placed in between the speaker and the addressee with the arm bent at a 45 angle, elbow forward and slightly raised. A variation is the open palm held vertically between the speaker and the addressee, the palm facing the addressee.

In example (7) shown in Image V, prior to the first frame (a), the speaker utters, “...parce que si vous donnez de trop, vous avez un contrôle fiscal.” She continues to say, “On vous dira...” while at the same time the addressee interjects with “Tu exagères...” resulting in overlap. At this juncture in frame (a), the speaker, anticipating an argument on the part of the addressee, displays her index finger gesture and continues to speak, countering with “...on dira... on vous dira: ‘Mais vous avez servi deux repas. Vous n’en avez déclaré qu’un. Donc, vous volez l’État!’”, all the while maintaining the display of her hand gesture as well as gaze direct towards her addressee. Still in Frame (a), the addressee interjects again with the utterance “Tu exagères! Peser tous... chaque... chaque...” while the speaker is still holding up her index finger and overlaps with “Il y a eu un restaurant... Il y a eu...” It isn’t until frame (b) after the speaker restarts her argument with the utterance “Il y a eu un restaurant...” when she no longer anticipates an argument from the addressee, i.e. quells the argument and succeeds in denying the addressee his speaker-turn, that she terminates the gestural hand display.

Image V



(a)

(b)

7.

(<a) S: "... parce que si vous donnez de trop, vous avez un contrôle fiscal."
'... because if you give too much, you're audited.'

S: ["On vous dira..."
'They'll tell you...']

A: ["Tu exagères..."
'You exaggerate...']

(a) S: (HD/GD) "on dira...on vous dira: 'Mais vous avez servi deux repas'.
-----> maintaining gesture and gaze direct ----->

(HD/GD) 'they'll say... they'll tell you, "But you only served two meals"'.
'Vous n'en avez déclaré qu'un. Donc, vous volez l'État!'

-----> maintaining gesture and gaze direct ----->

'You only declared one. So you're stealing from the State!'

(a) A: "Tu exagères! Peser tous..."

'You exaggerate! To weigh all...

[chaque... chaque..."

each... each...']

S: (HD/GD)

["Il y a eu un restaurant...il y a eu..."

(HD/GD)

'There was a restaurant...there was...']

(b) S: "Il y a eu un restaurant..."

In the following example also shown in Image VI, the addressee first silences the speaker (Speaker 1) and signals forthcoming argumentation. Upon taking the speaker-turn, the addressee-turned-speaker (Speaker 2), anticipating a counter from Speaker 1 following what she is about to say, gestures using the open palm variation which she displays vertically between herself and Speaker 1, the palm facing Speaker 1, thereby averting Speaker 1's counter. In Image VI, Speaker 1 is on the right and Speaker 2 is on the left. Gaze direct is maintained during the gestural display.

Image VI

8. S¹: “Si tu veux être décontractée, il faut fumer le bédo tous les deux et tu seras plus comme ça (gesturing hands trembling motion).”
 ‘If you want to destress, you have to smoke the bedo, the two of us together and you won’t be like this (shaking) anymore.’
- S²: (HD/GD) “Après! Après! Si tu veux, après... après les examens, si tu veux... mais avant, non.”
 (HD/GD) ‘After! After! If you want, after... after the exams, if you want... but before, no.’

Speaker 2 then continues to defend her position by expressing the seriousness of the exam-taking process that Speaker 1 dismisses as an almost frivolous undertaking, thereby perpetuating further argument that ensues between these two participants.

5.2 The Japanese speaker

A tense nod held 2 to 3 seconds by the Japanese speaker performed in sentence-final position, functions to avert a forthcoming argument by the addressee. This head gesture conveys to the addressee that the speaker wants to change the topic or terminate the conversation. Attempts on the part of the addressee to further contribute to the conversation are usually futile. This gesture conveys negative attitude in essence saying: “I am having the last word on this topic and now it’s the end of this conversation!”

With regard to gaze patterns, Japanese speakers do not maintain gaze direct in the process of averting an argument as do the French. The Japanese speaker averts the gaze just prior to the head nod display.

5.3 The American speaker

One nonverbal means by which the American speaker averts an argument is by averting the gaze. In the sequential organization of the turn-at-talk, gaze direct is a turn-yielding regulator for Kendon (1990). According to his model, during the speaker-

turn, the speaker averts the gaze; therefore in displaying gaze direct, the speaker is signaling a response from the addressee. Our data support Kendon's turn-taking model for American English speakers. However, in the argumentation framework, I find that when the speaker anticipates argumentative discourse from the addressee, she or he redirects the gaze towards the addressee for a brief moment and then averts the gaze just prior to an attempt by the addressee to counter the speaker's discourse.

The hand gesture, "Talk to the Hand!," discussed in Section 4.3. and shown in Image IV is also used by American speakers to avert an argument. This hand gesture differs from the addressee signal in that the purported meaning does not necessarily bear a negative attitude on the part of the speaker. Here again, the speaker first redirects the gaze to the addressee, then averts the gaze followed by the display of the hand gesture.

6. *The significance of the role of gaze avert*

In English, the "nod" is a back-channeling regulator used by the addressee with utterances such as "uh-huh", "I see", etc., to signal to the speaker that she or he is listening, following and/or is in agreement with the speaker's opinions, comments and/or topic. This gesture maintains the conversation flow and conveys "positive attitude". The nod is always displayed while gazing at the speaker. We find the "nod" to be a back-channeling regulator also used by addressees in French and in Japanese.

Regulators perform other functions, however, such as convey negative attitude, request or reject further information, control the addressee's attention and understanding, accept or reject the speaker's topic, confirm the speaker's hypotheses about the addressee's background knowledge via tag questions and negotiate turn-taking.

In this study we found that the addressee back-channels utterances that 1. convey disagreement with the speaker's discourse and possibly interjecting or taking the speaker turn to explain or justify the disagreement; 2. convey negative attitude; 3. express sarcasm and 4. express disaccord. *Negative back-channeling*, therefore, is expressed with gaze *avert*¹, while *positive back-channeling* is always uttered with gaze *direct*.

The expression of disagreement and negative attitude can also be viewed as a departure or detachment from the mutual engagement and from the progression of the topic. As such, gaze avert functions in a similar manner to digress from the here-and-now with the intent of cooperating in the natural course of the conversational exchange in order to arrive at a resolution or conclusion of sorts. Thus, the detachment from the mutual engagement and the digression from the here-and-now – this discourse feature is manifested by the aversion of gaze.

¹ This is not to say that one never displays gaze direct in negative back-channelling. Certainly in confrontational situations this would be the case; however, we are working within the context of an ordinary conversation which follows the Gricean maxims and the Cooperative Principle.

Crucial to this study is accounting for cultural differences which I find to be significant with respect to gaze behavior patterns and the form of the head or hand gesture. As the data have shown, French speakers maintain gaze direct prior to, during, and after the gestural signal; whereas Japanese and American speakers avert the gaze prior to and during the gestural display. Perhaps of greater significance is the pattern that is observed across all three of these languages and cultures. This study yields results that suggest that gaze avert functions across these three languages as a precursor to argumentative discourse but with the following condition:

Only when it is the *addressee* who displays a nonverbal signal that functions as a precursor to argumentative discourse, is the precursor displayed in conjunction with *gaze avert*.

Hence, gaze avert is an addressee precursor to argumentative discourse.

Assuming that the interlocutors are adhering to the principles and parameters of the turn-taking model for American English conversation which stipulates that the addressee is gazing at the speaker during the speaker turn, gaze avert does not indicate a lack of interest in or disapproval of the speaker's topic on the part of the addressee as previously suggested by Argyle and Cook (1976) and others, but on the contrary, the addressee is expressing his or her vested interest in the topic by virtue of the disagreeing, disputing and disproving of the speaker's discourse. Although it may be argued that the former is found to be true in expressing negative attitude and sarcasm, the lack of interest or disapproval is actually not in the speaker's topic when expressing disagreement, rather, it is with the speaker's comment, opinion or utterance, i.e. discourse, that the addressee is in disagreement.

Further, according to the French turn-taking model proposed by Nash (2001), speaker-addressee mutual gaze (i.e. gaze direct by both interlocutors) is high during the speaker turn. Hence, gaze avert on the part of the addressee has a functional purpose, and one such function is that in conjunction with utterances that express disagreement, negative attitude, or sarcasm, gaze avert signals forthcoming argumentative discourse.

Finally, the Japanese exhibit low mutual gaze, i.e. high gaze aversion during a conversation. The Japanese model in and of itself belies the notion that gaze avert indicates a lack of interest.

7. Preliminary models

The data from this study suggest that as interlocutors engaged in argumentative discourse, we exhibit a predictable pattern, i.e. we adhere to specific rules in the interactive exchange from which we can construct a model of behavior for the addressee and the speaker.

I propose here a 3-tiered model that accounts for the effecting of the addressee's argumentative discourse. First and foremost we *presuppose* that there is no speaker ex-

pectation of a forthcoming argument by the addressee. Secondly, the addressee performs an act that functions to signal to the speaker his or her intent to argue. Finally, the act is successful if the intended result is achieved, i.e., the addressee takes the speaker-turn and initiates his or her argumentative discourse.

- I. Premise: There is no speaker expectation of a forthcoming argument by the addressee.
- II. Performance: The addressee signals with gestural display.
- III. Result: The addressee takes the speaker-turn interrupting the speaker with a contentious comment.

I propose another 3-tiered model that accounts for the effecting of the speaker's averting the addressee's argumentative discourse (and secondarily, effecting the speaker's argumentative discourse). First and foremost we *presuppose* a forthcoming argument by the addressee. Secondly, the speaker performs an act that functions to block the addressee's argument. Finally, the act is successful if the intended result is achieved, i.e. the addressee does not realize his or her argumentative discourse.

- I. Premise: The speaker has the expectation of a forthcoming argument from the addressee.
- II. Performance: Anticipating the argument, the speaker gestures thus denying the addressee the speaker-turn to counter.
- III. Result: Any attempt on the part of the addressee to counter are futile hence the argument on the part of the addressee is not realized.

8. Conclusion

Nonverbal regulators as conversation markers perform various functions in the organization of the talk-interaction. The goal of Pragmatics is to account for those mechanisms that are employed in communicating more than is actually said or conveyed by a verbal utterance; hence the principles and parameters that account for pragmatic competence in native speakers are not delimited to linguistic expressions.

On the contrary, a comprehensive account of native speaker pragmatic competence cannot preclude nonverbal behavior, particularly in the form of gestural patterns that are displayed in conjunction with verbal utterances, as these features of the language system are observed in the interaction of native speakers which only occur within socio-cultural contexts.

This paper addressed this issue by identifying those nonverbal expressions that regulate conversation, focusing on signals that serve as precursors of argumentative discourse which encompass negative attitude and disagreement in French, Japanese and American English conversation. We sought to reveal cultural differences and in so doing we discovered a cross-linguistic pattern, i.e. gaze avert displayed by the addressee functions across these three languages as a precursor to argumentative discourse.

We proposed models that account for the speaker-addressee realization of argumentation in a conversational exchange that necessarily incorporates the gestural code due to the fact that the verbal code is not sufficient in describing the actual exchange in all of its intricacies.

This is merely a first study and in view of the now widely-held belief that language and gesture function together as one unit – inseparable and indispensable in communicating in any language, further research in the role of nonverbal expressions as they relate to argumentative discourse is surely warranted.

References

- Argyle, Michael & Cook, Mark (1976). *Gaze and Mutual Gaze*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Duncan Starkey, Jr. & Fiske, Donald W. (1977). *Face-To-Face Interaction: Research, Methods and Theory*. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers.
- Duncan Starkey, Jr. & Fiske, Donald W. (1985). *Interaction structure and strategy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Fraser, Bruce (1996). Pragmatic markers. *Pragmatics* 6/2: 167-190.
- Goodwin, Charles (1981). *Conversational Organization. Interaction between Speakers and Hearers*. New York/Toronto/Sydney/San Francisco: Academic Press.
- Kendon, Adam (1990). *Conducting Interaction. Patterns of behavior in focused encounters. Studies in Interactional Sociolinguistics*, 7. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kita, Sotaro (2003). *Pointing: where language, culture, and cognition meet*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Kita, Sotaro & Ide, Sachiko (2007). Nodding, aizuchi, and final particles in Japanese conversation: How conversation reflects the ideology of communication and social relationships. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 39/7: 1242-1254.
- Manoliu, Maria M. (1999). Interrogative utterances as non-questions. Romanian markers of talk-interaction. *Romanistik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*. Trier/Hamburg: Helmut Buske Verlag.
- McNeill, David (2005). *Gesture and Thought*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.
- Nash, Caroline (2001). *Language and Gestures in Conversation: A Cross-Cultural Study of the Usage and Functions of Regulators and Illustrators in French, Japanese, and American English*. (Doctoral dissertation, University of California, Davis). *Dissertation Abstracts International* 62, 07: 2404.
- Sacks, Harvey, Schegloff, Emanuel A. & Jefferson, Gail (1974). A Simplest Systematics for the Organization of Turn-Taking for Conversation. *Language*, 50: 696-735.
- Schefflen, Albert E. (1964). The Significance of Posture in Communication Systems. *Psychiatry*, 27: 316-331.
- Schegloff, Emanuel A. (1984). On some gestures' relation to talk. In: Atkinson J. M. & Heritage J. (eds.), *Structures of Social Action: Studies in Conversation Analysis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 266-296.

Schiffrin, Deborah (1987). *Discourse Markers*. *Studies in Interactional Sociolinguistics*, 5. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Whiffen, Thomas (1915). *The North-West Amazons: Notes on Some Months Spent among Cannibal Tribes*. London: Constable.