

Body partitioning and classifiers: Dual-ing viewpoint gesture strategies in Hul'q'umi'num'

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Storytellers in Hul'q'umi'num' (Salish, British Columbia) make extensive use of gestures during narratives. Based on our archive of videos (coded in ELAN (2021)), discussions with storytellers, and observing performances, we report on how speakers of Hul'q'umi'num' use gestures to convey the perspective from which an event or scene is viewed or expressed.

Within the study of gestures and perspective, a distinction is made between *character viewpoint* (C-VPT) and *observer viewpoint* (O-VPT), terms which come from McNeill (1992). In C-VPT gestures, the speaker maps the character's body onto their own, on a life-sized scale. O-VPT gestures are schematic and show the scene to the audience as if from afar. *Dual viewpoint* (D-VPT) gestures arise when multiple viewpoints are expressed simultaneously, either as a combination of Character + Character or Character + Observer viewpoints (McNeill 1992; Parrill 2009). The D-VPT typology can be subdivided based on which viewpoints are combined and how many articulators are used. *Dual-viewpoint* gestures were found by Parrill and McNeill to be quite rare in narratives, however in Hul'q'umi'num' narratives, they appear much more frequently. This paper asks (1) Why do we see a relatively high number of D-VPT gestures in Hul'q'umi'num' narratives? (2) What strategies are being used to achieve this?

The answer to (2) directly informs the answer to (1). The two most common types of D-VPT gestures in the narratives we study use two strategies first identified in signed languages: *body partitioning* and *classifier constructions*. Body partitioning occurs when different articulators (e.g. hands and face) represent different entities (Dudis 2004), shown in (i). Classifier constructions are an expression of an entity and a predicate, using a particular handshape (Barberà & Quer 2018; Leeson & Saeed 2012; Suppalla 1986), seen in (ii).



Body partitioning of **hands** vs. **face**
(RP, *Thunderbird and Orca*, 3:47)



Classifier construction with right hand
(RP, *Little Wren Goes Hunting*, 1:40)

Though some authors have acknowledged similarities between gesture viewpoint and use of classifiers (e.g. Quinto-Pozos & Parrill (2015)), there is little discussion of viewpoint and body partitioning, or how gestures may be said to use “classifiers.” Existing dual-viewpoint studies largely fail to take into account gestures that utilize these two strategies. Taken together, body partitioning and use of classifiers contribute to an overall higher number of D-VPT gestures in Hul'q'umi'num' narratives than might be anticipated. Using signed language research as a lens through which to investigate gesture viewpoint, we are able to identify a new subtype of D-VPT gestures not previously reported, and an additional way to express D-VPT.

References

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