

GESTURAL MINDS UNFOLDING: ON BECOMING FULLY EQUIPPED AND FULLY LICENSED GESTURAL SIGNERS

JOANNA PUPPEL

Abstract: The article is a theoretical framework on becoming fully equipped and licensed gestural signer. The establishment of a complete gestural mind in every single human individual is assumed to follow a phasing procedure and these phases are explained in the article.

Key words: communicator, gesture, gestural mind, gestural signer, logokaryote

Słowa kluczowe: komunikator, gest, gestykujący umysł, gestykujący, logokaryote

Introduction

Before every single human becomes a fully shaped and socially and culturally fully licensed ‘gestural signer’, before they can be assessed as such and before they can get involved in full gestural usage in the span of their lives, a necessary unfolding process must take place. At this point, a distinction is proposed, namely into: the human communicators as necessarily falling within: (a) the ‘linguistic mind framework’ (hence LMF) and (b) the ‘gestural mind framework’ (hence GMF), respectively. At the onset of this paper, it is to be emphasized that both frameworks enjoy separatedness in adult communicative practices, in the sense that they may (and do) function separately in human communication via the linguistic (verbal) communication versus non-linguistic (nonverbal) communication modes which may be turned on and off at will in human communication. But the overall outcome is always, especially in spoken language use, the result of synergic cooperation of LMF and GMF. Simply, humans as successful and comfortable communicators are both talkers and signers in the oral order of communication. They may, therefore, be referred to as ‘talker-signers’ within what has been referred to as ‘logokaryote’ (see Puppel and Puppel (forthcoming), where the term has originally been introduced).

The LMF may be defined as the knowledge and possession of linguistic resources by the human communicators, as they have been characterized in the massive, long-time, laborious and celebrated contribution of linguistics to the development and maintenance of the scientific method via the application of the landmarks of the method, such as observation, description and explanation of the intangible phenomenon of language. This task has been accomplished in countless many handbooks, monographs, articles and reviews that have been published to date and those which are forthcoming and yet to be published (see also the bibliography at the end of the paper).

The very notion of the ‘linguistic mind’ (LM), consequent upon the human unfolding and possession of language, is, therefore, a label with which every human communicator must be characterized. In other words, no definition of ‘being human’ and ‘human being’ can afford to neglect the presence and significance of the phenomenon of language for the genus *Homo sapiens*.

The same may (and should) be said as regards the ‘gestural mind’ (GM) which one may view as referring to the unfolding and possession of the human gestural competence. The latter comprises all that the human communicator knows about his/her body as a communicative device, in particular about the use of the upper/free limbs (i.e. the hands) in communication, especially in a more narrow dimension of the face-to-face type of communication. This complex knowledge is not available to a single human as s/he enters this world, but is the end result of an intricate ‘process of unfolding’ of individual gestural competence in a number of phases.

In what follows, I will set out on the task of describing the phasing within the GMF in which every individual human communicator is involved and which, eventually, leads to the establishment of a communicator’s fully mature and efficient ‘gestural mind’ which accompanies the ‘linguistic mind’.

Gestural minds unfolding

As has been indicated above, the establishment of a complete gestural mind in every single human individual is assumed to follow a phasing procedure, whereby the human individual’s gestural competence gains its operational fitness within what one may refer to as the ‘nested dynamics’ of the GM locked in LM. It is also assumed that the phasing involves four distinct phases, each having an inner and outer (external) dimension. These phases comprise the following:

I. Phase one: this is the growth phase which is the phase of initial gestural exploitation. In this phase, the neonate explores and exploits the limits of inborn gestural capacity. In this way, s/he eventually establishes full control over the body, especially over the free limbs (the hands). This constitutes the inner dimension of phase I. At the same time, the infant gradually gains control over the entire ‘body geography’ meant as ‘spatially contingent’, or as being able to perform,

express, and communicate the embodied dimension via assuming increasingly vertical posture and moving into socialized space. Especially, the latter condition entails that the infant/child communicator is under the constant presence of the ‘others’ as participants (i.e. senders and receivers) of their gestural communications. In other words, the child’s growing control of the body, or overall bodily competence, becomes subjugated to the contingencies of the ‘social self’. In this way, the infant moves from an initially uncertain body to the socially relevant body (see e.g. Shilling, 1993; Prieur et al., 2020), whereby the child’s gestural competence gains intentionality, goal directedness and referentiality in the use of gestures, thereby substantially completing the emerging logokaryote.

II. Phase two: this is the interlocking phase in which gestures become more and more conspicuously locked in the linguistic mind framework. In its inner (i.e. mental) dimension, the process involves the child’s growing linguistic competence combined with overall linguistic-communicative fitness (e.g. Cameron-Faulkner et al., 2021) The synergic cooperation of the LM and GM becomes more tightly integrated within the ‘logokaryote’. Whereas, in its external dimension, the child’s gestural mind most naturally enters ‘culture’ as a socially sanctioned source of the child’s growing identity as a social-cultural being. In this phase, the socially relevant body finally becomes the foundation of conscious participation of the gestural mind both in linguistic performances, expressions and communication. At the same time, the child’s gestural competence gets more and more involved in the ethnic ‘coloring’ of the use of gestures. It is also in this phase that the child’s LM and GM are finally established to yield what may be referred to as the ‘native language competence’ (with full linguistic code in place) and ‘native gestural competence’ (with some protogrammar of gestures in place), respectively. Within the latter competence, the human communicating agent is now able to ‘crack the nonverbal code’ (i.e. decode and encode them, see e.g. Pearce and Caltabiano, 1982; Molinsky et al., 2005).

III. Phase three: this is the ‘plateau’ phase of the nested dynamics of both LM and GM combined into ‘logokaryote’. The two now function in the postulated ‘logokaryote’ in full unison, with the gestural mind clearly supporting the linguistic mind (i.e. where the linguistic mind is serving as the ‘karyon’, or the core of verbal/nonverbal communication) so that the two operate in the oral order of communication in an inseparable tandem in a smooth and comfortable manner. In this fully cumulative phase, the child’s gestural competence is thoroughly established and demonstrates, among others: intentionality of use, goal directedness, referentiality, a protogrammatic structure, and, above all, the interactive (i.e. conversational) potential.

IV. Phase four: this is the most mature phase of the nested dynamics of the logokaryote in which the talker-signer is able to transcend his/her ethnicity in more or less conscious and more or less successful assimilatory use of the individual gestural potential vis-à-vis another culture (see e.g. Takaki, 2008; Lee, 2009). In this phase, the logokaryote of the communicators occurs in the frame-

work of heterogeneous experience this time necessarily in the context of culture contact. With phase four, the unfolding of gestural minds finally becomes complete.

3. Final comments

The logokaryote, postulated above, is a supervenient and cumulative device, which is established in every human communicator in the four phases briefly described above. It is responsible for the human communicators' acts of communication with the combined use of verbal and nonverbal elements. This is done both in homogenous and heterogeneous contexts, with bounded ethnicity of the mono and hetero types. In both cases, language and non-language resources combined into the logokaryote finally allow for a smooth and successful functioning of every human communicator across the expanse of the human communicative universe.

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