

Semiotic and modality diversity in the utterance: a languaging perspective.

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In speakers, the kinesic component of an utterance is commonly treated as “paralinguistic” and often considered to be auxiliary to the processes of language production, not as a part of it. In contrast, in signers, who have only the kinesic modality available for utterances, this distinction between what is part of language production and what is not, is less easily drawn. For example, the issue of whether signers use “gesture” or not, and whether, if they do, this is to be considered part of their language, has remained contentious. However, if we start by looking at the various actions and semiotic devices mobilised when languagers (speakers or signers) create their utterances, we can compare the employment of different semiotic strategies – deixis, depiction or lexical description - and examine how they may be interrelated and how their relative uses change, according to the extent and manner in which the different vehicles for utterance are employed, be they oral-aural or kinesic, or in combination. In this way, in applying the inclusive “action framework” of *languaging*, the differences and similarities between “signing” and “speaking” and problems about the linguistic status of speaker kinesics may be clarified. Implications of this integrated approach to the study of languaging for conceptions of language and language origins theories will be discussed.