Numerical size gestures of largeness: cross-cultural variation and phonetic symbolism of the MAGN-units

Key words: size gestures, largeness, MAGN-function, multimodality, focus.

This study explores co-speech size gestures of largeness, supported by iconic prosody, and their correlation with linguistic expressions conveying the semantic MAGN-function of extreme degree.

The MAGN-function, which denotes meanings such as "very," "highly," or "extreme degree of state" (cf. Mel'čuk 2012), is observed in purely syntactic structures where "the argument word is modified by an epithet or an adverbial element indicating an extreme degree of a certain state[1]" (Krysin 2012: 344). Alternatively, it appears in linguistic units with so-called "fused" expressions of the MAGN-function. Based on this classification, it has been noted that conversational gestures of largeness predominantly accompany:

1. Adverbial phrases (AdVP), adjective phrases (AdJP), and nominal phrases (NP) with semantic elements indicating an extreme degree of action, state, or property, e.g., *this HUge reserve, it's just MASsive,* or Ukr. *dlya VSIKH zykh karTYN* ('for all these pictures');
2. Derivational morphemes expressing meanings such as "intense," "highly," or "extremely," e.g., Ukr. *strashenno bojat'sya* ('very scared');
3. Word stems, determinans/determinata, or independent words conveying intensivity within their semantics, e.g., Germ. *sie hat sich verDOPpelt* ('she has doubled in size') or *RIEsenchaos* ('huge mess').

Drawing on 120 video samples randomly selected from TV shows and discussions in English, German, and Ukrainian media spaces, this paper seeks to address the following questions:

1. How do hand gestures expressing largeness differ cross-culturally in terms of motor execution?
2. How do size gestures correlate with linguistic units regarding their extension over phrases or focus on specific words?
3. What phonetic and phono-symbolic dimensions are involved in expressing numerical quantity (e.g., pitch contour, sound quality, duration, pitch range, and phonation)?
4. What are the cross-cultural similarities and differences in gesture-prosody correlations for syntactic versus fused MAGN-function representations?

This study adopts multimodal interaction analysis (cf. Norris 2013) to examine the interplay of (para-)verbal and non-verbal actions in conveying meanings such as "very," "highly," or "extreme degree of state.[2]" Preliminary findings suggest that linguistic units with the MAGN-function frequently correlate with H* or H*L- pitch contours and are accompanied by other

[1] The "fused" meaning is expressed by a derivative or is a part of an independent word with the meaning of an extreme degree of X (cf. Krysin 2012).
[2] Cf. McNeill (2016: 97).

phonetic markers of “large vocal space,” such as vowel lengthening, tense phonation, greater intensity on focused items, etc. Cross-cultural differences were also observed in the motor execution of gestures and their representation in syntactic versus fused MAGN-function units.

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