# Question sequences and their gestural correlates in French and English TED Talks

Discourse analysis; corpus linguistics; questions ; multimodality ; gestures

Several studies have investigated the interaction between gestures and illocutionary meaning (Kendon 1980, 2004; McNeill, 2005). Kendon (1980: 207) explains that speech-associated movements, "are generally recognized as being intimately linked to the activity of speaking and are often regarded as part of the speaker's total expression." In other words, to derive the most accurate illocutionary meaning, both verbal and non-verbal cues must be taken into consideration.

Gestures are used in both monologic and dialogic communication and have been studied in both discourse types (Shattuck-Hufnagel & Ren, 2018; Weinstock et al., 2020; Ginzburg & Lücking, 2021; Ter Bekke et al., 2024). TED talks are one discourse type which could be considered monologic, due to speaker's ability to maintain control of the discourse and the addressee's limited ability for dialogic participation (Author 1 & Author 2, 2024). They are a digital discourse which should be considered part of the New Oratory, as defined by Rossette-Crake (2019, 2022).

One feature of TED talks is the presence of question sequences in which the speaker poses one or more sequential questions without creating a response space (Author 1 & Author 2, 2024). Question sequences have previously been studied in conversational settings and are considered to serve a backward-looking repair function or a clarification request (Ginzburg et al., 2022). In monologic discourse settings such as TED talks, however, the purpose of question sequences is less clear because they are less explicitly linked to a change in speaker turn. In contrast with their use in conversation, recent studies on question sequences in monologic discourse postulate that they are linked to strategies of salience and interaction (Author 1 & Author 2, 2024).

The meaning of questions, as well as their correlated gestures, depends on the discourse type and setting. In other words, gestures that co-occur with questions in dialogic settings are not identical to gestures that are used in monologic settings. Through the analysis of question sequences and their gestural correlates in French and English TED talks, as studied in Author 2 et al. (forthcoming), this paper will test the theory that question sequences coincide with gestures that are used to mark salience and interaction. We hypothesize that the emphatic and interactive functions of question sequences are indeed reflected by the gestures they co-occur with, as question sequences tend to be marked with head beats, two-handed gestures, and repetitive hand gestures. Moreover, this study stands to examine the differences between question sequence gestures in French and English TED. Such differences may indicate a difference between the communicative function of questions in the two languages.

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