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# Looking at the Pragmatics of Laughter

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## Abstract

Laughter and gaze have an important role in managing and coordinating social interactions. We investigate whether laughs performing distinct pragmatic functions, either related to humour or to a potentially social discomforting utterance or situation, are accompanied by different gaze patterns. Using a multimodal corpus of dyadic taste-testing interactions, we show that people tend to not look at their partner while producing laughs related to humour, whereas laughs that relate to potential social discomfort are accompanied by gaze at the partner. With respect to the non-laughing partner's gaze at the laugher we observe the opposite pattern around the laughter offset. We show that gaze contributes to the synchronisation and alignment of laughter production, analogously to previously reported results for speech turn-taking. Our study also provides empirical evidence to the debate about gaze aversion, opposing the view that social stress is the main explanatory factor.