UC Merced

Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Cognitive Science Society

Title

Gesture during political speech reflects and affects judgements of topic similarity

Permalink

https://escholarship.org/uc/item/76m1d1wc

Journal

Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Cognitive Science Society, 45(45)

Authors

Zhang, Icy(Yunyi)
Izad, Tina
Huber, Jenarae Noel
et al.

Publication Date

2023

Peer reviewed

Gesture during political speech reflects and affects judgements of topic similarity

Icy(Yunyi) Zhang
University of California, Los Angeles, Los Angeles, California, United States

Tina Izad
UCLA, Los Angeles, California, United States

Jenarae Huber
UCLA, Los Angeles, California, United States

Simran Saini
UCLA, Los Angeles, California, United States

Madeleine Gates
UCLA, Los Angeles, California, United States

Erica Cartmill
UCLA, Los Angeles, California, United States

Abstract

Understanding the relationships between gesture, speech, and thought bears on how we conceptualize language and embodied cognition. We asked whether the gestures U.S. politicians produced when presenting ideas as similar (listing) or different (contrasting) varied in handshape, form, or movement. We found that location was more likely to change during contrasting, while movement pattern was more likely to change during listing. In a follow-up experiment, we showed that these gestures impacted participants' perceptions of how similar the items discussed by the politician were, even when the auditory information was unavailable. When participants could see politicians' gestures, they rated listed topics as more similar and contrasted items as more different, even when the videos were muted. We conclude that gesture during political speech can both reflect and affect judgements of similarity and difference.