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Interactive and embodied repair: Displaying, recognizing, and negotiating misalignment in an emerging language context

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Abstract: As problems of understanding arise in conversational interaction, we must find a means to indicate to our interlocutor the reason for our misunderstanding. However, we are simultaneously constrained by social interactive practices that limit face threat and adhere to epistemic rights. Thus, the challenge is to communicate our own misunderstanding - as specifically as possible - while avoiding explicitness. This challenge may be increased in contexts of language emergence in which alignment is necessary to promote communicative efficiency and conventionalization. Participants in novel communication tasks relied on certain gesture-driven other-initiated repair strategies to gain interactive alignment. The embodied display of cognitive and interactive misalignment cues the interlocutor to repair in a way that reflects their own understanding of the repair initiation and trouble source. The breakdown of intersubjectivity - and its subsequent re-building - is observed in the negotiation of evolving signal-meaning matches through interactive repair sequences.