

*Metaphorical aspects of mismatches between  
verbal and nonverbal signs*

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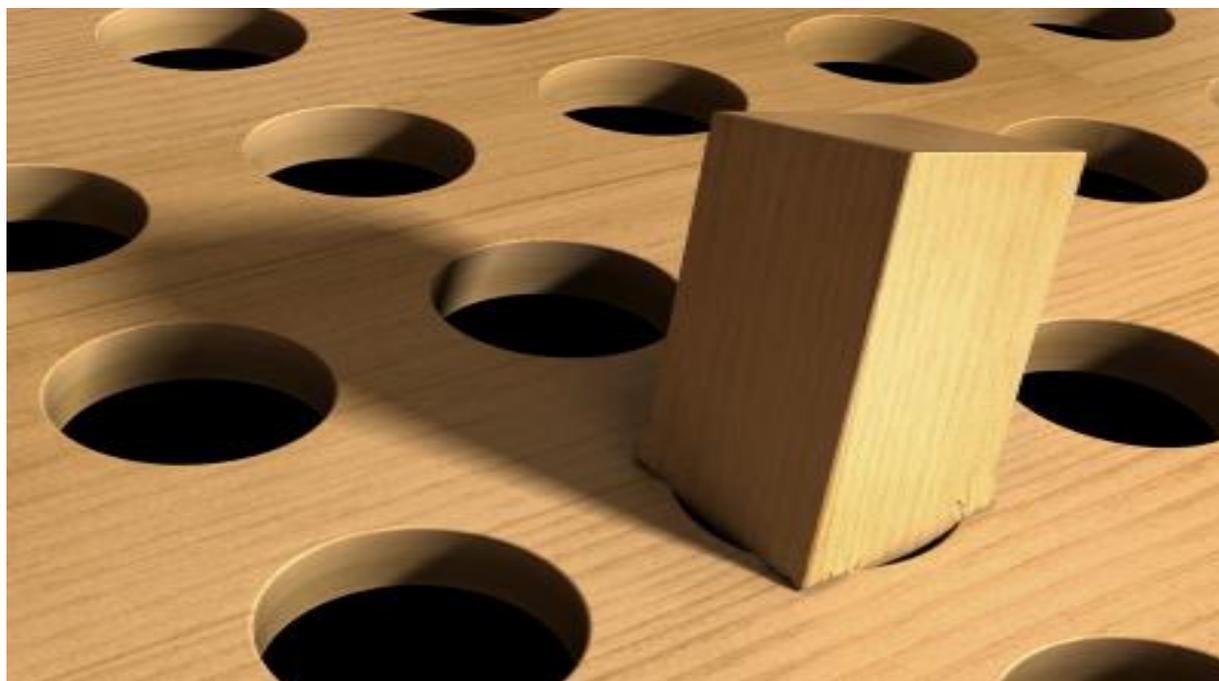
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Speech acts include much more than just words

# Mismatch



# Definition

Gesture-speech mismatch occurs when gesture conveys information that is different from (although not necessarily contradictory to) the information conveyed in the speech it accompanies (Singer & Goldin-Meadow, 2005)

Gesture and speech combine into a single  
meaning (McNeill, 1992)

Speech-gesture mismatches are the very best  
place to look for the effects of gestures on  
listeners (Goldin-Meadow 2003)

For quickly and accurately understanding messages...congruencies between gesture and speech are the most effective; but for shaking up knowledge states and prodding learners over time, a certain degree of incongruence between gesture and speech (mismatches) may be optimal...

(Kelly et al, 2010)

# Current studies involve mismatches as a research tool in following areas:

- a. Didactics: strategy to enhance mathematical understanding.
- b. Gesture\language studies: the unitary basis of language and gesture.
- c. Psychology: predicting a child's kind of attachment (dev. Psy.).
- d. Political science: predicting a political winner.
- e. Brain studies: mismatches were detected neurologically.
- f. Critical studies\social psychology.

This original research applies semiotics to linguistic and non-linguistic segments in a text in search of potential correlations between them. The resultant mapping is applied to cases of gesture-word mismatches that are evident in conflict situations. The current study adopts the word systems approach, a sign-based theory that is naturally designed for the analysis of linguistic signs, and extends it to non-linguistic units, borrowing analytical tools from the field of dance movement therapy. The variety of interdisciplinary metaphorical and literal interpretations of the analyzed signs enriches the theoretical framework and facilitates examination of the instances of mismatches. Hence, this study makes a meaningful contribution to the understanding of linguistic/non-linguistic mismatches in situations of conflict. Further, it makes more general claims: the semiotic system underlying this study paves the way for further research of correlations (or lack thereof) between a range of phenomena cutting across sociology, sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics and political science.

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Waisman  
Body, Language and Meaning in Conflict Situations

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# Data- conflict talk

Video-recorded sessions between Israeli -  
Arab and Jewish students

30 hours of film, 16 meetings

1,000 pages

69 mismatches were detected in dialogues of  
conflict

Theoretical framework - the theory of Phonology as Human Behavior (PHB) of the Columbia School (CS) sign-based theory of linguistics (e.g. Davis 2006, Tobin 1990, Tobin & Schmidt 2008) and the theory of Word Systems (e.g. Aphek & Tobin, 1988)

# Semiotic approach – language is:

a system of systems composed of various sub-systems (revolving around the notion of the linguistic sign) which are organized internally and systematically related to each other and used by human beings to communicate (Tobin, 1995:7).

# Synergesis

The cooperative action of discrete agencies such that the total effect is greater than the sum of the discrete effects taken independently (Tobin, 1990:48).

# The mini-max struggle

the desire to achieve maximum  
communication with minimal effort

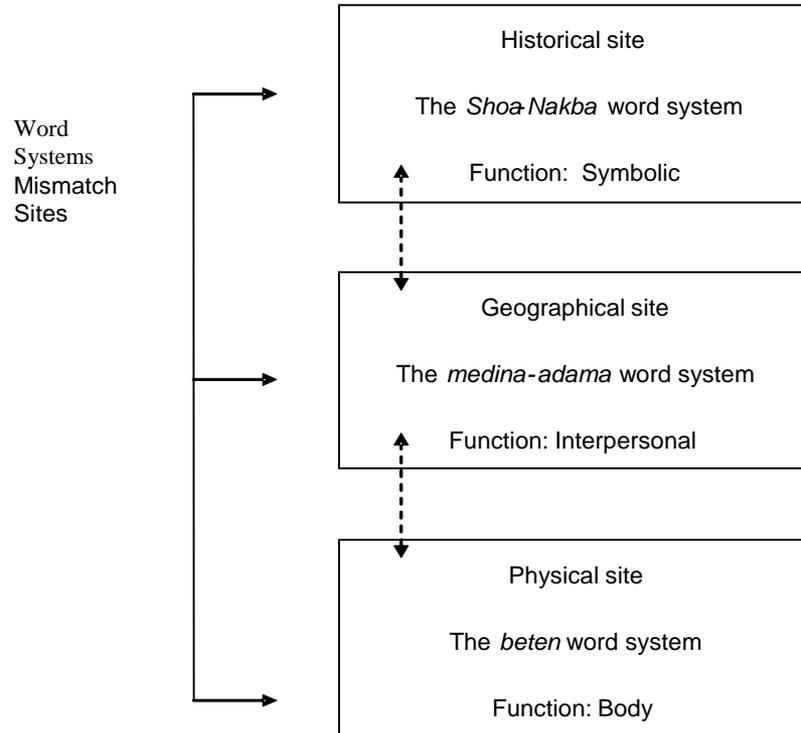
# Columbia-school view

the task is not to describe  
linguistic structure; it is to  
discover linguistic structure

# Findings: Waisman, 2010

Gesture-speech mismatches  
occur at times of conflict

### Three Layers of Significance of the Arab -Jewish Conflict



this is, like, my dilemma after what's happened in the Holocaust, maybe it justifies the existence of a state for the Jews. I saw an old man who spoke there [in the film], he said: "The state should be protected." Like, um... he, as far as he's concerned, after all he's been through, the very difficult things that he's been through, this is his conclusion. That the Jewish people should have a state. I can understand that

why am I guilty of all this? It happened in a different place, it's different people that did those horrible things and **perhaps I**, as part of humanity, I should contribute my share to this issue, but not to the extent that they'd take **everything from me**, I really don't... I can't....

# Discussion

In a gesture that mixes his own identity with that of the old man, Ibrahim points at his own belly when verbally referring to this Holocaust survivor, mismatching the third person singular deictic

Mismatches create a gap, a new site  
Powerful performative tool

Like metaphors, mismatches are irrational

They stir things up and in spite of not making sense and being more costly in terms of brain activity, they convey meaning that couldn't be conveyed otherwise

Mismatches expose layers of the text

issues of subjectivity and identity are blurred  
at times of conflict

Mismatches create a third realm - establishes  
a metaphorical existence that presents  
valuable information

moments where harmony is disrupted are opportunities for allowing new material to be integrated, for new learning to occur

creativity and emotive expressions

Traumatic situations create two-dimensional positions – there are only two possible roles: victim and perpetrator

the **THIRD** enables a process

The implications of Waisman's work are far-reaching, as she offers ample evidence of the power of bodily communication in expression and negotiation of meaning in the most weighty and volatile of conversations

The phenomena of speech and co-gesture ‘mismatch’ is understudied, under-theorized and under-defined... (Cuffari, 2011;219)

harmony disrupted = opportunities for  
allowing new material to be integrated,  
for new learning to occur

If you wish to grasp the invisible, penetrate as deeply as possible into the visible (Max Beckmann)



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