Getting it right: Advanced Danish learners of Italian adopt speech and gesture L2 forms

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Studies in motion events and gestures in Second Language Acquisition often show that, even though second language learners are able to produce correct L2 speech, they often apply typical L1 gestures thereby showing problems in reorganizing semantic representations and shifting attention towards different types of information (Choi & Lantolf, 2008; Gullberg, 2011; Kellerman & van Hoof, 2003; Stam, 2006). However, few studies show that language learners can to shift attention in both speech and gesture (Özyürek, 2002).

According to the typology proposed by Talmy (1985, 1991) Danish and Italian represent two different typological patterns. Danish, a satellite framed language, typically expresses path in verb particles and manner in main verbs. Italian, conversely, is categorized as a verb framed language where path is typically expressed in verb roots whereas manner tends to be encoded in subordinate clauses e.g. gerunds. However, typologies are not absolutely fixed. For example, Italian possesses manner verbs (e.g. rotolare – *roll*) observed to combine easily with verb particles (e.g. su – *up*, giù – *down*) (Folli, 2008; Iacobini & Masini, 2006). Nevertheless these constructions seem less frequent in Italian (Wessel-Tolvig, 2014).

This double strategy for lexicalization in Italian raises the question of how Danish learners of Italian come to encode information about motion in the L2. Are they more likely to select L1 typical (and grammatically correct) satellite framed forms or shift lexicalization pattern to more standard verb framed forms? And how will gestures reflect the choice of lexicalization?

Five Danish, five Italian and five advanced Danish learners of Italian narrated 8 motion scenes (Özyürek, Kita, & Allen, 2001). Consistent with findings for satellite framed languages, Danish L1 speakers predominantly express manner in verb roots and path in adverbial or prepositional particles in tight one-clause constructions and mainly produce one gesture (manner-path conflated gestures).

Although the Italian speakers predominantly express path in verb roots with manner, regularly, expressed in subordinate clauses, they also frequently use satellite framed constructions (verb + particle). With these one-clause constructions they mostly produce manner-path conflated gestures. When separating manner and path they tend to align gestures with semantically similar speech elements.

Surprisingly, the Danish L2 learners show remarkable consistency in expressing motion in 'standard' verb framed forms. They express path in verb roots and either express manner in subordinate clauses, e.g. gerunds, or omit it. Their gestures reflect verb framed Italian patterns separating path and manner information, producing path gestures on path

elements and manner/manner-path gestures on manner elements. The results indicate, for the five L2 speakers, a re-organization of semantic representation and a shift in attention towards a uniform verb framed system which is opposite of their L1 system, but which does not really correspond to the reality of spoken Italian. Our results confirm the tendency observed in (Özyürek, 2002) with the modification that the form Danish learners seem to acquire is an abstract one. An explanation could be that verb framed constructions may be more frequent in Italian grammars and written texts (through which much university learning occurs) which promotes 'standard' language specific event constructions in the advanced L2 mind.

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