

Hearing and seeing discourse – how speech and gestures achieve cohesion across languages, genres, and native/non-native users

Marianne Gullberg, Lund University

For discourse to be coherent, information about entities and events must be linked across stretches of sustained talk. In speech this involves alternations between nominal forms (e.g. the woman–she), the choice of which depend on referent properties (e.g. gender), grammatical role (e.g. subject/object), and information status (e.g. new/given; distance to previous mention, etc.), but also on grammatical structures in which referential expressions are embedded (e.g. existential vs. transitive clauses). However, discourse is a bimodal phenomenon that also involves gestures. In this talk I will outline how gestures participate in the building of cohesion, coordinating with speech to reflect discourse organisation, information structure and the tracking of entities and events. I will highlight when, where, and how gestures do this across different languages and discourse genres, and also show variations in how native speakers and adult second language users deploy these devices. I finally discuss some theoretical implications of considering discourse in a bimodal perspective.