Multimodal language acquisition

Most language acquisition theories are based on what children can produce in their speech or what they hear in their input. However, children, deaf or hearing produce, and are exposed to expressions in visual modality, as in sign languages or cospeech gestures. We know however little about what unique affordances of visual modality for expression (i.e., iconic gestures/signs, points) play a role in the language acquisition process compared/in addition to that of the vocal modality. So drawing on work we have been conducting with Turkish deaf and hearing children I will bring insights to the role of visual modality in spatial language acquisition in particular. I will also discuss the importance of looking at multimodal diversity as well as crosslinguistic diversity in understanding the language acquisition process-a topic that has been quite central in Maya Hickmann’s later work.