

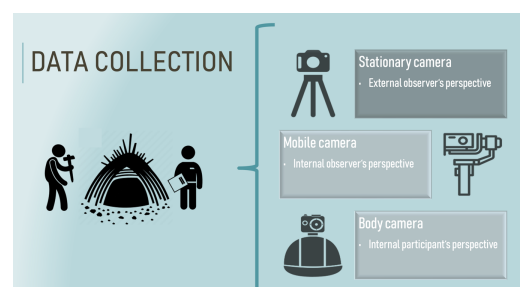
Prof. Dr. Antje Wilton // English Sociolinguistics

Idea

The interdisciplinary project investigates social interaction in environments that are characterised by pastness (Holtorf 2013). It analyses naturally occurring interactions using multimodal space-based interaction analysis (Hausendorf, Schmitt & Kesselheim 2016) to describe and interpret how participants use verbal, gestural, bodily and spacial resources to make sense of an environment that they understand as being of the past. This has implications for the sequential organisation of interaction, for the use of language as an interactional resource, and interaction in and with the material space as a salient feature of human sociality. The project draws on insights from linguistics, conversation and interaction analysis, archaeology, and museum studies.

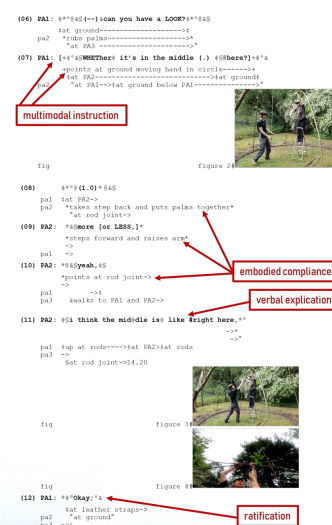
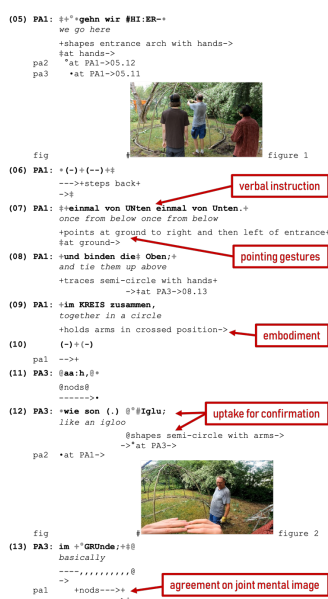
Featured Activity

The context of the example presented here is a hut building project on the university campus. A group of helpers with no prior experience in archaeological reconstruction and from diverse academic backgrounds and nationalities cooperate in the construction of a Mesolithic style hut. They are instructed by a team of three experts in archaeology and ancient technology. Information on the dimensions, orientation and possible materials of a hut common in the European Mesolithic were drawn from archaeological findings (Eickhoff and Petersen 2003). Some of the building activities were recorded from three perspectives: an external observer's perspective represented by a static camera capturing the overall scene, an internal observer's perspective represented by a hand-held camera and participants' perspectives represented by headcams.



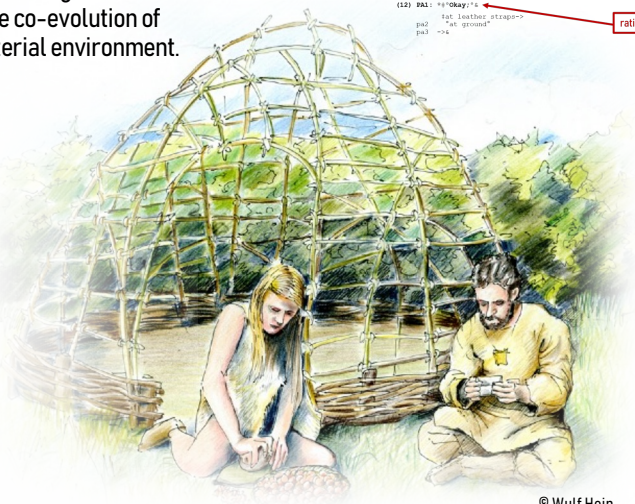
Analysis

The analysis is based on the recordings and a detailed multimodal transcript. In this example, the focus is on the role of instructions in the interactional establishment of virtual boundaries of the hut and the way participants orient to these boundaries until the structure is in place (Wilton 2025). The data show that instructions in these particular settings are necessarily multimodal and involve a combination of verbal as well as embodied actions in the joint manipulation and transformation of materials and space. The creative processes become shared intercorporeal experiences (Szczepiek Reed 2021) in which knowledge and resources of the past are recovered, transformed and used to structure current and future actions. Even if modern and past experiences can never be assumed to be the same, they are similar in that they are essentially human: “any experience of my predecessor is open to my interpretation in terms of the characteristics of human experience in general” (Schütz 1967: 295). Mutual co-presence and coordination is merged with interaction with predecessors, by not only using, but also recovering their solutions to fundamentally human challenges. These observations have implications for our understanding of the co-evolution of language, social interaction and the material environment.



References

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