

The UCLA Center for Language, Interaction, and Culture proudly presents:

2016 Workshop on Talk & the Body

February 19th & 20th at UCLA

**Norma Mendoza-Denton (UCLA Anthropology)
& Brendan O'Connor (Arizona State University)**

Sticky Objects and Treacherous Bodies: Case Studies of Entanglement in Embodied Interaction

In this talk, we explore the relevance of the concept of entanglement, or “the ways in which humans and things in their physical connectedness entrap each other” (Hodder 2014: 24), to studies of embodied interaction. It is, by now, well established that human beings construct social actions through “the mutual elaboration of diverse semiotic resources” (Streeck, Goodwin & LeBaron 2011: 3), in which language plays a crucial but not necessarily a privileged role. It is also widely accepted that human beings’ agency emerges within networks of human and nonhuman actors (Latour 2005). What has received less attention, however, is “the dialectic of dependence and dependency between humans and things,” or the myriad ways in which humans and things are beholden to - and, per Hodder (2014), even entrapped by - each other. Material objects (and, we might add, the material properties of human bodies cum instruments; cf. Kockelman 2006) open up particular possibilities for face-to-face interaction; however, objects, in their failure to be “entirely social,” might equally be said to “constrain or limit,” to some degree, what humans are able to do and how they are able to do it (Hodder 2014: 21). To illustrate the interpretive potential of the concept of entanglement, we present two case studies of video-recorded interactions in which material objects and aspects of embodiment not only mediate communication, but also present certain dilemmas to the participants. In the first, video-gamers’ entanglement with material and visual elements of the game environment - which are, themselves, entangled with the disembodied agency of game designers - is seen to channel or circumscribe the forms of joking and sociality available in the game-playing scenario. In the second, two high school science students’ entanglement with objects and gestures, as they attempt to embody a natural phenomenon, leads them on different “interpretive journeys” (Ochs et al. 1996), suggesting the unreliability of these instruments in the students’ sense-making processes. We conclude that the construct of entanglement is useful for shedding light on the constraints and limits on participants’ agency in embodied interaction.

Jon Hindmarsh (King's College London)

Request Sequences in Robotically-Assisted Surgery

The introduction of new technologies is massively significant in contemporary healthcare organisations – for efficiency, for patient safety, for professional communication and teamwork, and much more. Such developments also provide opportunities for us to consider how interactional practices address practical problems related to new sociomaterial configurations. This paper focuses on the relatively recent case of robotically-assisted surgery. These ‘robots’ are not acting autonomously, but are controlled by the surgeon, who is sitting a few feet from the patient. The surgeon is supported by, amongst others, an assistant and a scrub nurse. This paper unpacks the ways in which the organisation of request sequences addresses practical problems in the coordination of the team’s work. In doing so, it is critically concerned with interrelationships between talk, bodies and medical/robotic implements. The paper adopts an approach informed by ethnomethodology and conversation analysis, and is driven by extracts from audio-visual data collected during a series of colorectal operations.

Olga Solomon (University of Southern California)

Co-author: Melanie Rock (University of Calgary)

‘Humans make us animal’: Autism, cross-species embodiment and the One Health paradigm

This paper approaches the Body Talk workshop’s theme ‘Body with Animals’ through the linguistic and medical anthropology lenses with an eye for neurologically, culturally and linguistically diverse ways of ‘being with animals’ embedded, on one hand, in locally situated politico-historical and socio-economic conditions, and on the other, in the global One Health landscape. The One Health paradigm emphasizes that human health hinges on non-human animals and environments, but as illustrated by the 2015 special issue of *Social Science & Medicine*, “One world, one health? Social science engagements with the one medicine agenda,” anthropologists and other social scientists have focused mainly on infectious diseases in people, most of which originate in non-human species. This paper adopts a contrasting view, one that attempts to stay close to the locally situated existential ground of humans’ and animals’ ‘being with’, and mutually constituting, each other (Fuentes 2006). Temple Grandin, an autistic professor of Animal Science is known for her argument that ‘*animals make us human*’ made in her books “*Animals Make us Human: Creating the Best Life for Animals*’ (2009) and ‘*Animals in Translation: Using the Mysteries of Autism to Decode Animal Behavior*” (2005), An advocate for the rights of people with autism, as well as for humane practices of animal husbandry, Grandin reflects on her own experiences and development through a unique, embodied, sensory-based understanding of animals’ lives in human societies, an understanding expressed most strikingly in the design of over 90% of slaughter houses and handling facilities in North America built to Grandin’s specifications. As an autistic person, however, she is far from alone in her embodied, albeit practical and unsentimental, affinity with animals. Dawn Prince Hughes’ poetic autobiography “Songs

of the Gorilla Nation: My journey through autism”, and Donna Williams’ “Autism: The Unlost Instinct” also point to the significance of ‘being with’ animals as a way of rendering own personhood and experience knowable and comprehensible. At a closer look, however, one does not have to be autistic to think that the beings we call ‘animals’ inhabit what is considered a ‘human’ world as kin and ontological equals. In “Dingos Make us Human”, Debora Bird Rose describes how north Australia’s Aboriginal people see dingos as “ what we would be if we were not what we are” (2011: 47). As Ingold has argued “The very concept of the human (...) relentlessly drives us apart, in our capacity for self-knowledge, from the continuum of organic life within which our existence is encompassed (2013: 8). He writes elsewhere that “we are dealing here not with a way of believing about the world but with a condition of being in it. (...) (with) the dynamic, transformative potential of the entire field of relations within which beings of all kinds, more or less person-like or thing-like, continually and reciprocally bring one another into existence” (Ingold 2006:10). To develop this analytic direction, the paper draws upon on-going research projects on children with autism and their engagements with animals in Southern California (Solomon), and in pet-care practices related to shared medical conditions such as diabetes in Alberta, Canada (Rock).

**Erica Cartmill (UCLA Anthropology)
& Rafael Nuñez (UC San Diego)**

The body in mind, ... yes, "literally"

Research in embodied mind usually focuses on how physiological and anatomical features of the body relate to psychological states, cognitive functions, and the direct bodily experiences they support. However, the study of human semiotic resources and conceptual systems, reveals that people routinely and effortlessly transcend direct bodily experience to engage in complex elaborations such as counterfactuals (e.g., “Had I been a bat I would have gone over there”), metaphorical thinking (e.g., “the week ahead looks great”), as well as pointing through walls and gesturing in imaginary spaces. In technical domains, such as mathematics, this shows up with exquisite precision in cases involving the infinite — which by definition is out of the realm of our finite bodily experience. Are these conceptual elaborations then dis-embodied, as has been suggested? In these presentations, we will explore how bodily experience and mental activity co-shape each other, arguing that conceptual elaboration is possible because of, not in spite of, the body and the cognitive resources it sustains. We will begin by asking how the body becomes engaged in metaphoric reasoning by examining the development of semiotic resources in children’s gesturing during their first years of life. Then we will review data from fieldwork on metaphorical spatial construals of time among the Aymara of the Andes and the Yupno of the remote mountains of Papua New Guinea, as well as from studies of mathematicians working with concepts in infinitesimal calculus. We will see that the world of stable and robust inferences generated by the ensemble of imaginary elaborations doesn’t come straight from bodily functions and direct experience (much of which we share with other primates) but is organized by intricate conceptual mappings that are mediated by human cultural practices, linguistic factors, ecological settings, and symbolic conventions.

Nick Enfield (University of Sydney)

"What is Not Language?"

My invited theme is 'The Body in Talk.' So I will go to the central question implied here: What is the relation between visible bodily behaviour and language? It requires us to define language; to say what is language and what is not language. This old but still-unanswered question has come to the fore in light of recent research on sign language and on co-speech gesture and other forms of visible communication. In this talk I will discuss some of the problems of interpretation of certain visible behaviours, treated in some contexts as 'obviously not part of language' and in other contexts as 'obviously part of language'. I will discuss the possibility that forms of language ideology are interfering with our ability to think clearly about a question so central to language-related disciplines.

Jürgen Streeck (University of Texas at Austin)

Embodiment, Emplacement, Displacement

During three weeks in 2009, I filmed the social life and public interactions in a plaza in the Colombian city of Cartagena de Indias on the Caribbean coast. The plaza, with its dense network of quotidian interactions involving a large part of the local urban community and all generations every night, appeared to be an ideal site to investigate how social interaction appropriates built space—how architecture scaffolds social life—and how living human bodies acquire senses of place and self (Streeck 2013). At the same time, the multigenerational 'plaza society' also allows us to witness the central role of children in integrating, structuring, and reproducing the local community as a face-to-face society (Streeck & Harrison 2015): the 'macro' (social reproduction) can be observed in the 'micro' (moments of interaction among children or between children and adults). My presentation is a narrative account of this research. It contrasts observations made in 2009 with the current reality of the plaza and describes how this research project has become implicated in the neighborhood's fledgling resistance against the plaza's occupation by tourists and the gentrification of the neighborhood. Gestmaní is a historic neighborhood of freed slaves and poor immigrants and has been an icon of Afro-Colombian identity and Colombia's struggle for independence since the early 19th century.

February 19th: A special presentation by choreographer Betsy Baytos

Betsy Baytos

Heavens To Betsy Productions

Before there was dance there was movement, but when did it become funny? Betsy Baytos reveals the secret of eccentric 'comedic' dance through selected film and interviews with some of the masters of visual comedy: Red Skelton, Jerry Lewis, Shirley MacLaine and Marcel Marceau, from her upcoming film, 'FUNNY FEET: The Choreography of Comedy'. She will explore how a 'character' can tell a story through exaggerated movement and humor.

About Betsy:

Betsy's love of comedic dance blossomed while working as a Disney animator, when she discovered a powerful link between eccentric dance and animation. The next 30 years her passion pushed her deeper into the visual arts, as dance historian, character designer, illustrator and puppeteer, performing as her own 'Betsy Bird' on the Muppet Show in London and the Kennedy Center in Washington.

Betsy's extensive research of eccentric dance led to the Broadway stage as featured performer in '*Stardust*' and coming full circle as animation choreographer for many of Disney's most celebrated animated films: '*The Rescuers*', '*Pete's Dragon*', '*Mickey's Christmas Carol*', '*The Emperor's New Groove*' and most recently, '*The Princess and the Frog*'.

Betsy implements her animation training into her '*character movement*' workshops that are taught across the globe, at the Fred Astaire Conference at Oxford University, animation classes at Cal Arts, Disney & PIXAR, Ringling Bros. Clown College Alumni, Cirque Du Soleil, Universal Studios Osaka and The Physical Theater Institute in Maine. Betsy's focus in her workshops is character analysis and creating an animated performance through exaggerated body language, gesture and walks, making their characterization believable and to '*think*' like a cartoon.

She is currently illustrating a historical recipe book with Shirley MacLaine and producing a feature film entitled: '*FUNNY FEET: The Choreography of Comedy*', to be presented at the Motion Picture Academy of Arts & Sciences and Lincoln Center's 'Dance on Film' series.