

Inside and Outside of Language: Sign, Gesture, and Cognitive Linguistics

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The grammatical use of space is a hallmark of signed languages. Early on, Stokoe (1960) identified location in space as one of the elements of sign phonology. Spatial locations are used in deictic and anaphoric reference, in list buoys, in antecedent-anaphor constructions, in verb agreement, and more. And yet, spatial locations continue to be the focus of theoretical debate as to their linguistic status, with a number of sign linguists claiming that certain uses of spatial locations are gestural and thus require a language-gesture interface (Meier & Lillo-Martin 2013), or positing sign-gesture fusions (Schembri et al. 2018). I will suggest that a cognitive linguistic account of spatial locations offers both conceptual unification of a range of constructions previously regarded as distinct; and theoretical austerity, requiring only well-established linguistic structures with no need to invoke gesture. Finally, taking Kendon's (2017) conclusion that the concept of gesture is muddled with ambiguity, and theoretical and ideological baggage, I will suggest an alternative way to understand what gesture is.

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