

Changes in Patterns of Thinking with Second Language Acquisition

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ABSTRACT

It has been claimed that speakers of Spanish and English have different patterns of thinking for speaking about motion both linguistically and gesturally (Slobin, 1991, 1996a, 1996b; Berman and Slobin 1994; Slobin and Hoiting 1994; Stam, 1998; McNeill and Duncan, 2000; McNeill, 2000; Kellerman and van Hoof, 2003; Neguerela et al., 2004). Spanish speakers express path linguistically on verbs, and their path gestures tend to occur with path verbs, while English speakers express path linguistically on satellites and their path gestures tend to occur with satellites (adverbs or prepositions) and verbs + satellites. What happens when Spanish speakers learn English, do their patterns of thinking for speaking change?

Several studies (Marcos, 1979; McNeill, 1992, 2000; Duncan, 1996; Goldin-Meadow, 1999, 2000; Goldin-Meadow, Wein, and Chang, 1992; Goldin-Meadow and Alibali, 1995) have shown that examining both subjects' speech and gesture gives researchers an enhanced window onto the mind through which mental representations and processes can be observed. Two studies which applied this perspective to investigate second language acquisition are reported here.

Study 1 explores how the addition of gestural information influences raters' scoring of oral proficiency interviews. The findings suggest that the addition of learners'

nonverbal information and gestures has both a positive and a negative effect on the scoring, depending on what additional information the learners' gestures, posture, and gaze conveyed.

Study 2 examines how path is expressed linguistically and gesturally in motion event narrations of 4 groups: monolingual Spanish speakers, native English speakers, and two groups of Spanish learners of English (intermediate and advanced). Previous findings about L1 Spanish and L1 English speakers having different patterns of thinking for speaking in the expression of path are confirmed. The speech and gesture of the L2 English learners indicate that they have aspects of both L1 and L2 thinking for speaking patterns in their expression of path. Some L2 learners' gestures reveal L1 thinking for speaking patterns with grammatically correct and fluent L2 speech; others suggest that some L2 learners could be at a point where they might be open to learning the L2 thinking for speaking pattern.