

## Professor Jürgen Streeck



### **Plenary title: The Emergence of Conceptual Actions**

In this talk I will present a hypothesis about the emergence of semantic and pragmatic/interactional hand gestures—what I call ‘conceptual actions’. Conceptual actions conceptualize elements of discourse content or of the interactional process, including the speaker’s communicative act. My hypothesis is that these gestures are abstracted from practical actions in the material world and that their conceptualizing force consists in the projection of the senses inherent in these actions onto the discourse domain. However, many conceptual gestures are communally shared or ‘recurrent’ (Bressem & Müller 2014; Müller 2017) and thus clearly not taken from the speaker’s own practical life-world experiences, but rather acquired *as gestures*, by observing and copying other speakers. Their emergence must therefore be conceived as a two-stage process, genesis and circulation, an initial abstraction of an enactive, gestural form from a practical, ‘real-world’ action, occasionally followed by repetition by self and others and sometimes becoming sedimented as a socially shared form, enacted in an ever-wider range of contexts.

My data are taken from a variety of work and interaction situations, and I try to show that the emergence of conceptual gestures has much, though by far not everything, in common with grammaticalization processes in natural languages. Both processes share a common logic. But while gestures rarely if ever grammaticize, they may very well undergo ‘bleaching’ and ‘erosion’, processes characteristic of grammaticalization. My hypothesis provides an alternative to a certain cognitive-linguistic approach to semantic and pragmatic gestures, namely that these are *expressions* of independently held conceptual metaphors. If we assume body-mind unity, conceptual gestures are not representations of conceptual metaphors but *do* the metaphORIZING themselves, providing enactive schemata that the evolving lexicon of the spoken language can draw from, as is illustrated by Latin, German, and English speech act verbs that literally refer to acts of the hands (Streeck 2009).

### **Workshop title: Interactive Gestures**

In this workshop we will explore forms and functions of hand gestures whose overall role seems to be the embodiment of some aspect of the communicative action and interaction. These gestures, which often appear to be communally shared, are interesting because they not only display and structure, but also conceptualize, i.e., make sense of, the situation at hand. We explore these gestures in three kinds of video recordings:

1. short clips of ‘recurrent’ interactive gestures;
2. videotaped moments during which features of initially environmentally coupled or iconic gestures are repeated, but change interactional function; and
3. conversational moments rich in interactive gesturing.

Participants are invited to bring their own video examples of these gesture modes to the workshop.

Preparation:

Streeck, J. (2009). *Gesturecraft – The Manufacture of Meaning*. Ch.8

Streeck, J. (2017). *Self-Making Man. A Day of Action, Life, and Language*. Ch.5

### **Bio of the speaker:**

**Jürgen Streeck** (Ph.D. FU Berlin) is professor of communication studies, anthropology, and Germanic studies at the University of Texas at Austin. His work is devoted to the microethnographic study of talk and embodied interaction in everyday life, and he investigates embodied interaction from the perspective of body-mind unity. In 2002 he organized the founding conference of the International Society of Gesture Studies and subsequently served as its inaugural president. Among his books are *Social Order in Child Communication* (1981); *Gesturecraft – The Manufacture of Meaning* (2009); *Embodied Interaction. Language and the Body in the Material World* (ed. with C.Goodwin & C.D.LeBaron); *Self-Making Man. A Day of Action, Life, and Language* (2017); *Intercorporeality. Emerging Socialities in Interaction* (2017, ed. with C.Meyer & J.S.Jordan); and *Time in Embodied Interaction* (2018, ed. with A.Deppermann).