

**Title:** The function of children's iconic co-speech gestures: A study with French-Japanese bilinguals and French monolinguals

**Authors:** Meghan Zvaigzne, Yuriko Oshima-Takane, Patricia Groleau, Kayo Nakamura, and Fred Genesee

**Institution:** Department of Psychology, McGill University

**Abstract:** People gesture while speaking, but the function of co-speech gestures is debatable. Gestures may communicate information to listeners, facilitate speakers' cognitive processing, or both. This issue was addressed by examining children's speech and iconic gestures in a communication task when the listener was or was not visible. Iconic gestures convey imagistic aspects of concrete things or events. French-Japanese bilingual and French monolingual children (4;0-7;0 years) were compared to examine how knowledge of two differently structured languages influences bilinguals' gesture production. Two animations were shown differing on one feature: shape, size, manner of movement (dog rolling or sliding downhill). Children described the feature for the experimenter to identify the animation. Monolinguals gestured in both visibility conditions, though more in the visible condition. Bilinguals gestured the same amount in both conditions. These results suggest monolinguals' iconic gestures serve communicative and cognitive functions, whereas bilinguals' iconic gestures are used primarily for cognitive processing.