Gestures as Mimetic Forms of Identity in Post-Secondary Italian as a Foreign Language Classrooms: A Sociocultural Perspective

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GESTURES AS MIMETIC FORMS OF IDENTITY IN POST-SECONDARY ITALIAN AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASSROOMS:
A SOCIOCULTURAL PERSPECTIVE

By

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
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University of Nevada, Las Vegas
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ABSTRACT

Gestures as Mimetic Forms of Identity in Post-Secondary Italian as a Foreign Language Classrooms: A sociocultural Perspective

By

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Professor of Curriculum & Instruction
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This study investigates the use of mimetic gestures of identity by foreign language teachers of Italian and their students in college classes as a form of meaning-making. All four of the teachers were found to use a variety of Italian gestures as a regular aspect of their teaching and presentation of self. Students and teachers also were found to mirror each other’s gestures. None of the teachers had been video-recorded before the study and all were surprised to see the degree to which they appeared to be Italian, although at the same time all believed this to be an important and positive aspect of their teaching.

Students had similar views on the significant role of authentic embodiment of the Italian languaculture for instructors and students alike, particularly in relation to renting a new identity. In offering an explanation for these findings we consider the role of gesture as a social semiotic in learning another language, how teachers perform their identity in the classroom and use gesture to prolept students into a possible future as embodied communicators of the language (thus encouraging language learners to acquire their own identity within a figured world), the process of communicative actuation as it relates to learning a language across different timescales and environments, and how all of the
above relates to the zone of proximal development and its application to frontier regions of development.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to express gratitude to the people who were instrumental during my doctoral program and my dissertation writing process. The completion of this dissertation has been a much bigger challenge than I had anticipated; however, Dr. Steven G. McCafferty, my Doctoral Advisory Committee Chair, never stopped supporting me and believing in me, through all of life’s ups and downs. I firmly believe that without him, I would not have finished writing my dissertation. Furthermore, I thank my husband, Benjamin D. Peltier, J.D., who was an everyday supporter in terms of being my confidant and cheering me on in my steps toward my doctoral degree. Additionally, I am grateful to my colleague, Dr. Natalie Hudson, who remains my friend even after our moves overseas. She was the ultimate companion of adventures as we went through our coursework together and embarked on writing our dissertations on similar topics. Her kind, positive, reassuring and encouraging words through the most intense moments were a comfort and the incentive I needed to keep believing in myself. Similarly, a big thank you is due to my many friends who have cheered for me from all over the world.

Moreover, I want to convey my appreciation to my professors in my doctoral program who were also great resources for feedback and advice, particularly my current Advisory Committee Members, Dr. Shaoan Zhang, Dr. Chyllis Scott, and Dr. LeAnn G. Putney. Finally, I’d like to acknowledge the four teacher participants in my dissertation as well as their students for allowing me to conduct my study in their classrooms and for being very open and enthusiastic about my research.
DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation first to my father, Emilio Nardotto, who, with his 5th grade-level education was my first fan and a tireless supporter of all my endeavors, and who instilled in me a love of learning and a desire to go as far as possible both in my education and in my dreams. I know he would have been proud. Second, I dedicate this work to my two little rays of sunshine, my daughters Aurora Vivienne and Soleil Taliah. I began my doctoral program when Aurora was a baby and I am finishing it while Soleil is a toddler. You both have been my partners and cheerleaders. What a privilege it is to share my life with you!
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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This dissertation lays out an overview, theoretical framework, literature review, research methodology, findings and discussion, and conclusions to justify an investigation of the use of mimetic forms of identity (particularly gestures) as observed in post-secondary Italian as foreign language classroom settings as a form of meaning-making between teachers and students. This first chapter provides an overview and introduction to the study. This study is organized around six chapters.

Chapter One provides an overview of the dissertation, including its organization, a general introduction, an introduction of the overarching topic of nonverbal communication, a more focused presentation of the topic of gesture (including Italian gestures), the research focus and goals of the study along with the research questions, the theoretical framework (Sociocultural Theory and related concepts), and a summary. Because this chapter is an overview, it only provides a short presentation of all the elements, which are defined and discussed in more depth in the chapters that follow.

Chapter Two presents the theoretical framework upon which this study is built. It includes first a discussion of Sociocultural Theory (SCT) stemming firstly (but not exclusively) from the work of Vygotsky (1962, 1978), particularly highlighting concepts such as the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), imitation, internalization, private speech, and inner speech. It then draws attention to other important notions closely related to SCT and this study, such as activity theory and second language acquisition (SLA), Cultural-Historical Activity Theory (CHAT), communicative actuation in language learning contexts, eco-social perspectives, embodiment, figured worlds, gesture,
identity, materialization, meaning making, mimetic forms of identity, performing, prolepsis, and social semiotics. Finally, Chapter Two puts forward a discussion on current views and theories on speech and gesture by concentrating on primary viewpoints, alternative notions, and Italian perspectives.

Chapter Three offers a review of literature on the topic of gesture. First, it looks at gesture and nonverbal communication from a historical point of view, particularly how the interest in gesture was born, and how it developed over the years. Second, it examines gesture from a contemporary stance, thus providing an overview of the most influential studies in the field, mainly from a second language (L2) perspective. Finally, it presents the notion of Italian gestures by discussing the best existing literature in this extremely narrow field.

Chapter Four presents the rationale and methodology for this dissertation. First, two brief sections delineate the overview and organization of the chapter, and a segment emphasizes the importance of studying gesture. Next, the following components are presented and discussed in order: an introduction and summary of this study, the research questions guiding the study, the setting, human subjects specifications, participants, recruitment procedures and consent, data collection (i.e., teacher background survey, video recordings, instructor follow-up interviews, student online survey), data analysis, privacy and confidentiality, risks and benefits. A connection to theory and a conclusion end this chapter.

Chapter Five depicts the findings of this study and supplies the discussion of these findings. First, the chapter outlines the organization for this section of the dissertation. Next, the chapter reiterates the research questions and supplies a data analysis overview.
Following these sections, the important findings for this study are presented and discussed by category: teachers’ use of gestures (i.e., gesture forms, emblematic gesture usage, gestural space, exaggerated beats, exaggerated gestures, frequency and repetition of gesture), teachers’ interviews (i.e., identity, identity through gesture usage, identity in teaching and learning, identity and imitation), students’ gesture usage (i.e., teacher-student mirroring, student-teacher mirroring, mirroring mini case-study), and student online survey.

Chapter Six draws final conclusions for this dissertation. It does by delineating the purpose of this dissertation and the research questions that guided it. Next, it brings forth conclusions by category as listed in Chapter Five: conclusions of teacher use of gestures (i.e., gesture forms, emblematic gesture usage, gestural space, frequency and repetition of gesture), conclusions of teacher interviews in terms of identity, conclusions of student use of gestures (i.e., teacher-student mirroring, student-teacher mirroring, mirroring mini case-study), and conclusions of student survey. Final conclusions, recommendations and implications for further research and application end the last chapter of this dissertation.

Overview

For decades, studies in modern linguistics have sought to better understand how systems of communication are developed, shared and acquired as well as the evolutions of such systems into the many examples of human language. From the production of sound to the comprehension of semiotic systems and the acquisition of secondary or tertiary languages, the myriad components of language and its place in culture are the threads woven to create the fabric of a fascinating field of study. This field continues to
seek out new frameworks for understanding the psychology of communication and more effective methodologies for transmitting knowledge. This is especially true in the study of second language acquisition, where the impact of modern technologies has begun to eliminate common barriers of geography and politics that once created relatively clear delineations between cultures and their individual systems of communication. It is not uncommon today for any individual to be regularly exposed to multiple linguistic contexts, creating an interplay between languages and their related culture, or languacultures (Agar, 1994) – such that were previously limited to unique historic variables; for instance, altered trade routes or the introduction of a language to a new geography through conquest or migration. As linguistic cross-pollination becomes more prevalent and the general need or desire to acquire skills in multiple language contexts becomes more common, the academic understanding of how language is transmitted and learned is continually refined. Our awareness of the biology of language, the psychology of communication, the pedagogical precepts of second-language acquisition, and any number of other concepts related to human expression and the exchange of ideas is regularly augmented. We are fortunate to live in a time of increased openness and shared thought through academia.

Within this framework, we seek to transmit these notions of basic communication one to another through the very sequences of sounds and symbols we study, and through that exercise we create meaning. Because meaning-making is passed from person to person within a community, it is reflective of the individual identities and the shared culture and norms. As we approach an ever fuller understanding of language, identity, culture, and cognition, the linguistic equivalent of Heisenberg’s (Born, Heisenberg, &
Jordan, 1927) uncertainty principle – in which the more precisely one unit of understanding is capable of being measured, the more uncertain the measurement of its corollary becomes – ensures that there is always more for the linguist to observe and a greater amount of understanding to glean from those observations.

It is within this spirit that this dissertation seeks, at a minimum, to contribute to the understanding of linguistics and, more specifically, second language acquisition. Whereas the past several decades of linguistic studies have built to our current understanding, we have built upon the generative theory of language (Chomsky 1957/2002) to current applications that use high technology to actually observe the biological functions that chemically conduct the process of language (see, for example, Cox and Savoy’s 2003 work with functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI)). We now have the capacity to literally watch the mind as it makes meaning of the signs that make up language in real time. This research focuses specifically on the use of gestures, especially mimetic forms of identity (Donald, 2001), that is gestures that communicate a person’s cultural identity, found in the interaction between teachers and students in Italian as foreign language classrooms as a form of meaning making.

The data collected does not rely on medical technology like fMRI studies, but it does seek to look into the mind of the language teachers and students that were observed. It uses the tools of audiovisual recordings, interviews, and surveys to understand their sense of self and the embodiment of their cultural identity through their use of gesture (especially mimetic gestures associated with Italian identity) in the classroom. The goal is to better understand whether language teachers (in the case of this study, teachers of Italian as a second language) consciously or unconsciously incorporate their cultural
identity into their instruction through the use of gesture. The dissertation also looks at whether students begin to use these forms of gesture as they mirror their instructors, who facilitate gesture usage and the adoption of a more “Italian” self. It is important, therefore, to understand whether teachers and students use the same gesture forms during their classroom interactions and what their perceptions are of gesture usage within the classroom (whether or not they are consciously aware of that usage), especially with regard to gestures associated with Italian identity.

While this study looks specifically at Italian language instruction in post-secondary classrooms, it seeks to unearth whether there might be worthwhile pedagogical applications of gesture usage in teaching languages generally. In an ever more globalized world in which language and culture are increasingly diffused, it is sensible to discover equally more global and efficient processes by which language and culture may be acquired. This study endeavors to understand whether gesture may be a useful pedagogical tool for the transmission of self in a cultural context that facilitates other forms of language learning.

**Nonverbal Communication**

Nonverbal communication (e.g., gesture, mimesis) is a relatively new topic in the area of SLA. Although nonverbal communication has been studied as it pertains to the art of “oratoria” (i.e., public speech) since the earliest philosophers used public speech as a way to convey and pass on wisdom (Kendon, 2004a), it has rarely been analyzed or even noticed with other more popular aspects, or data, found in a classroom, such as speech, instructional styles, and cognition. Truth be told, nonverbal communication has mostly been ignored or seen merely as an extra characteristic that comes along with language
learning and with little importance in and of itself. Recently, though, there has been a growing interest in this topic, especially for scholars interested in SCT (Vygotsky, 1962, 1978) as it relates to language acquisition.

The importance of nonverbal communication was brought to my attention through my background in language learning and teaching. In my lifespan, I have formally studied French, German, English and Japanese (in chronological order) and I am a native Italian language speaker. In addition, I have taught Italian as a foreign language and English as a second/foreign language at the university level in the United States and in Kindergarten through 12th grade in Europe. My interest in the present study stems from a fascination and first-hand realization of the significance of nonverbal communication in general as it relates to language learning and teaching, but specifically as it is tied to the acquisition and the teaching of Italian as a foreign language.

Gestures

Gestures in general have been studied for a relatively long time as pertaining to areas such as language origin (e.g., Mallery, 1881/1972), animal gestural communication (e.g., Hewes, 1973; Hockett & Ascher, 1964), deaf studies and sign language (e.g., Bulwer, 1644/1974; Épée, 1776; Sicard, 1800), and child nonverbal behavior (e.g., Bates, 1979). Only recently has nonverbal communication awakened an interest in its study related to classroom contexts, especially language classrooms (e.g., Kendon, 1972, 2004a; McNeill, 1992, 2005). In fact, David McNeil’s work (1992, 2005) has significantly contributed to the study of gesture in relation to children’s behavior, especially linked to language production and acquisition in L1 (primary language) contexts. Particularly, he has helped define, categorize, and study gestures.
Although much has been done in relation to studies of SLA and nonverbal communication over the last few years, still several areas need more attention. For example, more work needs to be done investigating language teachers as well as their students and each group’s understanding of its own use of gestures as well as that of the other group. Moreover, language teacher training should explore the inclusion of education on gesture awareness for both the teachers’ benefit and to help students become conscious and attentive of nonverbal behavior.

Surely, much more work needs to be conducted in the area of gestures in foreign language (FL) classrooms, as this is an area that has not received much attention to date. In the specific area of Italian as a FL classroom in the United States, which is the context of this study, at the time of this writing and to my knowledge, no applied research has been conducted in relation to nonverbal communication. Aside from Efron’s study (1941/1972) of the gestures used by Italian and Jewish immigrants in New York City in the early 1900’s, studies pertaining to the Italian language have usually focused on the explanation and categorization of certain Italian nonverbal behaviors (Cocchiara, 1977; Kendon, 2004b; Leone, 1983; Munari, 2005; Ricci Bitti, 1987), but they have unfortunately not examined these behaviors in action in a foreign language classroom, especially not during interactions between teachers and students. My dissertation is an attempt to bridge this gap.

**Research Focus and Goals**

This study took place in Italian as FL college-level classrooms in the United States. As illustrated throughout this study, Italians are known for their broad use of gestures and other nonverbal communication characteristics (e.g., facial expressions,
sounds, body posture), both historically and contemporarily. Most of the studies executed in the area of Italian gestures have been mainly descriptive of single gesture types. This study, however, seeks to dig deeper by virtually taking a step back and looking at the relationship between Italian nonverbal communication (i.e., gestures and such that are culturally bound to Italian speakers) and identity in the sense of mimetic forms of identity. As is explained later in further detail, mimetic forms of identity are of great interest in the area of language learning and teaching, especially in a foreign language classroom setting, in that they represent a person’s embodiment of their cultural background (i.e., the teacher’s) and facilitate students in the acquisition of the aspect of language learning that takes them a step further into their target language and culture: nonverbal communication. This study seeks to determine whether mimetic forms of identity create a deeper connection between language and culture in the context of a languaculture such as the foreign language classroom.

Based on the review of the studies conducted in the area of gestures and SLA, this study indicates a gap in the literature on the role of mimetic forms of identity in the language classroom, specifically in FL contexts. As explained in depth in Chapter 4, this study aims to bridge this gap by examining how mimetic forms of identity as a form of meaning-making as produced by teachers of Italian as a FL in post-secondary settings represent their Italian embodied beings while they are teaching. Furthermore, the study strives to demonstrate how mimetic forms of identity on the part of these teachers can assist in introducing language students to a deeper cultural dimension of the target language. The teacher participants incorporated in the study are native speakers of Italian, and the student participants vary from some who were taking Italian as a FL for the first
time to others who had spent up to two years abroad in Italy. In summary, this dissertation attempts to provide evidence to be added to the existing body of research in the area of gestures in the FL classroom for teachers and students alike.

This study finds implications for the FL classroom that inform teachers (especially language teachers who are native speakers of the target language) of the tremendous amount of influence that their nonverbal communication, together with their spoken language, can have on students stemming from their mimetic forms of identity used in class as part of their teaching and being themselves. Furthermore, not only teachers, but hopefully students as well, realize what an advantageous tool nonverbal communication is in the FL classroom, and they realize the importance of acquiring not only the spoken target language but also the nonverbal aspects, as those are part of what makes a native or fluent speaker of Italian.

**Research Questions**

Because the aim of this dissertation is to observe the use of gestures, especially mimetic forms of identity, found in the interaction between teachers and students in Italian as foreign language classrooms as a form of meaning making, this dissertation endeavors to answer the following four questions:

1. To what extent do native speakers of Italian teaching Italian as a FL use forms of gesture (especially mimetic gestures associated with Italian identity) in the classroom?
2. To what extent do students use gestures in the classroom, especially mimetic forms associated with Italian identity?
3. In what ways do students take up their teachers’ use of gesture during classroom interactions?

4. What are teachers’ and students’ perspectives of their own and each other’s use of gestures in the classroom, especially those gestures associated with Italian identity?

**Theoretical Framework**

The underlying theoretical framework for this study is Sociocultural Theory. A few of the primary researchers on whose work this study is built are Vygotsky (1962, 1978), especially his conceptions of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and internalization; Bakhtin (Bell & Gardiner, 1998; Hirschkop & Shepherd, 1989) and his notions on dialogism and appropriation; Gal’perin (1989) and his theory on materialization, and Thibault (2004) and his eco-social perspectives.

Other very important concepts based on SCT and related to nonverbal communication, which help frame this study, are the notions of activity theory (Lantolf, 2000), communicative actuation (Rosa, 2007a, 2007b) in language learning contexts, Cultural-Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) (Roth & Lee, 2007), embodiment (e.g., Efron, 1941/1972; Haught & McCafferty, 2008; McCafferty, 2002), figured worlds (Boaler & Greeno, 2000), identity (Holland & Lachicotte, 2007; Marx, 2002; Norton, 2000), meaning making (e.g., Donald, 2001; Goldin-Meadow & McNeill, 1999), mimetic forms of identity (e.g., Donald, 2001; McCafferty, 2008b), performing (Newman & Holtzman, 1993), prolepsis (Van Lier, 2004), and social semiotics (e.g., Thibault, 2004; Tomasello & Call, 2007).

Nonverbal behavior theories, together with and related to SCT, are also concepts of particular importance for this study. In particular, David McNeill’s (1992, 2005) work
on gesture, especially his gesture definitions and categorization as well as his conception of microgenesis take on a primary role in this research. Donald’s theory (2001) with his characterization of mimesis, especially mimetic forms of identity, and his notion on material carriers is also an integral part of the theoretical framework of this study. Included last, but not because they are the least, are Italian perspectives and gestures (e.g., Cocchiara, 1977; De Jorio, 1832; Efron, 1941/1972; Kendon, 2004b; Leone, 1983; Munari, 2005; Ricci Bitti, 1987).

Summary

Stemming from the important work of Vygotsky and those that followed after him in a sociocultural approach, as well as based on important theoretical concepts related to both SCT and nonverbal communication (including Italian perspectives), all of which are discussed in the next chapters, this dissertation aims at bridging a gap in the existing literature in the field of nonverbal behavior (specifically gesture and mimetic forms of identity) in the context of Italian as a FL classroom teaching and learning. The overarching goal of this study is to be able to emphasize the importance of nonverbal communication in the language classroom as a form of meaning-making.
CHAPTER TWO

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The first section of Chapter Two is a discussion on Vygotsky (1962, 1978), particularly his conceptions of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and imitation, internalization, private speech, and inner speech. The second section highlights a number of theories that go hand-in-hand with SCT and focus on language acquisition, gesture, and classroom language contexts. The different theories are presented by topic or researcher in alphabetical order for ease of organization. Researchers of note in this section include Bakhtin (Bell & Gardiner, 1998; Hirschkop & Shepherd, 1989) and his notions on dialogism and appropriation, Donald (2001) and his discussion on mimesis, Gal’perin (1989) and his theory on materialization, McNeill (1992, 2005) and his foundational theory related to the study of gesture, and Thibault (2004) and his eco-social perspectives. Other important concepts and theories which help frame this study and are presented in this section include the notions of activity theory and SLA (Lantolf, 2000; Leontiev, 1978), Cultural-Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) (Roth & Lee, 2007), communicative actuation (Rosa, 2007a, 2007b) in language learning contexts, embodiment (e.g., Efron, 1941/1972; Haught & McCafferty, 2008; McCafferty, 2002), figured worlds (Boaler & Greeno, 2000), identity (Holland & Lachicotte, 2007; Marx, 2002; Norton, 2000), meaning making (e.g., Donald, 2001; Goldin-Meadow & McNeill, 1999), mimetic forms of identity (e.g., Donald, 2001; McCafferty, 2008b), performing (Newman & Holtzman, 1993), prolepsis (Van Lier, 2004), and social semiotics (e.g., Thibault, 2004; Tomasello & Call, 2007). A third and final section discusses current positions on speech and gesture by addressing primary viewpoints, alternative notions,
and Italian perspectives. This third section serves as a transition between a discussion of theory related to my field of study in Chapter Two and the review of literature on the topics related to this dissertation presented in Chapter Three. A summary concludes this chapter.

**Sociocultural Theory**

**Overview**

This section provides an overview of Sociocultural Theory (SCT) together with a few examples to illustrate the main concepts. This overview is based largely on Lantolf’s (2000) review of SCT, which includes many details of Vygotskian theory. Other studies have examined Vygotskian theory (e.g., Jacobs & Hannah, 2004; Lantolf & Pavlenko, 1995).

Vygostky (1962, 1978) is a key individual and theorist whose foundational work is the basis to the current understanding of SCT, particularly for his concept of mediation (Lantolf, 2000). To Vygotsky, we as human beings need to mediate our interaction with the physical world through the usage of tools (e.g., artifacts such as technology) in order to “change the world, and with it, the circumstances under which we live in the world” (Lantolf, 2000, p. 1). Similarly, SCT upholds that our mind uses mediation through the usage of symbolic tools (e.g., music, art, language) in order to “mediate and regulate our relationships with others and with ourselves and thus change the nature of these relationships” (Lantolf, 2000, p. 1). One primary example of such transformations is language change, which entails the evolvement and development of language forms that are passed on from generation to generation in a given society.
One essential environment or “culturally motivated activity” (Lantolf, 2000, p. 13) studied directly by Vygotsky is child play. Observing children at play and playing in different ways between them can suggest inferences about both their cultural background and their future development. Play as an activity brings into the picture the ZPD (see below), which looks at the transformation and development of social forms, as well as language play (e.g., Lantolf, 1997), which is the experimentation with language during the language acquisition process.

Vygotsky’s view on the purpose of psychology was its need to analyze and value such mediations, both physical (social) and symbolic (mental), as they happened through the usage of “culturally constructed artifacts” (Lantolf, 2000, p. 1) within specified societies. Furthermore, he viewed the mind as a system of classification in which the innate (natural) aspects of the brain are constructed through mediation and exposure to culture. Examples of such cultural or higher mental abilities are “voluntary attention, intentional memory, planning, logical thought and problem solving, learning, and evaluation of the effectiveness of these processes” (Lantolf, 2000, p. 2).

SCT views thought and language as two separate but linked entities. The link, or the unit of analysis of thinking and speaking, according to Vygotsky, was the word and the relationship between what the usual meaning of a word is and what is meant by the person uttering that word (Lantolf, 2000). Interestingly, several SCT scholars disagreed with Vygotsky and proposed alternative units of analysis (e.g., Leontiev, 1978; Wertsch, 1998; Zinchenko, 1985). This concept was further developed by McNeill (1992, 2005) with his Growth Point theory (see below).
Zone of Proximal Development and Imitation

A central concept created by Vygotsky (1962, 1978) is the ZPD. The ZPD is not an actual, physical space; rather, it is an abstraction, a metaphor, to indicate the interaction and the learning that takes place in a social setting (be it a classroom, a workplace, or other) as people collaborate or use other mediation tools in the execution of a task. The ZPD is both a process and a product, or as Newman and Holtzman (1993) describe it, it is a tool and result and not a tool for result, as many interpret it to be. The goal is to be able to detect the progression and transition from carrying out a task on an “intermental plane” to an “intramental plane” (Lantolf, 2000, p. 17). In other words, to go from a need to use external mediation (i.e., people, tools) to using one’s own internal (psychological) mediation (i.e., internalization – see below).

A concept strictly tied to the notion of the ZPD is imitation (Vygotsky, 1962, 1978). Imitation is to be separated from the idea of copying what someone else is doing. Instead, imitation takes place when, in a ZPD in which an expert and a novice are interacting (though this is just an example and not to be assumed as the standard context in a ZPD), the novice observes what the expert does and tries to learn to do the same through communication and by using the expert as a mediation tool. Lantolf (2000) defines copying as “the verbatim mimicking of what the expert appears to do,” and imitation as “a complex activity in which the novice is treated not as a repeater but as a communicative being” (p. 18). Copying is a characteristic of language classrooms in which an audio-lingual methodology is prevalent (i.e., the teacher utters a sentence, and the students repeat it in unison). In such cases, Vygotsky asserts that there is a lack of imitation and no consideration for the ZPD.
It is important to note that the interaction that takes place in a ZPD does not necessarily need to happen exclusively between an expert and a novice (which has been covered extensively, for example, by the research described in the next section on parent–child puzzle making activity by Wertsch 1985; 1998). On the contrary, the ZPD can encompass the social interaction between peers, for example (without the presence of an expert such as a teacher), who are learning from each other as they are working on accomplishing a given task (e.g., Swain & Lapkin, 1998). Lantolf (2000) summarizes this discussion by defining the ZPD as “the collaborative construction of opportunities for individuals to develop their mental abilities” (p. 17).

**Internalization, Private Speech, and Inner Speech**

Internalization is an aspect of Vygotsky’s work (1962, 1978) that explains the merging of higher levels of thinking and the development and progression of a person’s culturally based activities as they are socially mediated. Lantolf (2000) defines internalization as “the reconstruction of the inner, psychological, plane, of socially mediated external forms of goal-directed activity” and as “the process through which higher forms of mentation come to be” (p. 13). Central to the concept of internalization is the idea that consciousness is neither internal nor inborn; rather, it is external, as it is directly tied to social and cultural activity.

Wertsch (1998) illustrates this concept beautifully by using the example of a novice contrasted by an expert pool player. Wertsch explains that a novice pool player, because of the lack of exposure and experience with the game, will need to rely on external artifacts (i.e., pool playing objects) in order to discover the outcome of a certain shot. On the other hand, an expert pool player does not need external artifacts; rather,
he/she will rely on previous exposure and experience with the game in order to know how the ball is going to move once struck in a particular way. Through this example, is it clear that the novice player goes from relying on external cues to the expert player who relies on internal (or internalized) ones. Similarly, this concept can be replicated for other culturally based activity.

Another example of internalization can be seen in a study by Wertsch, Minick, and Arns (1984) in which they asked a Brazilian rural and an urban group of mothers to help their children make a puzzle of a barn by copying a model given to them. The rural mothers, motivated by the artifact production that is present in their communities, gave direct instructions to their children as to what piece to pick up and where to put it, leaving no room for teaching them how to copy a model. In contrast, the urban moms, who were also teachers and were motivated by wanting their children to learn to think independently, encouraged their children to look at the model and to find out for themselves what piece went where. The group of urban children, who were encouraged by their mothers to develop their own thinking in copying a puzzle model, was able to (eventually) internalize the thought process needed to complete such a task without their mothers’ assistance. The group of rural children was never able to internalize anything because they were merely following step instructions and were unable to accomplish the same task on their own.

While the previous example illustrates the notion of internalization, it also introduces another element of mental activity: private and inner speech. Lantolf (2000) defines private speech as “speech that has social origins in the speech of others but that takes on a private or cognitive function” (p. 15). In Wertsch (1985), the group of urban
children began using private speech as a mediator to aid them in the accomplishment of their task. They asked questions to themselves, they answered those questions, they told themselves when they did something right or something wrong, and so on. Though these utterances were audible, the next stage of internalization transforms private speech into inner speech (though this is not a definitive stage, as reoccurrences of private speech or of seeking external assistance through other mediational means, such as artifacts or people, may manifest themselves when a particular activity proves to be difficult for an individual). Lantolf (2000) characterizes inner speech as “language that at the deepest level loses its formal properties as it condenses into pure meaning” (p. 15).

Theories Related to Language, Gesture, and Classroom Contexts

Activity Theory and Second Language Acquisition

Activity Theory is closely tied to SCT. Lantolf (2000) describes Activity Theory as “a unified account of Vygotsky’s original proposals on the nature and development of human behavior” and that “specifically, it addresses the implications of his claim that human behavior results from the integration of socially and culturally constructed forms of mediation into human activity” (p. 8). The word activity does not refer to any given or observed action; rather, it describes those actions that are guided by biological or cultural needs (motives) and conditions (Leontiev, 1978).

Leontiev illustrates that motives for the same action can be very different and are, in fact, what differentiate one action from another, with an example about hunting (1978). Hunting is performed in diverse ways in various cultures, as it calls for a particular number of people performing specific tasks (such as scaring the prey, killing it, cooking it, and distributing it). Although the motives for people performing one of these tasks
may be similar at some point in time (i.e., the need to satisfy hunger), it could also be very different when, for example, a person beating a drum to scare the prey discovers a passion for rhythm and music. Therefore, as Lantolf (2000) states, “Activities then can only be directly observed, by others, at the level of conditions” (p. 8).

Another example that illustrates this point is clearly shown by Wertsch, Minick, and Arns (1984) in their study about child development in Brazil. Interestingly, errors were scarce in the group of rural mothers (who had directed their children in what puzzle pieces to pick up and where to put them), as that was the main motive driving that group of mothers. While in the group of urban mothers (who had let their children find the puzzle pieces and place them in the correct spot by themselves), errors were plentiful, as producing an error-free puzzle was not a goal for the second group of mothers. Thus, the same action can be performed differently (both in its process and in its outcome) because of diverse goals and motives driving that action.

Further, second (and foreign) language learning contexts have also yielded several studies focused on activity theory, particularly on the change in the nature of an activity as it was being carried out. For example, Thorne (1999) examined the change in the nature of communication in an online foreign language classroom. Although the beginning of the communication in the online course seemed similar to a physical classroom context, as time went by, changes in the language became apparent as students began using what would be deemed as inappropriate language in a classroom context. Findings suggested that students communicate differently in an online context (where the internet is the mediating tool) as opposed to a face-to-face classroom. In fact, creativity, wit, and fun were encouraged and became tools for fostering dynamic communication.
An additional illustration in a second language learning context that shows that the same action (task) could be driven by differing motives is given by a study conducted by Gillette (1994). This study was set in a university-level French class in which the students came from radically diverse backgrounds. For example, several of the students had beliefs stemming from an anti-American cultural view, while others came from a love of languages cultural background. Findings in this study indicated that students in a language learning environment, though they may be undergoing the same tasks with the aim of learning a new language, may be achieving the goal in different ways (both in the process and in the outcome) because of the underlying differences in their motivation.

**Bakhtin, Dialogism, and Appropriation**

Bakhtin follows the notions of SCT in that he emphasized the dialogical, ever evolving (and not the static) nature of truths (Shotter & Billig, 1998). In the realm of psychology, for example, he emphasized the need to focus on people’s social practices rather than their individual inner-self alone.

In the linguistic realm, he viewed language as “the dialogic interaction of those who make use of it” (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 183). For Bakhtin, every utterance is dialogical in nature; therefore, it is always new, never repeated, never taken from an already existing one, and never repeatable again. He called these moments of dialogical activity, “once-occurrence event[s] of Being” (Bakhtin, 1993, p. 2). He emphasized the importance of encompassing one’s self and one’s social and contextual relationships. For Bakhtin, words themselves do not carry meaning; rather, meaning stems from connections made between individual (speaker), social (hearer), and contextual cues. Thus, understanding an utterance does not simply mean to understand one’s words, but is to understand them
within the particular context they stem from. According to Shotter and Billig (1998) this kind of understanding “is not of a cognitive, representational-referential kind, but is a practical, dialogical kind of understanding … that is ‘carried’ in our ongoing language-activity, and is continually updated, utterance by utterance, as it unfolds” (p. 24).

Going one step further, for Bakhtin, an utterance from a speaker to a hearer does not merely equate to a transmission of information; rather, it concurrently encompasses and shows appropriation or assimilation of such information on the part of the speaker as well (Holquist, 2004). For example, the way a devoted Christian and an Atheist would utter the words of a prayer would indicate, respectively, closeness and distance from the prayer because of the gap between intentions and words.

**Communicative Actuation**

Communicative actuation is a process that relates to the differing contexts (e.g., college classroom, study abroad) and timescales in which students learn a foreign language. If, after taking FL classes (e.g., Italian), students actually study abroad, visit for an extended period, or end up living in their target-language country (e.g., Italy), they might find that their exposure in classrooms to the acts of meaning carried out and embodied by FL teachers (e.g., gesturally, mimetically) has helped prepare them to communicate in face-to-face encounters with Italians in Italian physical, psychological, and social space as they come to act on the languaculture they live in. How organisms come to act on affordances in the environment is the process of actuation.

Developing meditational actuations of communication is what happens to individuals (e.g., FL students) as they undergo three process stages put forth by Rosa (2007a, 2007b): first is exposure to an aspect of communication that is the object to be
understood; next is the act of engaging in the act itself; and finally is the formation of conventional use of the object in social settings. It is also important to emphasize that semantic development in this process moves from first a gathering of sense to conventional usage. Studying in an FL classroom where the teacher presents herself or himself as Italian allows the student to experience the languaculture through the embodied presence of the teacher: how she or he talks, looks, smells, dresses, moves, gestures, and so on – all of which contribute to the accumulation of sense. If these students participate in a study abroad or simply go and live in Italy for a period of time, they will eventually absorb and produce both the language and the nonverbal forms of communication of their new environment.

Communicative actuations are also dramaturgical (Rosa, 2007a, 2007b, following Gonzales, 1997). This point is applicable to the movement of students to a study abroad or similar experience in which as newcomers they are subjected to mastering the “use of objects and symbols, pragmatically, semiotically, and semantically, something that can only be done by participating in socio-cultural practice” (Rosa, 2007b, p. 305). Additionally, this process helps newcomers construct a sense of self “as an object among others, as an agent and as an actor” (Rosa, 2007b, p. 308). To support the application of this experiential form of learning, there is enough anecdotal evidence from more than once source that newcomers are chided by Italians in Italy for not using Italian forms of gesture once they have attained some fluency in the language, an indication of the importance accorded mimetic gestures of identity by Italy’s population as a feature of interaction.
Cultural-Historical Activity Theory

Cultural-historical activity theory (CHAT) has common elements with other SCT theories, and it stems from the work of Vygotsky (1962, 1978) and his views on activity theory (see above), though it was further developed by his successors (e.g., Gal’perin, 1992; Leontiev, 1974; Luria, 1982). Vygotsky used the term “cultural-historical” to elucidate the close relationship between cultural mediation (i.e., culture) and human cognition (i.e., thought) in that culture and mind are not static but continuously develop and change not as separate entities, but closely related one to the other.

CHAT encompasses four main areas of study (domains) that explore higher mental capabilities: phylogenesis (the study of the evolution of the mind in relation to mediation in human beings in comparison with other life forms such as primates), socioculture (the study of the evolution of thought of differing cultures through the use of symbolic mediation tools), ontogenesis (the study of how children learn to use mediation in relation to their thinking), and microgenesis (the study of the development and evolution of mediation over time). Ontogenesis is the area that has received the highest amount of attention within SCT up until this point. This dissertation, however, focuses primarily on microgenesis. The main focus of CHAT (as well as SCT) in any particular domain is to examine the formation, reformation, or the deformation of mental systems through mediational means.

Roth and Lee (2007) point out that CHAT offers a different option to current theories of teaching and learning. In fact, they argue that CHAT, by using activity as its unit of analysis, offers to potentially fill gaps found between contradictions or dualisms in the realm of education namely theory and practice, epistemological and ontological
human development, decontextualized and embodied knowledge, and individual learners’
and social environments. They explain that CHAT “leads to changes in the location of
representing what is educationally relevant” as “its inherently dialectical unit of analysis
allows for an embodied mind, itself an aspect of the material world, stretching across
social and material environments” (p.189). While Vygotsky focused on sign and semiotic
mediation (i.e., language) as his unit of analysis, CHAT extended his vision to encompass
objects as related to practical activity.

Cultural-Historical Activity Theory and language.

In relation to language, CHAT views it as unconscious when used to promote
action and as a tool, object, or sign when employed to discuss action or when theorizing
teaching practices (Roth & Lee, 2007). Language can be integrated into CHAT in that the
speaker uses it as mediation by aiming at previously uttered language in order to create
new language socially constructed. Thus language takes on the role of both means and
product.

Cultural-Historical Activity Theory and identity.

Although the concept of identity is more thoroughly discussed below, it is
important here to mention that identity is a crucial concept in a discussion about learning
and learning environments. Indeed, identity is a central aspect of learning, together with
other aspects such as motivation, motive, and emotion, as activity cannot be separated
from who we are now and who we will become. Roth and Lee (2007) affirm the
dialectical nature of identity as it is not an “invariant attribute” but is “continuously
produced and reproduced in practical activity, which both presupposes and produces
identity (pp.215–216) (see also Roth et al., 2004). They further point out the complexity
of the relationship between agency and one’s position in the social world, which
(relationship) in turn shapes one’s multiple identities in any one of the numerous existing
learning contexts (such as a language classroom). Thus, CHAT provides a fresh manner
in which to view the relationship between identity and the individuals who take part in
concrete social activity. CHAT’s dialectical nature can also shed light on the relationship
between individual and group identity. In fact, it can support the thought that “collective
identity is always a structural feature of organizational life” (Roth & Lee, 2007, p. 216).

**Donald’s Theory on Mimesis**

Although the main focus of this dissertation is on gesture, one broader aspect of
nonverbal communication, which incidentally has not received great attention up to this
point, is mimetic theory. As of today, not very many studies have been conducted on the
use of mimesis in second language learning contexts. Nevertheless, a few theoretical
articles have been written on the subject, and it is from those that this discussion stems
(i.e., Donald 2001; McCafferty, 2006; Zlatev, 2002).

Gesture and mimesis are intrinsically connected, as gestures can be seen as a
subcategory of mimesis (details on gesture below). Mimesis, then, when looked at
generally, is a broader grouping that includes all gestures with the addition of other body
movements that do not merely involve arms and hands (which are usually seen as the
classical gestures) and facial expressions. When we look at mimesis more closely as it
relates to identity, however, other communicative aspects can be added to the list of
characteristics that pertain to mimesis (e.g., cultural behaviors). The purpose of both
gesture and mimesis is communication, and they can precede, accompany, follow, or
even take place without oral language.
Zlatev (2006) defines mimesis as “a particular bodily act of cognition or communication” based on four conditions which he calls “volition, representation, communicative sign function, and non-symbolicity” (pp. 16–17). He goes further and introduces the concept of “mimetic schema,” which he conceptualized with the purpose of “bridging the gap between language and embodiment” (p. 20).

McCafferty (2006) analyzes mimesis in a second language acquisition context based on SCT. Particularly, he discusses two aspects of mimesis, “the first being its role as a materializer for both the purposes of thinking and communicating, and the second related to being and doing in an L2 languaculture (identity)” (p. 27). McCafferty agrees with Zlatev on the concept of embodiment and argues that, “people live a material existence as embodied beings, and that materiality becomes a part of our cognitive architecture” (McCafferty, 2006, p. 23).

Donald (2001) defines mimesis as:

an analogue style of communication that employs the whole body as an expressive device. Mimesis is really about acting. It manifests itself in pantomime, imitation, gesturing, sharing attention, ritualized behaviors, and many games. It is also the basis of skilled rehearsal, in which a previous act is mimed, over and over, to improve it. (p. 240)

In his book, Donald describes in detail how the experience of Helen Keller (who was deaf-blind) is tied to mimesis. He explains that Helen, although she did not have language skills, used gestures and body movements to communicate and to make sense of her dark and silent world. Later, Annie Sullivan took on the challenge of becoming Helen’s teacher and started teaching her sign language. Interestingly, Helen learned to
mimic what Annie was doing without knowing that those signs had a meaning. In fact, she did not realize that the signs she was making with her hands stood for something else, like a book, or a table. She was, in fact, learning as a child learns to speak, through babblings and imitations of adult speech; she just did it not with words but with signs. Later, she realized that using her nonverbal channels was a way to communicate images of concrete and abstract things, and her world opened up.

The story of Helen Keller falls into the realm of Vygotskian SCT, the ZPD, and the concept of the development and evolution of cultural identity (gained through the mediation of symbolic skills) going “from culture to individual” and “from outside to inside” (Donald, p. 251). In fact, Helen (the novice) was interacting with Annie (the expert) and went through stages of imitation and learning where she first used Annie’s expertise as her mediation tool and later learned and internalized those higher levels of thinking that permitted her to achieve independent proficiency in mimesis as a mode of communication. Key to her success, according to Donald (2001), was that with the arrival of her teacher, she was exposed to a ZPD that provided her with a “contextual framework” (p. 245) or a “symbolic cultural web” (p. 248) that eventually taught her how to communicate with others. While she did not have that kind of context (or ZPD), or as Donald puts, “enforced enculturation” (p. 248), she did not learn to communicate and certainly did not progress. Donald stated, “The symbolic framework must be established from outside the nervous system. Otherwise, a mind will stay in a holding pattern until the conditions for internalizing symbols are met” (p. 248). The outside that Donald is talking about is “an existing culture” (p. 249).
In other words, Donald holds that it is only through a cultural context that we can acquire those higher-level cognitive skills that will enable us to obtain symbolic competence. Therefore, nonverbal communication (i.e., gesture, mimesis) is strictly tied to cultural identity and embodiment. Furthermore, language and nonverbal communication determine and help express our cultural identity and embodiment. Moreover, the building of our cultural identity (e.g., social, literate, intellectual, attentional skills) is a conscious (and not subconscious) process. Donald states:

Helen gradually acquired her adult personality, after endless difficult metacognitive bouts of agonized self-evaluation, in loop after loop, as she internalized the norms of her culture. She developed nothing of what we would call inner speech, or reflective intelligence, until she was guided through the long, convoluted labyrinths of deep culture to its symbolic core. (p. 250)

To conclude, mimesis, according to Donald (2001), is meant as a communicative representational action that can include other aspects beside mere gesture or body movements, such as games and behaviors. Therefore, mimesis can go beyond representing a word or an object (for example, through emblems); in fact, mimesis can promote identity. When people who have been exposed to a certain culture express themselves, they will portray not only their language (i.e., words or concepts) through their use of mimesis, but also who they are—their sense of identity. Donald sums up the relationship between mimesis, language, and external representations by saying that all three are connected to changes in awareness and self-awareness. He explains:

Mimetic skill is all about self-representation and self-definition, but mimetic style has meaning only in relation to the actions of others. Language is a powerful
means of constructing autobiographical memories, but our sense of self takes on meaning only within a shared oral tradition. External symbols define us as individuals in a thousand ways, but they too acquire meaning only in the context of a collective sense of social structure. (p. 321)

**Figured Worlds**

Boaler and Greeno (2000) defined the concept of figured worlds as “socially and culturally constructed or interpretive realms,” and “places where agents come together to construct joint meanings and activities” (p. 173). These authors studied students in mathematics classrooms in relation to the construction and use of thought and agency, arguing that learning can be “a process of identity formation in ‘figured worlds.’” Thus, classrooms of Italian as a FL are figured worlds in which participants (i.e., teachers and students) collaborate in meaning-making activities that result in the formation of culturally-appropriate and socially- and contextually-bound identities.

**Gal’perin and Materialization**

Gal’perin (1989, 1992) based his work on Vygotskian theory when he developed his thoughts on materialization. Gal’perin sees instruction (specifically, the type of instruction) as holding a crucial position in relation to pace and direction of learning. For example, the type of instruction used by a language instructor in a language classroom will be key in determining the learning rate and the route of the learning process of a particular linguistic feature for the students in that classroom. Materialization refers to the activity performed in the physical world as a means to internalize the object of study before moving on to verbalization (thus moving from the external to the internal plane) (Lantolf, 2005; León, 2001; McCafferty, 2006).
Several studies have explored Gal’perin’s materialization theory (e.g., McCafferty, 2006; Negueruela & Lantolf, 2008; Swain, 2000) and indeed found that students who are taught through a materialization approach will perform better, at higher levels and will learn faster than others taught through a different (usually more “rule-of-thumb”) pedagogical style. As Lantolf (2005) states:

when instruction makes it possible for learners to gain a conceptual understanding of a feature of language, or indeed a feature of any subject matter, it has a profound influence in shaping how development unfolds, both with regard to rate and route. (p.340)

Furthermore, McCafferty (2006) found that materialization through gestures can also be a way for L2 learners to both externalize and better internalize a particular conception.

**Identity**

The main concept of identity that frames this study was put forth by G. H. Mead during the early 1900’s because it is one that closely relates to SCT (Holland & Lachicotte, 2007). Meadian identity focuses on the individual with regard to how people “form senses of themselves—identities—in relation to ways of inhabiting roles, positions, and cultural imaginaries that matter to them” (p. 103). Furthermore, Meadian identity leaves room for the possibility of multiple identities for one individual.

Similarities between Mead and Vygotsky’s views on identity include “active internalization, internalized self–other dialogues, and [the] … semiotics of behavior” (Holland & Lachicotte, 2007, p. 105). One difference between the two researchers on the concept of identity is that Mead was concerned with the end result, “the … linkages
formed between self and society,” while Vygotsky focused on the development of “mind and personality, as sociogenetic products” (p. 105).

Another pertinent view on identity for this study is Marx’s (2002) identity framework which she constructed based on the works of Wenger (1998), who emphasizes the role of constant renegotiation of the self, Norton (2000), who stresses the multiplicity and non-static characteristics of identity in relation to SL studies, and Kramsch (2000), who discusses the importance of social role and discursive voice as part of a learner’s cultural identity. Also, Marx called attention to Sfard’s participation metaphor, which views learning as “a process of becoming a member of a certain community” (Marx, 2002, p. 3, citing Sfard, 1998, p. 6).

Marx’s (2002) study takes a sociocultural theoretical approach to understanding gesture as it relates to identity. Vygotsky’s approach to understanding human development and function can guide research on identity. Identity in this framework is formed through an individual’s actions in a given setting. It is participants actively engaged with each other in a particular setting that produces a person’s identity. Through a SCT viewpoint, people use mediated tools, psychological and physical, to form identity. It is language that is often used as a primary tool or vehicle for intellectual development which in turn guides a person’s identity. Robbins (2001) in describing Vygotsky’s views on the individual, states:

always understand that we were not born into this world as free-thinking individuals, but instead born into a world of pre-established social norms and conventions. We can become individuals, in the true sense of the word, only by connecting to the outside, social world in a new fashion. (p. 6)
This connection to the outside world is often obtained through language, both verbal and nonverbal. Just as a person can verbally tell you what nationality they are, nonverbal behavior is also able to carry a similar message. One should be able to identify a person by viewing the message or material that is produced through gesture.

Identity is a central notion to language learning in a social setting. Norton (2000) explains that people improve their understanding of self through their relations to others. Their past relations affect their present and future social relations. As a consequence, social identity is influenced by language (both oral and nonverbal) between people.

Norton states:

I use the term identity to reference how a person understands his or her relationship to the world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space, and how the person understands possibilities for the future. I argue that SLA theory needs to develop a conception of identity that is understood with reference to larger, and frequently inequitable, social structures which are reproduced in day-to-day social interaction. In taking this position, I foreground the role of language as constitutive of and constituted by a language learner’s identity. … It is through language that a person negotiates a sense of self within and across different sites at different points in time, and it is through language that a person gains access to – or is denied access to – powerful social networks that give learners the opportunity to speak. (p. 5)

Norton’s account reflects the idea that social identity at the use of language is constantly changing according to social setting and time. Gesture as part of this language
component plays an integral part in identifying one self and can be a strong indication of how motivated a person is to participate in a particular environment.

McNeill and Vygotskian Theory

Gesture overview.

One of McNeill’s (1992) important contributions in relation to Vygotskian theory is his work on gesture, particularly his sharing of strategies and conventions for reporting and citing gestures (p. 12). Before discussing his theory on the connection between speech and gesture, it is important to understand what types of gestures McNeill studied. In fact, he provides a breakdown of the five principal kinds of spontaneous gestures that are observable in communication. First, he describes iconics (or iconic gestures). These are pictorial gestures that depict (through a movement or through a symbolic image) a physical object or event. For example, representing the way a tree bends, or showing a weapon with one’s hand. Next are metaphorics (or metaphoric gestures). These are similar to iconics in that they are pictorial in nature, although metaphorics represent abstract images instead of physical ones. For example, they represent ideas, metaphors, etc. Beats come next, and they are portrayed as gestures that are unchanged (they always look the same) and get their name from the movements of the hands and arms that an orchestra conductor makes when holding a baton and leading music. In fact, beats move in two directions only (up/down, in/out, side/side) and they coincide with (parts of) words or phrases that need emphasis in a “discourse-pragmatic content” context (McNeill, 1992, p. 15). McNeill states that beats “reveal the speaker’s conception of the narrative discourse as a whole” (p. 15). Cohesives are the subsequent kind of spontaneous gestures described by McNeill. As the name itself suggests, the purpose of cohesives is to imply
continuity in what is being said. The way that cohesives express continuity is through the repetition of the same gesture. What is interesting is that cohesives are not one particular type of gesture; rather, they can comprise many kinds, such as iconics, metaphorics, deictics, or beats. Politicians are the prime example of using cohesives as they speak, especially in the form of beats. Lastly, McNeill describes deictics as the final major type of spontaneous gesture. These are also known as pointing gestures, as their purpose is to point to a physical object, person, or place, for example, or to point to a figurative concept of the same. McNeill explains, “Abstract pointing gestures imply a metaphorical picture of their own in which abstract ideas have a physical locus” (p. 18).

**Gesture and speech.**

McNeill (1979, 1985) brought forth his own work on the relationship between gesture and speech. In his book *Hand and Mind* (1992), he defines gestures as “movements of the hands and arms that we see when people talk” (p. 1). To him, spontaneous gestures are not to be considered separately from speech, as a separate language in and of itself, but are “an integral part of language as much as are words, phrases, and sentences—gesture and language are one system” (p. 2). He argues strongly about the dialectic relationship of language and thought and affirms that language “is verbal and gestural. Far from being ‘beside’ language, gesture is actively part of language” (p. 4).

According to McNeill (1992), language and gesture are drastically different in that the first conveys meaning and the latter does not, unless one knows how to understand those gestures. Furthermore, language is linear and needs to be segmented when expressing meaning, while gestures do not inherently have either one because of
their characteristic multidimensionality. McNeill sums up this concept by stating that “Gestures are global and synthetic and never hierarchical” (p. 19). He explains that global means that a gesture in its wholeness establishes the meaning of its parts. For example, wiggling fingers establish that a person is running even without having to express motion with a separate gesture. Furthermore, synthetic means that one gesture can take on and combine several different meanings. Based on the previous example, wiggling fingers (one gesture) can establish that a person is running along a road (several meaning elements). Finally, by describing gestures as being never hierarchical (or by using the term noncombinatoric), McNeill refers to the property of language to combine smaller units to form a bigger one. This does not happen with gestures. Gestures do not combine with each other (though they can relate to each other very closely).

As stated by McNeill, there are three underlying thoughts regarding gesture and speech. First, he argues that we need to enlarge our definition of what language is. In other words, we should not limit our view of language to a mere ensemble of words; rather, we should include the element of image within it. In fact, sometimes gesture can communicate the meaning of a thought, through a visual image, in a much better way than words can. Second, McNeill sustains that gestures are an integral component of discourse as they are intrinsically tied to thought and speech, and they can complement or explain a thought in ways that words cannot. Third, he holds that gesture has an influence over thoughts and can provide the opportunity for the occurrence of speech.

**Gesture and inner speech.**

Research on gesture in relation to inner speech (e.g., McNeill, 1992) has been demonstrating that nonverbal communication is invaluable in communicating.
Furthermore, gestures are not just essential in social communication contexts in which one tries to convey an idea to a third party; rather, they are also crucial for one’s own cognitive processing, and they can manifest themselves through inner speech. It is important to note that gesture, according to McNeill (1992), does not try to substitute speech. On the contrary, gestures and other nonverbal means of communication complement speech and are sometimes quite separate from it, almost taking precedence over it. Lantolf (2000) exemplifies this concept when he recalls a television interview with a baseball coach who, in the middle of an utterance, lost his train of thought and was able to get back on track by looking down at his hands (which were forming a diamond shape) and recall what he wanted to say. A second example by the same author illustrates how a linguist who was speaking about movement could not quite get across the meaning of what he was trying to say and, therefore, simultaneously showed what he meant through the use of a hand gesture which left no room for misinterpretation of his meaning (Lantolf, 2000).

**Microgenesis and Growth Point theory.**

One of McNeill’s well known terms to describe his theory about the connection of speech and gesture (or language and thought) is what he named the Growth Point (1992, 2005). McNeill (1992) bases his Growth Point theory on the concept of microgenesis. Microgenesis, he explains, is an internal development that takes place when somebody is forming an utterance (i.e., the final product of words and gesture that are communicated to someone). He further explains that an utterance has to go through a formation process that follows specific steps in order. In fact, an utterance does not just happen all at once, and it is not measured through language alone and in the order in which the words are
uttered. Both language and image play an important role in the formation of an utterance. McNeill (2005) asserts that there is a dialectic relationship between thought and language, as a thought is both verbal and imagistic, and that speech and gesture work together to construct meaning.

The microgenetic approach that McNeill uses needs at its base a unit of analysis, which is “the smallest component that has a capacity to grow, to develop into something else—the final utterance” (McNeill, 1992, p. 218). It is this unit of analysis that McNeill named the Growth Point. McNeill (2005) explains that the Growth Point is called that “because it is meant to be the initial form of thinking for (and while) speaking, out of which a dynamic process of organization emerges” and also because it “addresses the concept that there is a specific starting point for a unitary thought” (pp. 105–106). He adds that “a Growth Point is a package that has both linguistic categorical and imagistic components, and it has these components irreducibly. It is a minimal unit in the Vygotskian sense, the smallest package that retains the property of being a whole; in this case the imagery-language whole that we see in synchronized combinations of co-expressive speech and gestures” (p.105). McNeill (2005) summarizes the definition of Growth Point by saying that it is “a minimal dynamic unit in which imagery and linguistic categorical content are equal parts” (p. 106). McNeill talks of dynamism of the Growth Point in terms of change caused by instability of conceptualization and context.

Kendon (2004a) explicates McNeill’s idea of nonlinearity of an utterance, be it speech or gesture, in the following way:

What is to be expressed in the utterance is present all at once at its beginning. Its final form, its form as we can observe it in a speaker, is the product of a
microgenetic processing which imagistic thinking and thinking that uses linguistic
categories engage together in a kind of dialectic process which leads, in the end,
to the particular gesture-speech combination that is created by the speaker. (p. 78)

McNeill’s Growth Point theory is based on Vygotsky’s (1962, 1978) microgenetic
analysis in which he describes that the relationship between gesture and speech is a
dynamic development and is not static.

**Mimetic Forms of Identity and Embodiment**

Mimetic forms of identity are those nonverbal types of behavior (e.g., gestures,
facial expressions, body posture, mimesis) that transmit a person’s embodiment of who
they are culturally. As discussed earlier, Donald (2001) describes mimetic forms of
identity and embodiment as “the primary public dimension that defines our personal
identity, and in it, style and tradition matter, to the degree that these things establish who
we are, who our friends are, and where we stand in society” (p. 240). McCafferty (2008b)
embraces this concept and points out that gesture is a form of identity in that it portrays
tribal characteristics of mimesis. He further underlines the necessary relationship between
mimesis of identity and SLA theories. In fact, mimesis is an intrinsic and important part
of communication as it aids in forming meaning and it plays an important role in forging
identities. Embodiment, in other words, stems from the fact that we live who we are.
Everything we say and do is a product of what makes us the people that we are today.
Mimetic forms of identity are clues into a person’s cultural being, and they are therefore a
part of the language learning process semiotically (e.g., Efron 1941/1972, Haught &
McCafferty, 2008; McCafferty, 2002).
Performing

A form of development associated with Vygotsky’s concept of the ZPD called “performing” is exemplified by children putting on their parents’ clothes or shoes pretending to be them in action and speech (Newman & Holtzman, 1993). Language students who become aware of the integral part that nonverbal forms of communication plays in the social semiotics of the target language will also likely display an application of the conception of performing. Simply put, these students will begin displaying and using similar behaviors as those of their teachers or native speakers of the target language (i.e., performing), such as gestures and mimetic forms of identity, thus attempting to become a part of the new languaculture (i.e., ZPD) as part of the process of communicating in L2 contexts. Through their experience in the classroom, they are able to take advantage of the affordance of performing themselves as insiders of the languaculture in this respect.

McCafferty (2002) examined gesture production for a native and nonnative speaker of English in quasi-tutorial interactions. The two participants started imitating each other’s gestures as a part of the process of meaning-making. However, there was more of an attempt to do so on the part of the learner, presumably because of his need to accommodate his new surroundings semiotically. Also, in a study of adult SL students rehearsing the lines of a script imitated the teacher’s use of gesture after they asked him to model the lines (the use of gesture was inadvertent on the teacher’s part). Furthermore, the students imitated each other’s gestures when seen on video, but only those gestures first initiated by the teacher (Haught & McCafferty, 2008).
**Prolepsis**

Prolepsis is another concept stemming from SCT and is defined as, “a way to refer to what is to come, it is a way to raise expectations,” as said by Van Lier (2004). This author further explains that, in terms of education, “[p]rolepsis can be seen as a game of make-believe in which the educator pretends that the learner knows more than she actually does, and can do more than she has shown to be capable of hitherto” (p. 152). Accordingly, educators such as language instructors should teach their students having the presupposition and expectation that they will learn the target language and become fluent in it as well as in its culture. It is important to note that prolepsis through the use of mimetic forms of identity happens in a spontaneous, unaware manner, as is the case with most gestures that co-occur with speech (i.e., spontaneous gestures) (McNeill, 2005).

**Social Semiotics and Meaning Making**

Semiotic mediation studies the use of signs (e.g., language, nonverbal forms of communication, tools) in social interactions to convey meaning. Therefore, meaning making in social contexts implies more than the mere exchange of words. Starting from a phylogenetic standpoint, apes seem to carry more meaning through their gestures rather than through language (Tomasello & Call, 2007). Children display similar characteristics in their infancy when their lack of verbal capabilities is compensated by their nonverbal form of behavior (Thibault, 2004).

While some languages incorporate aspects of activity (e.g., hand shape or position) into their verbal communication (Stokoe, 2001), such as in Japanese, for example, for most other languages, such as English and Italian, gestures work together
with language to carry out meaning as gestures and language hold differing affordances (Goldin-Meadow & McNeill, 1999). To be fair, gestures can in fact carry out all meaning, such as in sign language. Nevertheless, Donald (2001) pointed out that the usual purpose of nonverbal forms of behavior (e.g., mimesis) is to generate images of the objects and events being communicated. Or as Vygotsky (1978) put it, gestures are the “material carriers” of thought.

Thibault and Ecosocial Perspectives

Ecosocial perspectives are an extension of ZPD views. Lemke (2000) defines an ecosocial system as “a system of interdependent processes” (which he describes as both “material” or “immaterial” possibilities) that can be depicted by observing “what’s going on, what’s participating and how, and how one going-on is interdependent with another” (p. 275). Lemke (1995) adds that “there cannot be two systems here, one material and the other cultural, each changing according to separate laws, relatively independent of one another. There can only be one unitary ecosocial system, material and semiotic, with a single unified dynamics” (p. 107).

Thibault (2004) discusses concepts such as semiosis, meaning making, and the self in relation to ecosocial systems. In particular, Thibault stresses the essentiality of dialogism in understanding the notions of the self and consciousness. In fact, he emphasizes the foundational importance of “the building up of meanings along a trajectory through dialogic exchanges with other selves with whom one’s trajectory intertwines” (p. 177). Furthermore, dialogic interactions are constant and ongoing to permit for consciousness transformation through the occurrences of questions, doubts, and differences (p. 183).
Ecosocial perspectives on meaning making.

Thibault (2004), states that meaning making is social, not internal. Basing his theory on the work of Harré and Gillett (1994), he explains meaning, or a “system of meanings,” as what essentially constitutes both the self and consciousness and through which “we organize our experience around a notion of the self along a trajectory” (p. 177). Children first learn to make meaning and to adapt to the group’s “system of symbolic possibilities” through “dialogic exchange processes. Thus, the individual’s emergent symbolic or higher-order consciousness entails the building-up and elaboration of internal structures of meaning and interaction” (p. 179). “Higher-order consciousness, he adds, is what determines both the dialogic relationships between selves as well as the embodied meanings expressed by the self in a given context” (p. 177).

The difference between meaning and information, according to Thibault, is that the first is “always construed in relationship to the observational viewpoints and perspectives of the participants on the ecosocial scale in question” (2004, p. 179). In fact, “the world and its meanings are actively produced by us” (p. 184). Thus, Thibault pulls away from a standard view of the literature that focuses on individual processes (i.e., representation) and opts for the social, “we” dimension of meaning making.

Ecosocial perspectives on language and gesture.

Thibault (2004) argues for “the fundamentally multimodal character of all human meaning-making” (p. 246). He builds off of Lemke’s view of ecosocial systems to state that “the materiality of the body [plays] a central, not marginal, role in social meaning-making” (p. 10). While discourse is seen as a powerful tool for explicit meaning making, Thibault considers nonverbal communication (e.g., gesture, facial expressions, body
posture) as more implicit and unconscious, though still valuable and relevant. In fact, he attests that gesture, along with language, is one important symbolic mode of social meaning making.

Gesture is an integral part of meaning making. The close connection in the neo-cortex of the operations of writing, speaking and gesturing suggests “an intimate connection to consciousness, especially to symbolic or higher-order consciousness” (p. 187). In discussing the embodiment of the brain, in other words, what parts of the brain are connected to or control what parts of the body, Thibault points out that the “face and hands are massively and disproportionately represented in the neo-cortex with respect to other areas of the body” (p. 185, drawn from Thelen & Smith, 1994). Evolutionarily, standing up vertically, together with the fact that hands and face have an intricate musculature that enables to “discriminate complex systems of differences” on both an exploratory and a performance level, have made social meaning making doable (p. 186, drawn from Gibson, 1983/1966). In fact, “The taking up of the same patterns by others meant that the meaning-making potential of these patterns of difference was able to link individuals across diverse space-time scales” (p. 186).

Thibault (2004) draws on Lemke (2000, 2004) and his discussion on meaning making being multiplicative rather than additive. Thibault explains that spoken language and other semiotic modalities (such as gesture) are co-deployed (i.e., they happen at the same time) and co-contextualize each other as part of meaning making. This means that language and gesture do not coincidentally happen at the same time, simply adding one to the other because they are thought to be independent and separate from each other. Rather, they have “co-evolved with each other on the phylogenetic timescale and co-
developed and co-individuated on the ontogenetic scale” (p. 192). Thus, these meaning making modalities have a multiplicative rather than an additive effect.

Current Positions on Speech and Gesture

The connection between speech and gesture has already received some attention in this chapter, in particular in relation to the work of David McNeill as this dissertation follows his theory very closely. Nevertheless, it is important to provide here a short summary of the more notorious existing positions on speech and gesture, including Italian perspectives, before moving on to a focused review of literature in Chapter Three.

Some of the most prominent researchers in the area of nonverbal communication (e.g., De Ruiter, 2000; Goldin-Meadow, 2003: Kendon, 1972, 2004a; Kita, 2000; McCafferty, 2004; McNeill, 1979, 1985) agree that nonverbal communication is an essential part in communication and in formulating meaning. Despite this universal understanding of nonverbal communication, they may find differences in the details of their theories about the relationship of speech and gesture. Other researchers, (e.g., Freedman, 1972, 1977; Hadar & Butterworth, 1997; Krauss, Chen, & Gottesman, 2000; Rimé & Schiaratura, 1991) hold a different idea from the first group, as they theorize that nonverbal communication is secondary to speech and it assists speech but is not to be viewed as a crucial or fundamental part of communication and the making of meaning. A brief description of the prominent theoretical positions with regard to the connection between speech and gesture dating back to the late 1960s follows.

Primary Viewpoints

As described in an earlier section, McNeill (1992) sees gesture and speech as “two modes of representation” that are “linked in meaning, function, and time; they share
meanings, roles, and a common fate” (p. 218). Speech and gestures are together vital to the self-expressive and communicative abilities of a person, and they give insight into the mental processes that take place in communication. McNeill explicates this point as follows: “Gestures and speech, considered jointly, reveal a process in which holistic and imagistic representations interact with analytic and linguistic representations” (p. 218). Thus, both modes of representation stem from cognitive processes, though the first is tied to images, and the second is tied to language. Further, “Gestures (global and synthetic) and speech (linear and segmented) co-occur and are co-expressive in acts of speaking. From this co-occurrence during the same linguistic act, I posit an interaction of imagery and socially-constituted linguistic systems during utterances” (p. 218). One of McNeill’s better known terms to explicate his theory about the connection of speech and gesture (or language and thought) is what he called the Growth Point (1992, 2005) based on a microgenetic viewpoint (see definition and explanation earlier in this chapter).

Similarly to McNeill (1992), Kendon (1972, 2004a) believes that speech and gesture are “two different kinds of expressive resource available to speakers” and are seen as semantically connected partners that coexist and collaborate with the aim of forming a shared meaning or a “final product” (Kendon, 2004a, p. 111). In other words, speech and gesture, says Kendon, go hand-in-hand as they complement each other to create and communicate a better constructed meaning than if the two were used separately, one without the other. It should be made clear that Kendon does not think that speech and gesture always hold the same meaning. In fact, he states, “neither is the cause nor the auxiliary of the other, nor is there an obligatory link between them” (p. 128). Nevertheless, though speech and gesture frequently hold differing meanings per se,
Kendon states, “the meanings expressed by these two components interact in the utterance and, through a reciprocal process, a more complex unit of meaning is the result” (pp. 108–109). Furthermore, Kendon illustrates through examples how gestures can convey aspects of meaning, or they can convey images strictly connected to what is being said (e.g., verbs, nouns). This is not to say that speech and gesture, whether used separately or together, always succeed in communicating what is meant by the speaker or that the recipients of the message always understand it as it was meant.

McCafferty (2004) agrees with how Vygotsky sees the relationship between speech, gesture, and thought as a partnership in which gesture can assist one’s thought formation. He further specifies that gesture could also follow Kita’s (2000) views and be considered as an independent way of thinking. In his words, he adds that “gesture is a means through which linguistic elements… might, at least partially, be internalized through the process of embodiment” (p. 149).

Kita (2000), while agreeing with McNeill’s view on the importance of nonverbal communication coupled with speech, does not see them as stemming from the same place (cognitively); in fact, he does not view gestures stemming from an imagistic thought. Rather, Kita envisions gesture and speech as two separate developments that culminate in the collaboration “toward the common goal of organizing information to be conveyed into a more readily verbalizeable shape” (p. 171). In other words, Kita couples gesture with spatio-motoric thinking and speech with analytic thinking that come together to create meaning.

De Ruiter (2000) holds a different theory in which language and gesture are linear in their formation process. Furthermore, according to this view, gesture and speech never
collaborate or come together to share the common goal of creating meaning; rather, they
are mere “coincidences” of both processes happening at the same time.

Goldin-Meadow (2003), through her classroom-based research was able to
underline the importance of nonverbal channels of communication with speech. Her work
demonstrated that gestures are crucial in the process of communicating and
understanding what is being uttered. Not only that, but gestures can actually facilitate
understanding of what the speaker is trying to send across to the recipient of the
utterance.

**Alternative Notions**

Because my study is based on the theories put forth by scholars such as McNeill
(1992, 2005), Kendon (2004a), McCafferty (2004), and others whose beliefs on speech
and gesture I have described above, I only briefly touch on the work of other researchers
(e.g., Freedman, 1972, 1977; Rimé & Schiaratura, 1991) who differ in the way they see
gesture and nonverbal communication.

Freedman (1972, 1977) and Rimé and Schiaratura (1991) maintain that gesturing
merely fills a function of assistance to speech. In other words, these researchers believe
that gesture is helpful for the speaker (not the recipient of the utterance) in order to
organize what they want to say. Gesture, they sustain, supports speech in that it acts as a
place holder for a thought while the speaker is conceptually processing and developing
the final verbal utterance. Butterworth and colleagues (e.g., Butterworth & Beattie, 1978;
Butterworth & Hadar, 1989; Hadar & Butterworth, 1997), and Krauss and colleagues
(e.g., Krauss, Chen, & Chawla, 1996; Krauss, Chen, & Gottesman, 2000; Krauss &
Hadar, 1999) have all examined the relationship between speech and gesture holding
nonverbal communication as a mere aid for lexical retrieval. In other words, in their view, gestures help the speaker find the right words during a pause occurring in the middle of speech, for example. These ideas have sometimes led to the assumption that nonverbal communication has no real value in communication.

**Italian Perspectives**

Examining Italian literature, researchers in the area of gesture and nonverbal communication have also expressed their views on the relationship between speech and gesture. For example, Ricci Bitti (1987) argues that speech and gestures are interdependent. To underline this, he presents the research that has been done regarding gestures that precede speech (preparatory gestures) and gestures that occur with speech. When discussing the autonomous or symbolic types of gestures (those that do not require any accompanying speech), Ricci Bitti states that they are culturally bound. The author makes a list of studies that have been conducted in various cultural groups to illustrate this point. One study mentioned here conducted about Italian symbolic gestures (symbols) is by Isabella Poggi (1983). She looked at a particular Italian gesture of a hand cupped like a purse and of facial expressions accompanying the gesture. This gesture is probably one of the most analyzed Italian gestures, as it is definitely culturally bound to Italy.

Cocchiara (1977) points out that gestures are historically an integral part of oral speech in folklore, especially in storytelling. Gestures are what help us remember what was said. Tribal populations who passed on their stories from generation to generation used storytelling and could remember stories and songs that lasted for days.
Lamedica (1987) discusses a particular type of speech: public speech. In his writings, he underlines the characteristics of speech and gestures. He states that gestures have “a rhythm that is more perceivable” than the rhythm of words in a speech or in a verbal interaction (p. 162). The reasons, he argues, are to be found in the need for “unifying the various argumentations,” and for “catching the spectator’s attention just enough to make him a participant and conscious of the other more superficial rhythmic structure represented by the ‘crescendos’ and by the ‘diminuendos’ of the tone of voice…” (pp. 162–163). Lamedica believes that gestures emulate the rhythm of verbal speech.

**Summary**

Chapter Two has offered the basis of the theoretical framework upon which this study is built, namely Sociocultural Theory (SCT). It started from Vygotsky’s views of SCT and some of his related theories, it moved forward onto the work of other prominent researchers who have continued along similar paths, examining some key concepts which are the basis for this study in the realm of studying gesture usage in a language classroom (such as the role of identity, or how teachers may use prolepsis as a way to invite students into their figured world), and finally it took a close look at theories underlying the relationship between speech and gesture in general and more specifically as related to the Italian language (the language of focus in the current study). Chapter Three takes a step forward and examines the most prominent existing literature on the topics most closely tied to my study, particularly gesture, by examining the literature on this topic from historical, contemporary, and Italian points of view.
CHAPTER THREE

REVIEW OF LITERATURE ON GESTURE

The focus of Chapter Three is to present a review of the most pertinent and prominent literature on gesture. This chapter begins with a historical overview on the interest and attention that gesture has received over the years, starting from the times of Roman philosophers and ending with the latest rebirth of the interest in gesture studies. An emphasis is put on how gestures have been seen and considered throughout history and the researchers whose work have brought this topic to light and have given it its due importance. The second section, which is the majority of this chapter, delineates a review of contemporary studies conducted on gesture and nonverbal behavior, with particular emphasis on studies connected to second- and foreign-language classroom interaction. The studies focus on the relationship between gesture (and other nonverbal behavior), Sociocultural Theory (SCT), and SLA, and they are grouped into eight categories that reflect such relationships. A more thorough description of the organization of this section prefaces the gesture review of literature section. A third and final section presents a review of literature pertaining to Italian gestures. Specifically, this section outlines landmark studies on Italian nonverbal communication, it gives a historical background, it gives an overview of the stereotype associated with Italian gestures, it recounts recorded anecdotal experiences, and it gives an overview of the specific Italian gestures and other nonverbal behaviors formally studied and present in current literature. A summary concludes this chapter.
Historical Overview on Gesture Literature

Early Understanding

Gesture and nonverbal communication has been studied as it pertains to the art of “oratoria” (i.e., public speech) since the earliest Roman philosophers, such as Aristotle and Cicero, used public speech as a way to convey and pass on wisdom (Kendon, 2004a). Public speech and its accompanying gesturing (not to be confused with nonverbal communication used by mimics and actors), was important for anyone who considered himself an educated person. It was, in fact, explicitly taught. Teachers, politicians, priests, and other public figures used public speech as a common practice to communicate with an audience. In fact, nonverbal communication, if learned and used well, was even seen as a way to elevate one’s social status. Quintilian’s work on Roman gestures as they accompany speech, stemming from the first century AD, is one of the best known efforts to address this subject.

The idea of proper gesturing, or “delivery”, as it was known, showing high social status, spread throughout Europe (Kendon, 2004a). In fact, during the 1600s, gesture had become a prominent topic in the areas of art, drama, and rhetoric. Two of the most prominent works on gesture and nonverbal communication stemming from that period were those written by Bonifacio (published in Italy in 1616) and Bulwer (published in England in the 1640s). Bonifacio’s book underlined his main thought that “gesture could be a universal language that could replace the confusion of spoken languages” (Kendon, 2004a, p. 24). Bulwer’s three books on sign language, facial expressions and head movements, and the influence of customs on one’s nonverbal expression, all emphasized his belief that language is found inherently inside of all of us. This idea was added to the
more popular thought that gesture is *per se* a natural, universal language (as opposed to a divinely established one) and gave fuel to debates on the origin of language. The work of two noted researchers stemmed from these philosophical bases: Épée (1776) and Sicard (1800) ideated a French sign language system for deaf and mute people and speculated on the possibility of a universal sign language.

**Foundational Works (1800s and Early 1900s)**

In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries there were four scholars who conspicuously contributed to studying nonverbal communication, gestures in particular: Andrea De Jorio (1832), Edward Tylor (printed in 1865), Garrick Mallery (1881/1972), and Wilhelm Wundt (1921). De Jorio (1832) wrote an ethnographic classic in which he described and interpreted in detail the gestures and body poses characterizing well known pieces of art (e.g., vases, mosaics, frescoes, statues). For his interpretation, De Jorio studied and compared the works of art to the everyday nonverbal modes of communication that were prevalent among Neapolitans during that time. He believed that the current facial and body expressions and gestures used in Naples had been kept and passed on for generations. Two of De Jorio’s main beliefs that appear through his work are that gestures are very much like a language, and that there is a strong connection between their form and their meaning. He states that gestures are the “imitation or similitude of an internal sentiment expressed with external action” (De Jorio, 1832 p. 374). Furthermore, De Jorio explicitly held that Neapolitan nonverbal communication differs from that of other people in Italy, thus portraying a belief in the direct relationship between gesture and culture.
Tylor (1865) also wrote an ethnographic classic in which he answered the question of whether nonverbal communication and other cultural aspects across differing cultures evolve in a similar way due to the contact between such cultures and the consequent spread of cultural characteristics. He also explored whether these nonverbal communication and cultural aspects are due to similar yet independent developments of each separate culture (accounted for through similarities in the human mind). Tylor advocated the latter. He arrived to that conclusion by studying the gestures of Native American sign language and of other populations’ deaf sign language (e.g., monks, German deaf mutes). Tylor believed that gestures are a language, in that they both communicate meaning and use symbolism, and that the two are interdependent. Furthermore, he asserted that a language based on gesture has a universal psychological base, although it may slightly differ in its form among groups at times.

In addition, Mallery (1881/1972) composed a report on American Indian sign language and picture writing in which he sustained that, on the debate on the origin of language, nonverbal communication could have come first and was likely more important, although he seemed to opt for the simultaneous origin of both gestures and voice. Mallery disagreed with some of the common beliefs of the time, such as that the use of nonverbal communication portrayed a person to be a savage, uncultured, or uneducated being. Instead, he explained, “that a common use of gesture depends more upon the sociologic conditions of the speakers than upon the degree of copiousness of their oral speech” (p. 293). Therefore, Mallery’s beliefs seem to go hand-in-hand with those of De Jorio who believed in the strong tie between culture and nonverbal communication.
Finally, Wundt (1973) studied language and gesture as a way to understand the mind. He is regarded by Kendon (2004a) as the originator of what is considered modern experimental psychology. Wundt considered gesture as having originated before spoken language and as an outward expression of internal feelings and emotions. He drew his conclusion through the study of De Jorio’s, Tylor’s and Mallery’s data stemming from Neapolitan gestures and the sign language of American Indians, deaf mutes, and monks. Wundt also provided us with a semiotic categorization of gestures and other forms of nonverbal communication and an illustration of the development and change in their meanings. He states that “gestural communication supplies a model example for the development of language, distinguished by the simplicity and clarity of its phenomena” (1973, p. 149).

**From a Decline to a Rebirth of Interest in Gesture**

In the early twentieth century, gesture and nonverbal communication were grossly underestimated and sometimes even ignored. Kendon (2004a) explains that the main reason for this was that there was no theoretical framework that would support and include nonverbal communication within its realm. Behaviorism and psychoanalysis were two of the prominent areas of study that left no room for consciousness studies; therefore, nonverbal communication was completely left out. In the field of deaf studies, the reasons why nonverbal communication was temporarily abandoned were that gesture (i.e., sign language) was not seen as an actual language and was considered as hindering the teaching of deaf people how to speak, which was the focus of the time.

In the early 1900s, the work of Franz Boas (1914) and Edward Sapir (1927), two cultural anthropologists and linguists, brought attention to the study of nonverbal
communication seen as an important part of overall communicative behavior through their American Indian unwritten language analysis. David Efron (1941/1972) followed suit with an analysis and comparative study of the gestures displayed among Eastern European Jewish and Southern Italian immigrants to the United States. His work underlined the belief that gesture and nonverbal communication are strictly tied to the exposure to a particular society (i.e., cultural tradition).

In 1969, the work of Ekman and Friesen made a contribution (though not appreciated until later) to the study of gesture by developing a classification coding system based on Efron’s (1941/1972) work. The system comprised five categories of nonverbal behavior: emblems (i.e., gestures directly connected to culture), illustrators (i.e., gestures directly connected to speech), facial expressions, regulators (i.e., conversation organizational gestures and other nonverbal behavior), and adaptors (i.e., nonverbal behavior connected to self-, other-, and object- tasks).

The late 1960s marked a renewal of interest in gesture and nonverbal communication studies, especially in relation to speech. The theoretical frameworks that embraced this area of study were those belonging to the fields of linguistics, anthropology, and psychology. There were three main developments that were at the root of this renewed interest: first, the latest interest in discussing the older evolutionary idea that gesture came before speech and the new developments in teaching chimpanzees to sign (Hewes, 1973; Hockett & Ascher, 1964); second, the somewhat consequent and simultaneous renewed significance of sign language theories and studies, especially in terms of a definition of language (Gardner & Gardner, 1969, 1971; Stokoe, 1960); and third, the parting of psychology and linguistics to form two separate fields of study, and
the fresh interest within these newly separated fields in studying the intellect and
cognition and how language and thought are interrelated (Bellugi, 1981; Bronowski &
Bellugi, 1970; Chomsky, 1967). This last development brought about what is commonly
known today as cognitive science, and it was within its theoretical framework that
nonverbal communication and speech came to be studied.

Chomsky (1967) is credited with influencing scholars to think about language in
terms of cognition or “mental apparatus” (Kendon, 2004a, p. 83). His major implication
about the nature versus nurture characteristics of very young children in acquiring
language and grammar gave way to an array of new studies that examined children’s
linguistic behavior (e.g., Brown, 1973) and then infants’ pre-language communication
devices, including gesture (e.g., Bates, 1979). These studies were the basis upon which a
new theory came to fruition: the speculation that speech and gesture shared a common
goal, that of complementing each other in order to communicate something.

Other researchers (Birdwhistell, 1966, 1970; Scheflen, 1965) facilitated the return
of interest in nonverbal communication studies and the connection between gesture and
speech. Their lead brought about a movement that came to similar conclusions as
Chomskian researchers on the partnership of verbal and nonverbal communication
working toward a common mean-forming goal, and this was done by examining the

**Review on Gesture and Second Language Acquisition Research**

In communication, when researchers examine nonverbal aspects as they relate to
Second Language Acquisition (SLA) in second- and foreign-language classroom
interactions, the focus usually lies in the study of gesture. Several studies and theories
have been written on the use of gesture in second language learning contexts (e.g., Goldin-Meadow, 2003; Gullberg, 1998; Lazaraton, 2004; McCafferty, 2002, 2004; McCafferty & Ahmed, 2000). This section reviews some of the most prominent and recent studies in this area, though studies focused on all aspects of nonverbal behavior are also included. The relationship between these studies and theories of SLA in general and the sociocultural approach receive special attention in this review and are pointed out where appropriate. This is not meant to be an all-inclusive review, but rather a representation of the most current or most pertinent existing literature. For examples of other reviews of literature in this area, see Stam and McCafferty (2008), Gullberg (2006), and Roth (2001).

The review is organized around eight major gesture topics as follows: 1) gestures as a developing system; 2) gestures and interlanguage; 3) gestures and crosslinguistic influences; 4) gestures and self-regulation; 5) gestures and linguistic functions; 6) gestures in the social/interactional realm; 7) gestures and L2 comprehension and acquisition; and 8) gestures in the L2 classroom. It is important to point out that the studies included in the review rarely fall solely into a single category, as they may cover several areas of interest. In fact, it should be understood that the eight gesture topics do often overlap. For example, although the section on gestures in the L2 classroom specifically addresses gesture studies conducted in a classroom context, many of the studies listed under the other seven categories also stem from classroom environments, but because they were found to provide significant evidence for other topics, they were not listed under the topic “L2 classroom” header. Therefore, for the purposes of this review, each study is summarized only once under the gesture topic deemed to be the best
fit and in order to provide a balanced review of literature in each category. Studies in each section are ordered by year of publication (or conference presentation) from oldest to most recent. Furthermore, in the event of multiple publications in the same year under the same section, alphabetical order of the authors’ last name is employed. Additionally, in some instances, authors have written similar reports on the same study (e.g., Stam 2006, 2008). In these cases, the studies are reviewed together and are placed in a section of the review according to the first year of publication.

**Gestures as a Developing System**

Several studies have looked at how gestures can be acquired and studied like a language. In particular, they have examined how specific gestures can be understood, learned, and taught (e.g., Allen, 1995; Jungheim, 2006, 2008; Lazaraton, 2004; McCafferty, 2002).

Allen (1995), for example, conducted a study with three groups (experimental, no-treatment, and comparison group) of language students at the university level studying French as a foreign language. The purpose of the study was to establish whether teaching emblematic gestures (i.e., gestures that have a socially well-known direct translation into words) together with accompanying French expressions increases retention and long-term recall. The findings showed that, generally, all groups decreased in their recall abilities. Nevertheless, the results also showed that the teaching and learning of emblematic gestures simultaneously with French expressions did assist in having greater recall. In fact, the two groups (experimental and comparison) who actually saw the gestures being taught performed with a higher degree of success in recalling the French expressions. Specifically, the findings indicated that the experimental group did show retention and
long-term recall (at least greater than the other two groups) through the learning and use of gestures. The no-treatment group did not see the gestures accompanying the French expressions and therefore did not show increased retention and long-term recall. Finally, the comparison group did not learn the gestures but did notice them and forgot fewer expressions than the no-treatment group.

Allen (1995) felt that her study contributed to the field of foreign language teaching in three ways. First, the study provides evidence of the positive results stemming from the practice of gesture usage in teaching. Second, the study offers support of the notion that gestures promote authenticity of the language teaching context. Third, the study gives backing to the practice of keeping testing procedures in congruence with teaching practices and context. The author concluded that, in order to understand mental representations, which is the means to assist language students in the process of internalization, teachers should employ the use of gesture in their teaching and testing. Allen stated, “The inclusion of gestures in the encoding environment provide [sic] an elaborated context, thus causing a greater depth of processing and a more durable mental representation” (p. 527).

This relates to McCafferty’s (2002) case study, which is based on his 1998a data collection (see section on gestures in the social/interactional realm, below, for further details), but including additional data collected for the later study. In the later study, McCafferty examines the use of gesture and the creation of zones of proximal development (ZPDs) for second language learning. The purpose was to examine the connection between Vygotsky’s ZPD within an activity theory framework and gesture (by itself and alongside speech) in second language learning and teaching contexts. The
participants (i.e., a Taiwanese English as a Second Language (ESL) student and a native
English speaking research assistant) and data collection in this study (i.e., videotaped
conversations between the participants) were the same as in McCafferty’s 1998a study.

McCafferty (2002) grouped the findings into five groups: 1) Gesture and Lexical
Comprehension: The student participant imitated his conversation partners’ employment
of metaphoric and emblematic gestures when struggling with lexical search. 2) Illustrators: The research assistant began to employ the use of iconic and illustrative
gestures (i.e., gestures aimed at facilitating understanding during conversation) to teach
the student participant new concepts/vocabulary and to facilitate the conversation. 3) Environmental Affordances: Both the student participant and the researcher used gestures
(mostly deictics) to point to and include elements of the physical environment
surrounding them and sometimes even beyond. 4) Imitation: The student participant
showed ample examples of imitation (i.e., he imitated gestures initiated by the research
assistant) to facilitate and assure understanding in their conversations. What is interesting
to notice is that even the research assistant showed examples of imitation (i.e., he
imitated gestures initiated by the student participant). 5) Synchrony: The participants
showed examples of synchrony (i.e., they mirrored each other’s gestures and posture to
create unity and harmony with each other) together with imitation.

Based on these findings and building on Allen’s (1995) work, it is possible to
conclude that second language learners use gestures, in particular illustrators, to ensure
understanding on the part of the hearer in the L2. In fact, the frequency of the use of this
kind of gestures in the student participant showed his level of commitment and
engagement in making himself understood in the conversation. Furthermore, the findings
show that the participants used the environment (and the gestures they used to refer to aspects of it) to assist them in the comprehension of each other in their conversations. Moreover, these findings underline the connection of the ZPD to L2 learning and gestures through the creation of intersubjectivity and evidence of transformation of the participants. Additionally, the results of this study underline the collaborative and co-constructive nature of the ZPD, as both participants imitated gestures initiated by the other. Finally, the findings, especially the fact that the tutor mirrored the student (and not only the other way around), imply the effort undergone by both participants to establish a more equal ground upon which to interact and develop their relationship (in physical and psychological terms). Thus, the connection to intersubjectivity and the ZPD finds ample ground here for expansion.

Having established that the practice of using gesture in teaching provides positive classroom results (Allen, 1995) and applying gesture usage specifically to the ZPD for the creation of a collaborative L2 learning environment (McCafferty, 2002), Lazaraton (2004) conducted a microanalytic inquiry of the gesture and speech used during vocabulary explanations of one ESL teacher. The teacher participant was an ESL teacher in an Intensive English Proficiency grammar class and was connected to an ESL Master’s program in a large Midwestern university. She was from Japan and had five years of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching experience in Japan and one year of ESL teaching experience in the U.S. The student participants (Korean, Saudi Arabian, and of other unspecified nationalities) stemmed from three Level 4 (of 7) Intensive English Proficiency grammar classes taught by the teacher participant. As with McCafferty’s
(2002) data collection, the participants were videotaped during three focus-on-form lessons.

The research questions for this study inquired on the role of teacher gestures and other nonverbal behaviors in vocabulary explanations (in a focus-on-form grammar class) and on the role these teacher gestures play in the vocabulary explanation sequences. As with Allen (1995) and McCafferty (2002), Lazaraton (2004) found that the teacher participant displayed gesture usage and other nonverbal behavior. Lazaraton (2004) made notes that these events took place during unplanned vocabulary explanations of 18 lexical items (mainly action verbs). Often, it was the gestures themselves (and not the spoken words) that conveyed the actual explanations of the lexical items; other times, they reinforced what was being said. The author excluded that the gestures and nonverbal behavior displayed by the teacher was compensatory in nature (i.e., that she was using gestures to make up for missing words).

The research concluded that gestures and other nonverbal behavior are forms of input to classroom L2 learners. In fact, these gestures and other nonverbal behavior need to be considered as a significant aspect in classroom-based SLA research. Lazaraton (2004) states:

Although this study cannot claim that the nonverbal behavior ‘mattered’ for the learners, it certainly demonstrates that nonverbal behavior is a fundamental aspect of [the teacher’s] pedagogical repertoire that must be taken into account when ‘input’ itself is of interest. That is, the data reinforced the claim that there is a fundamental relationship between speech and gesture in face-to-face interaction. (p. 107)
Lazaraton (2004) acknowledges one gap in the study: there is no student feedback on whether the teacher’s nonverbal behaviors assisted them in comprehending explanations or if they understood the explanations at all.

With the notion that gesture usage in the classroom was an important element of a teacher’s tools, Jungheim (2006), and later Jungheim (2008), conducted two separate studies in Japan. The first involved a group of Japanese as a second language learners and a group of native Japanese speakers, all at university level. The aim of the Jungheim’s two studies was to establish whether the two groups would differ in their understanding, usage, and ease of interpretation of Japanese refusal gestures, and the first study particularly focused on one typical and widely known Japanese refusal hand gesture. Generally, the hope was to gain insight into the difficulty of learning the gestures of a foreign language. The results were similar in both studies, showing that native speakers were more successful in the first two aspects of the research question (understanding and usage), while there was no significant difference in their ease of interpretation (i.e., they all rated their understanding as high). Thus, Jungheim (2006) concluded that learning to understand and use gestures, even the most culturally widespread ones, may prove to be a difficult task for language learners. He also pointed out that, although gesture use is not an essential skill (meaning that, in his view, learning to communicate orally in a foreign language has priority over learning to use appropriate gestures), gestures are still an important aspect of learning a language, as “inappropriate use or insufficient understanding can be a problem for the learner who is trying to communicate in the real world, regardless of whether gestures were addressed formally in that learner’s classroom” (p. 141).
Jungheim’s second study (2008) focused on two native and two nonnative Japanese speakers who were observed in order to analyze visual attention to refusal gestures using eye-tracking devices. This study used the same data collection methods as the first. Findings for this part of the study underlined that students showed fixation on particular gestures, indicating cognitive difficulty. Also, in this part of the study, students did not show any gesture usage, although that might have been a result of having to wear eye-tracking devices. Overall, Jungheim felt that the results provided evidence that authentic video and animation “can be a rich source for learning speech acts, as well as their accompanying gestures” (p. 180).

Allen (1995), McCafferty (2002), Lazaraton (2004), and Jungheim (2006, 2008), therefore, establish the positive effect to varying degrees that incorporating gesture and nonverbal communication into a curriculum can have. All of these studies contribute to instituting gesture as a developing system in that gestures are shown to be an authentic and helpful part of learning and teaching a language. Thus, gesture and language go hand in hand.

Gestures and Interlanguage

Various research has studied how gestures develop through similar cognitive functions as language. For example, studies have examined the role of gestures in the contexts of interlanguage, for instance in private speech.

McCafferty (1998b), for example, sought out to discover whether nonverbal forms of expression (principally gestures, but also gaze and body posture) function in a self-regulatory manner when they occur with the use of private speech (i.e., vocalized forms of speech for the self that function metacognitively to help the learner plan, guide,
and monitor a course of activity). McCafferty (1998b) also wanted to discover whether these nonverbal forms of expression contribute to self-regulation in other ways. The participants were advanced and intermediate Intensive English Proficiency students at a major U.S. university. All subjects had a similar length of exposure to American culture and language. The data were gathered through a narrative recall and a picture narration.

The research uncovered that nonverbal elements (with beats as those most frequently used) were found to illuminate the private speech they accompanied. Furthermore, gestures were found to accompany all forms of object-regulation and verbal forms of other-regulation, but not forms of self-regulation (other than nonverbal forms possibly associated with inner speech, such as nodding and shaking one’s head). McCafferty (1998b) also discovered that gestures were found in and of themselves (that is, with no verbalization), to act in a self-regulatory capacity after brief pauses, implying a possible connection to inner speech. This study suggests possible cross-cultural and proficiency differences for the use of self-regulatory nonverbal forms. In fact, the Japanese participants used more gestures in conjunction with private speech in six of the seven gesture categories observed in this study (deictics were the exception). Intermediate students used more gestures in conjunction with private speech (they were more object-regulated and other-regulated) compared to the advanced students. Overall, a strong connection between cognition and affective/volitional concerns was brought out (following McNeill’s, 1992, and Vygotsky’s, 1962, 1978 beliefs), and learners’ strategic efforts (i.e., learning a second language) were demonstrated to be of an embodied nature.
Gestures and Crosslinguistic Influences

Other research has focused on the relationship of gestures and crosslinguistic influences (i.e., L1 to L2 transfer), for instance thinking for speaking (e.g., Kellerman & Van Hoof, 2003; Negueruela, Lantolf, Rehn Jordan, & Gelabert, 2004; Stam, 2006, 2008; Yoshioka, 2008; Yoshioka & Kellerman, 2006), as well as gesture prevalence in L1 versus L2.

Kellerman and Van Hoof (2003) studied the use of gestures during motion events descriptions, specifically path gestures. Three groups of participants were involved in this study: one group comprised native English speakers, one included native Dutch speakers (who were also L2 English learners), and one consisted of native Spanish speakers (who were also L2 English learners). Their results pointed out that there are differing language-specific gestural patterns, and that these patterns often transfer from an L1 to an L2. These results are in contrast with other similar studies on the gestures associated with motion events (e.g., Stam, 2006; Negueruela et al., 2004). As such, Kellerman and Van Hoof (2003) suggested not to underestimate the importance of teaching/learning gestures in second language acquisition (SLA) “because gestures may reveal L1-based thinking patterns not detectable in otherwise fluent and correct L2 speech. Consequently, we should reflect carefully on what it means to ‘become bilingual’” (p. 251).

Negueruela et al. (2004) took this one step further by conducting a study meant to extend (not replicate) Stam’s (2001) work. The research question of their study asked whether advanced L2 speakers shift toward an L2 thinking for speaking (i.e., thinking that occurs simultaneously with the speaking process) pattern or whether they rely on their L1 pattern as evidenced in the gesture–speech interface. In order to achieve this
goal, these authors focused on examining motion verbs and accompanying gestures in both the English and Spanish languages (because of the differences in how these languages form motion verbs—English being a satellite-framed language, and Spanish being a verb-framed language). There were twelve participants in the study: three L2 Spanish (L1 English) speakers, three L2 English (L1 Spanish) speakers, three monolingual English speakers, and three monolingual Spanish speakers. All participants were audio- and videotaped while they constructed a narrative (in English or in Spanish) based on a story with no text. Only gestures related to motion events were analyzed.

The study found that, in general, L2 speakers (even those at an advanced level) rely on their internalized L1 TFS patterns when using gesture/speech combinations to portray motion verbs. This was true even for Spanish L1 English L2 speakers who could have adopted their L2 manner verbs to their benefit. Negueruela et al. (2004) commented on the fact that the L2 speakers for the most part maintained their L1 gesture patterns when narrating in their L2: “high levels of verbal proficiency do not necessarily reflect the ability to think through the L2” (p. 132). The authors underlined two mistaken ideas: 1) “that improvement in verbal proficiency will result in shifts in TFS” and 2) “that one cannot be a proficient user of a language unless and until one has modified one’s TFS” (pp. 138–139). The authors commented on the rarity (though not impossibility) of L2 learners to shift their TFS from their L1 to their L2. They wrote, citing McCafferty & Ahmed (2000) and Pavlenko and Lantolf (2000), “We would…expect that those undergoing immersion experiences…would be under more pressure to adapt to their new circumstances and thus be more likely to reorganize their inner speech/habitus than would classroom foreign language learners” (p. 142).
Stam (2006), and later Stam (2008), reiterates this point in a study involving one group of native Spanish speakers, one group of native English speakers, and two groups of intermediate and advanced ESL learners who were native Spanish speakers, all of whom were university students. The purpose of the first study was to assess how native Spanish speakers who are learning English use gestures (specifically, path gestures) in reference to their TFS about motion events while retelling the story of a Tweety Bird cartoon video. Motion events, in particular path, in Spanish and English use different combinations of speech and gestures because of their differences in formation (i.e., Spanish uses path verbs in speech and gestures, while English uses satellites in speech and satellites, verbs plus satellites, ground noun phrases, and verbs in gestures).

The results of the first study (Stam, 2006) showed that even when speaking with correct English grammar and proficient fluency in their L2 and even though both English language learner groups showed an increase of gestures that modeled their L2, the subjects demonstrated that they kept and used their L1 TFS patterns. Stam attested that this “is not a gesture–speech mismatch, but rather a phenomenon that frequently occurs with learners who study a language formally” (p. 166). Stam argued for a need to expose language learners to more interactional opportunities with native speakers besides attending their formal classroom lessons.

The second study, Stam (2008), focused on the native Spanish speakers learning English as a second language and on the native English speakers only. Furthermore, this study added a question about what gestures tell us about SLA that speech alone cannot convey. The results of the second study (Stam 2008) were similar to those of the 2006 study in that they reflected both L1 and L2 TFS patterns concerning path gestures in the
native Spanish speakers who were learners of English as a second language. Furthermore, Stam (2008) proposed that in order to assess an L2 learner’s proficiency, both oral language and gestures should be examined and taken into account. She stated, “Learners’ gestures reveal not only what they are thinking but how they are thinking. Looking at learners’ gestures and speech can give us a clearer picture of their proficiency in their L2 than looking at speech alone” (p. 253).

Similarly in purpose to Stam’s two studies, Yoshioka and Kellerman (2006) and Yoshioka (2008) examined native Japanese speakers and native Dutch speakers learning Japanese as a foreign language in a Dutch university. The purpose of these studies was to explore how the Japanese learners introduced ground reference in both speech and gesture while narrating a story compared to native speakers of both languages (Dutch being a satellite language and Japanese being a verb-framed language). Through a cross-linguistic analysis, findings in the first study (Yoshioka & Kellerman, 2006) indicated that speech and gesture are interconnected in a speaker’s L1 and in a speaker’s L2 as well. Specifically, the group of native Japanese speakers demonstrated a preference for communicating ground reference in both their speech and gestures, unlike the Japanese learners group. Based on this first finding, the authors concluded that, “These parallel findings in the two sets of data offer support for the view that speech and gesture form a single system where meaning is conveyed in a multimodal manner” (p. 191). Finally, the later study found that the group of Japanese learners, similarly to the findings by Stam (2006), showed patterns of L1 in both their speech and gesture usage. Yoshioka (2008) explained these findings by saying that ground reference gestures are not compensatory in nature (therefore this explanation is ruled out), but perhaps these gestures are used for
the benefit of the listener (to enhance comprehension) and/or the speaker (for spatial organizational purposes).

**Gestures and Self-Regulation**

Embodiment and self-regulation, for instance inter- vs. intra-personal characteristics and internalization, is another area of interest in the study of gestures (e.g., McCafferty, 2004, 2006, 2008a; Negueruela & Lantolf, 2008; Platt & Brooks, 2008).

To begin, McCafferty (2004) examined space for cognition in the context of gesture and L2 learning. The questions asked in this article were whether the spatio-motoric channel of iconic (and other) usages of gestures in the L2 participant reflected a way for him to help himself acquire the L2 and whether the gesture usage of the L2 participant reflected intrapersonal and/or interpersonal characteristics (i.e., is he helping himself internally or is he trying to help his communication with another person?). The participants and data collection were the same as described for the 1998a and 2002 studies.

The researcher found that the research assistant’s gestures were frequent and took on mainly an illustrative role to his speech, though the gestures were also vague at times and not always identical to the content or meaning of speech. He also took cues from the L2 participant and imitated his gestures in order to ensure understanding and to teach him new words. The research assistant was definitely fully engaged in the conversation and amplified very much the degree of intersubjectivity between him and the L2 participant. In short, the research assistant’s gesture usage reflected interpersonal characteristics. The student participant used iconic gestures, which assisted him in the “creation of a Zone of Proximal Development,” or, as McCafferty termed it, a form of “distributed cognition.”
Furthermore, McCafferty felt that in his use of gestures, especially the abstract deictic ones, the L2 participant “mapped out an organizing principle of the discourse” which “helped him to orchestrate speech production in the L2 and to actionally structure the discourse” (p. 161). In other words, the participant was “gesturing-for-thinking,” the process of using gestures to solve a problem in L2 production. Finally, the student participant’s use of beats exemplified the embodied perspective of the participant in relation to the language, in particular on emphasizing syllables and words. It also illustrated the “self-regulatory function” of beats in that they become mediational tools in the process of “externalizing the linguistic structure of the L2” (p. 162).

Another important finding dealt with the interpersonal vs. intrapersonal concepts. McCafferty felt that the evidence presented in this study suggests that some of the gesture usage produced by the participants was geared toward interpersonal goals, such as clearer communication and understanding. Nevertheless, the author argued strongly about the presence of an intrapersonal dimension, as suggested by the findings of this study (e.g., abstract deictic gestures). In fact, he felt that some of the interpersonal data was evidence of a transformation that took place along the conversation from an interpersonal to an intrapersonal dimension. McCafferty nevertheless explained that he did not view this intrapersonal dimension as “the first development of this process; rather, I argue that it re-emerged as a form of mediation in connection to learning the new language” (p. 162). In fact, at times, both dimensions (interpersonal and intrapersonal) were simultaneously there.

In his 2006 study, McCafferty examined gesture and the materialization of second language prosody. This study had one main question: how does the use of beat gestures in
conjunction with speech help SLA? (The participants for this study were those who participated in the 1998a study, and the data sources were the same as those in the 2002 study.) The data were analyzed to find occurrences of beat gestures use together with L2 speech production on the part of the L2 participant.

The researcher found that the initial instances of beat gesture usage to underline syllables (especially the ones that did not reflect a correct syllabification of English words) suggested that the L2 participant was trying to find and concretize the correct rhythm of the English language through the pulsation of syllabic beats. Thus, the L2 participant was likely engaged in an intrapersonal, self-regulatory function to mediate SLA. Furthermore, in later instances of beat gestures, the L2 participant showed a decrease in beat production. In fact, the L2 participant seemed more interested in his lexical choices (he used intonation to stress words rather than gestures) and communication with the other participant (i.e., interpersonal realm), thus exemplifying “a shift in metalinguistic focus” (p. 205).

The author felt that the importance of learning the rhythm of a second language is what makes embodied processes a vital and important part of SLA. Beat gesture usage (such as in this study) is an example of such embodiment. Also, the (up-and-down and back-and-forth) beat movements employed by the participant in this study illustrated the role of gesture as “visual imagery” in the SLA process (p. 206). McCafferty explained:

This mapping of gesture onto linguistic structure was not only a means of externalizing the phenomena that [the participant] was trying to gain control over but also provided him a ‘material’ basis for a conceptual foundation as part of the process of internalization. (p. 207)
Finally, McCafferty suggested that the SLA field should “keep in mind that the mind and the body, the mental and the material world all interact with one another on the path to learning” (p. 207).

McCafferty (2008a) then looked at gesture, metaphor, and internalization as material foundations for SLA. The main question asked in his study was aimed at discovering what gestures of the abstract tell us about whether and how much of an L2 becomes an integrated aspect of cognition (i.e., internalized). The original participants and data sources for this study were the same as those in McCafferty and Ahmed’s (2000) paper. Nevertheless, for the purposes of this study, only one participant was examined. This was the only participant in the naturalistic group of Japanese speakers who demonstrated the use of a conceptual metaphor that matched a native English speaker (monolingual group). This participant was a Japanese woman who had been married to an American and had been living in the U.S. for 16 years.

The researcher found that there were three gestures of the abstract that were repeated (only slightly differently) that were at the basis of the participant’s underlying thoughts being communicated about marriage. 1) a “grasping” gesture accompanying the word “goal;” 2) a gesture accompanying the words “work,” “make,” “effort,” and “tight family;” and 3) an “A” shaped gesture (pyramid-like) accompanying the word “together.” Occasionally, gestures 2 and 3 occurred without the accompanying words or with words that did not portray the meaning of the gestures. Also, these same two gestures complemented one another and occurred sequentially at times.

The participants’ gestures gave insight into the fact that she seemed to have transformed her thinking, thus using gestures on an intrapersonal level (and not just on an
interpersonal one). In fact, she used gestures that were unlike any of her fellow citizens and that reflected those of native English speakers. McCafferty explained, “the participant may have re-conceptualized ways of being in the world, perhaps as a result of her long exposure to American language culture or a strong affinity to the culture, despite her difficulties with English” (pp. 62–63). Her gestures further suggested that she may have been using them to compensate for the obvious language gap. In McCafferty’s words, “gesture was … the primary vehicle for communication” (p. 62), thus exemplifying self-regulation. Finally, the concretization of the metaphors used by the participant to communicate the notions of “building up” a marriage provided evidence of the way she conceptualized an ideal marriage (much in the same way as an American would) and that she used materialization to promote understanding in her communication.

To gain further insight into the construction of meaning in an L2 Negueruela and Lantolf (2008) conducted a study based on their 2004 data collection. The authors pointed out that the aim of the current study was to examine gesture–speech synchronicity. The particular gestures of interest in this study were deictic (i.e., pointing) and iconic (i.e., pictorial) gestures. Results showed that L2 speakers used deictic and iconic gestures in a redundant manner (i.e., duplicating speech rather than co-expressing with it), compared to L1 speakers who did not show this phenomenon, “and therefore seem to add little additional information to the meaning conveyed through speech” (p. 95). The researchers, citing McCafferty (2004), argued that “the redundancy reflects the self-regulatory function of gestures, whereby the speaker uses gestures to support the thinking process” (p. 101). The authors added that perhaps this finding was also due to the pressure the L2 speakers felt in their communicative task. Furthermore, L2 speakers
showed a mismatch (or asynchronicity) between gestures and speech, thus breaking the speech/gesture functional system (see also Negueruela et al., 2004). The authors explained this fact by illustrating that “the problem for the speaker is not finding a word in their L1 but in accessing an equivalent term in their L2” (p. 101).

Platt and Brooks (2008) followed this with their study aimed at understanding the role of embodiment as self-regulation in L2 task performance. The participants in the study were two pairs of beginning Swahili learners who were observed while undertaking problem-solving tasks. The results emphasized how the participants used cognitive, linguistic, and bodily (i.e., embodiment) resources, as well as prior knowledge and task affordances, in order to accomplish their tasks in the environment in which they participated. More specifically, the participants used gestures, gaze, other body movements, and physical contact with task material in order to reach self-regulation. In turn, self-regulation aided them in progressing through their tasks more easily and with fewer mediational means. The authors stated that “the task participants’ embodied activity fulfills important regulatory and internalization functions in the overall execution and accomplishment of the assigned task” and that “These functions, having been accomplished, indicate that L2 development has taken place” (p. 66).

**Gestures and Linguistic Functions**

Gesture researchers have scrutinized the functions of gestures in assisting learners in acquiring an L2. In fact, they have observed how, in such contexts of SLA, gestures take on linguistic functions, such as word elicitation, co-reference, lexical search, fluency, time in space mapping, and spatial anchors for reference tracking (e.g., Gullberg, 2006, 2008; Tabensky, 2008).
For example, Gullberg (2006) conducted a study based on an earlier data collection (Gullberg 2003) and looked at how discourse is handled, specifically with regard to gestures, reference tracking, and communication strategies in early L2. The specific purpose of the study was to investigate whether the over-explicit nature of maintained reference in L2 speech is a communication strategy dependent on co-occurring disambiguating gestures, and whether those learner gestures that accompany over-explicit referential expressions are an interactionally motivated communication strategy to disambiguates speech. (Anaphoric linking or reference tracking is defined by the author as “information about entities (people and objects), time, space, and actions,” p. 156). The researcher examined these two questions by manipulating the visible access between the interlocutors.

The participants in this study were Dutch foreign language learners of French who had all studied French as an FL. None had ever lived anywhere where French was the L1. The data stemmed from videotaped gestures and speech obtained through four story retellings on the part of the participants in both their L1 and L2 under two visibility conditions. A visibility effect analysis was conducted.

There were four main findings stemming from this study. The first was a replication of a finding in the previous study that showed that “in early L2 speech, maintained reference is more often expressed with lexical [noun phrases] than in L1. These same lexical [noun phrases] are also over-marked by anaphoric gestures in L2” (p. 183). The second finding showed that changes in visibility did not influence and change L2 speech, therefore dismantling the belief that the presence of disambiguating gestures is key for over-explicit maintained reference. The third finding explicated that over-
explicit cohesive gesture usage in L2 is not strictly tied to whether or not the addressee can see those gestures. In fact, the results provided no significant difference in anaphoric gesturing in both visibility contexts. Finally, the fourth finding emphasized that the form and articulation of anaphoric gestures is strictly related to whether or not the addressee can see those gestures, thus implying the importance of anaphoric gestures “for interactional and possibly strategic purposes” (p. 184). In conclusion, then, the researcher found that the over-explicit properties of L2 speech are not motivated by interactional strategic concerns and that the presence of anaphoric gestures, though not interactionally motivated, influenced their spatial articulation.

Gullberg (2008) helps with this, writing a chapter that answers what L2 learners’ gestures tell us about L2 grammar. The study was divided into two sections. The participants in the first section of the study were a native Swedish, a native French, a native Dutch, an L2 Swedish, and an L2 French speakers. The L2 speakers learned their L2 language in formal settings and had never lived in a place where their L2 was predominantly spoken. The data were gathered through story retellings on the part of the L2 learners who retold printed cartoon stories in their L1 and L2 to native speakers of the languages used. Gullberg found that gestural reference tracking (specifically, maintained reference) is different between L1 and L2, in that it follows the difference between L1 and L2 spoken language: they are both over-explicit. Furthermore, Gullberg noticed that L2 gesture reflected L2 speech rather than L1 gesture patterns, “suggesting that the gestural expression of cohesion is related to an alternation of form rather than to the discourse status of a referent” (p. 194). Thus, the author felt that we can consider the combination of speech and gesture “as an achievement strategy for grammar” (p. 195).
The participants in the second section of the study were 16 native Dutch speakers learning French as a foreign language observed during story retellings (see above) conducted under two visibility conditions (i.e., the participants could or could not see each other). Gullberg (2008) found no difference in the frequency of the use of maintained reference in speech and in gesture usage under the two visibility conditions. Nevertheless, the author found differences in the gesture articulations between the two visibility conditions, especially with regard to locus. Gullberg concluded that the reasons for using gestures in an L2 go beyond the solving of lexical problems. In fact, she stated, “This study has shown that there is a very tight link between grammatical development in speech and behavior in gesture” (p. 204).

Looking, therefore, into further understanding expository (i.e., non-narrative) discourse in an L2 classroom, Tabensky (2008) asked whether there are differences in gesture types between expository (i.e., prepared) vs. interactional (i.e., spontaneous) speech and what is the relationship between language and gesture use during expository discourse. The participants in this study were Australian university students learning French as a foreign language who were observed while giving prepared presentations on aspects of the contemporary French society (expository discourse). They were then observed as they were engaged in an open discussion with the rest of the class immediately following each presentation (interactional conversation).

Results indicated that during the expository discourse, two types of gestures were predominant: presentational gestures (i.e., gestures that mainly present the utterance to the listeners) and representational gestures (i.e., content illustrators). The first kind was far more frequent than the second, which was different from what was expected. In fact,
the author would have predicted to find presentational gestures more frequently in interaction than exposition and would have expected to find representational gestures with similar proportions in both types of discourse. The author explained these findings by stating that presentational gestures were predominant in exposition because “this category of gestures is not dependent on interlocutors but on recipients,” thus implying the crucial role played by the audience even in what might seem like a monologue (p. 309). Another finding suggested that representational gestures grew in numbers during the interaction after the expository discourse. Tabensky (2008), citing Gullberg (2003), suggested that this was likely because representational gestures “are tied to speech production problems frequent in an L2, such as sentence structuring” and because “they are used to underline the intended meaning, following the hyper-clarity principle applied by most L2 speakers” (p. 310).

**Gestures in the Social/Interactional Realm**

An important aspect of gesture studies as it relates to SCT is the interest in how gestures (together with language) facilitate interaction (e.g., McCafferty, 1998a; McCafferty & Ahmed, 2000; Olsher, 2008).

The research begins with McCafferty (1998a), who conducted a longitudinal study of the appropriation of gestures of the abstract by L2 learners. The purpose of the research was to find out whether L2 learners who are exposed to naturalistic and/or mixed contexts (living and/or studying the language where it is the dominant language in use) appropriate nonverbal forms, and whether there are changes over time in the use of gestures of the abstract (especially container gestures) in these learners (especially because Chinese speakers – see participant description below – form container gestures
palms-down and Americans form them palms-up). The student participant in this study was an intermediate English as a Second Language (ESL) student at UNLV from Taiwan, new to the U.S. and Las Vegas and who had been in the country for only four weeks at the beginning of data collection. There was also a research assistant who was initially going to videotape without any interaction with the participant(s), but who also became a participant in the study. He was an experienced ESL/English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teacher who had taught at the postsecondary level both in Asia and in the U.S. The data were gathered from weekly video taped sessions of conversations between the two participants.

Findings underlined that the Taiwanese student did show gesture usage, and he did show a change in his gesture usage. Specifically, the student’s increased usage of iconic gestures was, in accordance with Vygotskian theory, “a form of object-regulation in the sense that there is an externalization of the language structure” (p. 12). In fact, as McCafferty pointed out, the student was clearly trying to make sure that his audience (i.e., the graduate student) could understand what he was trying to say. There are similarities among how L2 speakers learn to use iconic gestures and how children learn to do the same in their L1 (see McNeill, 1992). However, it is still unclear whether there is also a similar cognitive change in L2 learners like in L1 children. McCafferty exemplified his question by wondering whether L2 learners are simply plugging in new forms of gestures to old ones, or “if the use of different nonverbal forms also leads to a difference in the conception of self, for example” (p. 14). In this latter case, then, “the nature of interpersonal communication would also perhaps be different” (p. 14).
McCafferty and Ahmed (2000) then collaborated in a study that examined the appropriation of gestures of the abstract by L2 learners. The purpose was to discover whether exposure to a second language naturalistically (i.e., in the country where the L2 is predominantly spoken) and instructionally (i.e., in a foreign language classroom) leads to the appropriation of gestures of the abstract (i.e., metaphoric gestures that can be bounded or unbounded container gestures, gestures that split space, or beats) and whether there is a transformation of inner speech in relation to gesture. There were 36 participants in this study, from four different language contexts: 1) 8 advanced Japanese ESL speakers with L2 learning experience in a primarily naturalistic context; 2) 10 advanced Japanese ESL speakers with L2 learning experience in primarily formal instruction contexts; 3) 12 native speakers of American English (mostly monolingual); and 4) 8 native speakers of Japanese (mostly monolingual). The data were gathered through videotaped conversations on the topic of marriage, as this had the potential of being a personal topic of interest to all participants, with cultural ties, cultural differences, and cultural metaphors associated to it.

The general results of this study were that the group of naturalistic learners performed gesturally similarly to the native English speakers, and the group of instructional learners performed gesturally similarly to the native Japanese speakers. Data were found to include unbounded container gestures, bounded container gestures, splitting the gesture space gestures, beats, gestures accompanying verbal metaphors, and other nonverbal elements (e.g., shoulder shrugs, posture, head nodding, touching, facial expressions). In answering the research question for this study, the authors attested that it seems that exposure to a second language naturalistically does lead to the appropriation
of some gestures of the second language/culture. The authors did caution that because the participants in the naturalistic group were Japanese, and because their own native culture is geared toward the teaching of nonverbal communication (e.g., bows), this factor may have had influence over the fact that the participants seemed to have acquired much of the nonverbal communication skills of the native English speakers. In fact, the authors stated that “nonverbal elements in general proved to be a significant aspect of acculturation for them” (p. 217). Furthermore, the authors felt strongly about evidence of transformation of inner speech in relation to gesture in their data. They stated:

it seems unlikely that the naturalistic learners had simply adopted different gestural forms to represent established concepts without any change in ‘sense’, given the interconnectedness of thought, language, and gesture… in addition to the relative opaqueness of meaning for some of the metaphoric gestures in the study. Rather, our belief is that the high degree of functional English proficiency of these people together with their level of experience within cultural settings created grounds for remediation. (p. 217)

To understand further elements of gesture usage in linguistic functions, Olsher (2008) sought to understand whether gesturally enhanced repeats of lexical items in the repair turn (i.e., instances of problems hearing or understanding prior talk identified by questions such as “what?” or “huh?”) are a communication strategy or a cognitive language learning tool in spontaneous talk. The data sources of this study were video recordings of the interaction between three English language learners as they were carrying out a collaborative task (design and create a large, annotated map). The results indicated that language learners paid attention to both language and gesture as input, and
they also provided feedback indicating that the message was understood so the interaction could continue. Olsher suggested two factors that may aid language learning: 1) the use of nonverbal cues (i.e., embodiment) in conjunction with oral production and 2) the language learner’s level of engagement in a conversation in trying to understand the speaker(s) and resolve a problem of hearing or understanding.

**Gestures and Second Language Comprehension and Acquisition**

Gestures have been found to enhance language learning in terms of proficiency. The use of gestures on the part of both teachers and students can assist L2 learners in comprehension and acquisition (e.g., Kida, 2008; Sime, 2006, 2008; Sueyoshi and Hardison, 2005).

Sueyoshi and Hardison (2005) conducted a study that examined the role of gestures and facial cues (e.g., lip movements) in second language listening comprehension. The study involved 42 low-intermediate and advanced ESL students at the university level who were asked to watch a videotape of a native English speaker delivering a lecture on ceramics. The participants viewing the tape received audiovisual input (including gestures and facial cues), audiovisual input only, or audio only. All ESL learners were also asked to complete a multiple-choice assignment to assess comprehension of the lecture, and they were given a questionnaire to explore the students’ attitudes toward visual cues.

Generally, the results of the study showed that the participants who received visual input during their first task had a higher rate of comprehension compared to those participants who did not receive visual cues. This was true for both the low-intermediate and the advanced proficiency levels. Specifically, the advanced students showed a greater
level of comprehension when they were showed audiovisual and facial cues, while the low-intermediate students showed a higher comprehension level when they were showed audiovisual, gestures, and facial cues. Finally, results from the questionnaire demonstrated a positive outlook on the role of gesture and facial cues, thus underlining the importance of face-to-face interactions that include such nonverbal behavior.

Sime (2006), and later Sime (2008) looked qualitatively discovering how EFL learners view their teachers’ gestures in the classroom, especially in terms of functions. Sime (2006) conducted interviews with twenty-two adult EFL learners of differing nationalities participating in an EFL summer course in Scotland. The results revealed that, for the most part, the language learners in these studies valued their teachers’ gestures and considered them as essential to their language learning process. Specifically, the results found that these foreign language learners categorized their teachers’ gestures and other nonverbal behavior into cognitive, emotional, and organizational types. The first kind, cognitive, grouped those gestures that stimulated their language learning process. The second kind, emotional, indicated gestures that conveyed their teachers’ attitudes and emotions. Finally, the third kind, organizational, specified those gestures that were aimed at managing classroom functionality.

Sime (2006) further noticed that the students in her study used their background knowledge in order to be able to interpret and understand their teachers’ gestures and nonverbal behavior. In particular, she noticed that these students applied their background knowledge in how a teacher’s individual personality, goals, culture, etc. can affect their nonverbal behavior, as well as background knowledge in how a setting (i.e.,
interaction, teaching styles, etc.) and social rules and conventions can affect it. Through her study, Sime concluded:

it was clear that while learners’ attributions are unpredictable to an extent due to each individual’s distinct background knowledge and life experiences, shared and constant interpretations are made possible by pre-existent rules of social interaction and meaning-making which are inherent properties of a context such as a classroom. (p. 226)

Sime (2008) concluded that “Gestures seem to function, then, as symbolic tools of mediation, and learners actively engage in a process of meaning-making, especially when the teacher input is within their ZPD” (p. 275). Furthermore, she argued that specific instruction to learn “to use teachers’ gestures to comprehend their messages or to get more accustomed to the target culture” would benefit foreign language students from a pedagogical stance (p. 277). Teachers would also benefit from receiving training themselves in the use of nonverbal behavior “as teachers may reconsider their class behavior and think of ways of enhancing the communicative potential of their gestural communication” (p. 277).

Kida (2008) supports Sime’s conclusions, having written an article aimed at inquiring whether gestures play an aiding role in the context of discourse comprehension in an L2 as well as discussing didactic problems related to gesture and SLA. The participants in the study were a native French speaker interacting individually in a free conversation and a thematic conversation (on the topic of a culturally traditional recipe) with eight learners of French of differing proficiency levels studying at a French university. Differing visual conditions were also employed. The author focused on three
aspects of the conversations: 1) he compared the conversations under differing visual conditions; 2) he focused on misunderstanding and noncomprehension instances; and 3) he examined cases of visual compensation for discourse comprehension.

The results of the study indicated that L2 learners profit from the gestures that accompany speech, especially when the L2 learners’ linguistic proficiency level is low, because they use gestures as an interpretation strategy. The differing visual conditions did not seem to affect gesture usage, although in the case of anaphors (i.e., referents to a previously stated expression, such as pronouns), not seeing the accompanying gesture provided confusion on the part of the listener. Kida (2008) stated, “the use of gesture seems to contribute more to the understanding of the L2 interlocutor than to making logical connections in the discourse” (p. 150). Thus, gestures can enhance positive interactions between a native and a non-native speaker of a language when they are used to aid the other person’s comprehension. The author finally suggested that, in order to better SLA theories of analyses and didactic aspects of learning a foreign language, researchers need to consider gesture and other visual cues as “consubstantial” with social interaction and discourse production (p. 151).

**Gestures in the Second Language Classroom**

A few studies have examined the role of gestures in the language classroom. For example, McCafferty (2002) concentrated on student imitation of teacher gestures. Others have found that teacher awareness of gestures usage (through training) can assist students in the L2 acquisition process (e.g., Faraco and Kida, 2008; Lazaraton and Ishihara, 2005).

Based on the Lazaraton (2004) study, Lazaraton and Ishihara (2005) underwent a collaborative case study based on researcher observation and microanalysis, teacher self-
reflection, and discourse analysis, in which they discussed the importance of reviewing observation results with the teacher who is being studied. In fact, the thesis of their research was to provide evidence to the significance of both “the insights gleaned from teacher-directed, self-reflective action research and the results generated from researcher-directed microanalyses of classroom discourse” (p. 531).

Giving the teacher who is being observed a chance to give his or her own input and feedback provides more clarity, more accuracy, more insights, and more understanding into what the researcher alone has observed and theorized. In their particular study, Lazaraton and Ishihara (2005) pointed out that the researcher-directed microanalyses were helpful and insightful, but including the teacher’s input and feedback into the picture helped their limited view and gave them “the larger pedagogical focus” that they would have otherwise missed (p. 536). What a teacher can bring to a discussion about his or her teaching, according to Lazaraton and Ishihara, is:

contextualized knowledge of the class (e.g., specific knowledge of the curriculum, materials, and learners; in other words, the knowledge necessary for teaching and evaluating his or her classroom practice), but also knowledge of how his or her teaching beliefs came to be and how they relate to his or her own practice. (p. 538)

Another benefit of including the observed teacher’s views and interpretations is the teacher’s own growth and development. This is especially true, according to Lazaraton and Ishihara (2005), when such feedback includes forms of teacher-directed self-reflections. When these forms are coupled with the researcher’s observations, analyses, and interpretations, the result is “a new understanding” (p. 537) on the part of
the teacher on his or her own teaching. In the case of the Lazaraton and Ishihara study, the teacher in question gained a new understanding of the role of nonverbal communication in her teaching.

Moreover, even the researcher can gain important insight into his or her own role. Lazaraton and Ishihara (2005) explained how this happened in the course of their study as the researcher realized that only the teacher herself could contextualize what the researcher could only theorize based on mere observations. In their own words, “[the researcher] was forced to reexamine her own beliefs about participant voice in interpretive research” (p. 537) and “[the teacher’s] voice is perhaps the central one to which we should listen, because it is her insights, experiences, and reflections that underlie the study itself” (p. 538).

A final important contribution of the Lazaraton and Ishihara (2005) study is the insight gained about nonverbal communication or nonverbal behavior as they called it. The observed teacher, in one of her self-reflections wrote:

[Nonverbal behavior] can certainly be an effective teaching aid that can bolster both teaching and student comprehension, provided that it is used in a pedagogically and culturally appropriate manner. To be effective, nonverbal behavior must be coordinated with the verbal counterpart in a non-obtrusive way, and used to send a consistent message. (p. 537)

Faraco and Kida (2008) followed up with a study aimed at scrutinizing how nonverbal behavior (i.e., gesture, gaze, prosody) relates to the negotiation of meaning sequences in a second language classroom in didactic (i.e., teaching) and dyadic (i.e., conversational) conditions. Specifically, the authors asked whether nonverbal
communication is essential during the learning sequence and how it assists comprehension among conversation partners. The participants in this study were native and non-native speakers of English. Specifically, for the didactic portion of the study, the authors used audiovisual recordings of students/teacher interactions in a French language class. For the dyadic portion of the study, the authors used a previously used corpus consisting of conversations among language learners of differing proficiency levels and with different visibility conditions.

The results of this study showed that nonverbal cues are more crucial in a dyadic negotiation of meaning context because verbal communication is usually the predominant means of negotiation in dyadic settings. Particularly, the authors noticed that nonverbal behavior aids more in the learning sequence when the focus is on interaction rather than on formal language inter-comprehension between teacher and students. Furthermore, this study found both positive and negative influence aspects of teacher-initiated nonverbal behaviors. Gaze and gestures accompanying explanations being instances of the first, and nonverbal softening of a correction and gestures coinciding with a student’s discourse error rather than with the teacher’s correction being instances of the second.

**Italian Gestures**

Literature stemming from Italy in the area of nonverbal communication (i.e., gesture) aids in answering questions like the following: what are the modes of nonverbal communication employed by Italians? Why do Italians communicate through nonverbal communication? And how does nonverbal communication fit into Italian identity? Although very little research is available for a lengthy discussion on these topics, nevertheless, there is enough to gain a foundational understanding in this area.
Landmark Studies on Italian Nonverbal Communication

The most known and quoted landmark study ever conducted about Italian nonverbal communication is the collection of gestures compiled by Andrea De Jorio in 1832. In his research, De Jorio put together a collection of 380 pages of text and 19 pages of illustrations depicting commonly used gestures based on vases, ceramics, and well-known ancient art work stemming from widely known artists. His was an attempt to explain the origins and meanings of real life gestures still used in Naples at the time. De Jorio showed that the mimic depicted in ancient art was strictly related to that of the Neapolitan people, who were once a colony of Athens. Furthermore, De Jorio believed that the use of these ancient gestures eventually spread through the rest of the country and other parts of the world (Munari, 2005). His work is still widely known and quoted in Italy and abroad.

Cocchiara (1977) points out another study conducted by an ethnographer, Mallery (1881/1972) that was impacted by De Jorio’s work. Mallery studied the gestures of American Indians and based his gesture analysis on De Jorio’s work. By examining De Jorio’s gesture analysis, Mallery made the following two conclusions: 1) “that Italians descend directly from the people who in classical times cultivated gestures with love” and 2) “that in mimicking these gestures, they had the relics of the ancient arts in front of their eyes” (p. 34).

Historical Background

Leone (1983) gave a brief historical background of Italian gestures in his introduction. He said that, “the art of hand gestures has a long and honorable history, dating back to the time of the Romans, the Egyptians of the Pharaohs and the early
American Indians” (p. 1). Furthermore, “as civilization progressed, the use of the hand motion to embellish or supplement speech diminished, which is a pity, as this has made human contact less interesting” (p. 2).

Ricci Bitti (1987) relates a study conducted in Italy by Peter Collett and Alberta Contarello (1987) that illustrates the regional differences in the use of nonverbal cues in Italy as observed by Leone (1983). The topic of this study is gestures that express agreement and disagreement. This article focuses on how people use gestures to say “yes” and “no.” The authors start from Darwin and give a historical account as to why in Italy there are two different ways of nodding to say yes and no. The difference appears geographically somewhere between Rome and Naples. From Northern Italy to Rome, people employ a nod-shake; from Naples to Southern Italy, they employ a dip-toss. Other ways to say yes and no are discussed (using fingers shaped as a gun, using the index finger, etc.). The reason for the difference in usage lies in the Greek background that ties Southern Italy to Greece. Greeks and Southern Italians use the same dip-toss method, although Italians may repeat the gesture over and over, while Greeks do not (pp. 69–85). Again, history can explain the derivation of many gestures and other nonverbal communication still employed by Italians.

**The Italian Gesture Stereotype**

Italians are widely recognized for their usage of nonverbal cues (i.e., gesture and mimesis) in their communication. Ricci Bitti (1987) agrees with the existence of this stereotype when he says, “there is a general consensus according to which Italians are a people gifted with particular expressive skills, with a particular richness of expressive and gesture repertoires” (p. 10). He believes that it is only natural for researchers to be
interested in the analysis of such skills and repertoires. He makes his point by mentioning De Jorio (1832) and his pioneering work.

In order to illustrate the need for Italians to use nonverbal communication while speaking and communicating as observed by Leone (1983), Ricci Bitti presents an example. The second chapter in Ricci Bitti (1987) relates a study conducted in France by Rimé, Schiaratura, Hupet, and Ghysselinckx (1984). In this study, thirteen subjects were seated on a special chair. They were asked to talk freely for fifteen minutes, then they were restrained (head, arms, knees) and asked to talk for twenty minutes, and finally they were asked to talk freely again for another fifteen minutes. The results found in this study were that the movements of the body parts that were not bound (i.e., eyebrows, eyes, mouth, hands, fingers) increased when the subjects were restrained. Furthermore, the amount of talking decreased when the subjects were restrained. The authors conclude that gestures seem directly tied to speech and that when people cannot gesture, they will compensate this lack of ability by increasing other movements and by decreasing the amount of verbal speech (pp. 33–50).

Anecdotal experience.

Leone (1983) relates his personal experience with nonverbal communication. He recounts how in his youth he was always admonished to “stop talking with [his] hands” (p. 3), undoubtedly because gesturing and gesticulating was not widely accepted for a newly emigrated Italian child living in the United States. One can only assume that his mother was trying to help him behave in a more socially accepted way (i.e., not using gestures), since nonverbal communication stood out to everyone in the United States who was not an Italian immigrant in those days. He was being taught to use socially accepted
behaviors in order to fit into his new environment. He argues that in spite of this trend, gestures survived among Italian people “as gesticulating is almost second nature to them” and although “the pressure to assimilate has caused this custom to wane somewhat,” nevertheless “it still is an important part of the everyday speech of the Italians” (pp. 3–4).

When visiting Italy, Leone (1983) talks about his fascination with the fact that Italians seem paralyzed in their speech abilities if they cannot rely on the use of their hands and arms while they are talking. He also comments on “the richness [the use of gestures] gave to their daily communication” (p. 6). Finally, he points out that just as there are regional differences in the use of the Italian language and in the use of Italian dialects, in the same way, there are regional differences throughout Italy in the use of nonverbal cues in their communication (p. 123).

**Specific Italian Gestures and Other Nonverbal Behaviors**

The bulk of the literature stemming from Italy about Italian nonverbal communication deals directly and specifically with very explicit and particular gestures. Oftentimes, the researchers have compiled lists of them. These lists are of specific Italian gestures that have been researched, studied, and have had their meanings explained. The following is a discussion on the research that encompasses the main gestures researched and published by Italian scholars. The purpose of this discussion is to make the reader aware of the variety, wide selection, and number of gestures that Italian researchers have considered important and widely used in Italian nonverbal communication. It is important to note that the gestures discussed in the literature presented below are by no means inclusive. There are many more Italian gestures that are widely used in everyday communication among Italian people, and there are other types of nonverbal
communication as well (such as sounds, facial expressions) that have not been yet studied and published.

Leone (1983) compiled a gesture guide meant to assist nonnative speakers of Italian going to Italy as tourists. His main point is that people who understand and use gestures while in Italy will not only understand Italian people and what they are communicating to them or to others around them, but it will also help them in getting out of bad situations (such as not overpaying for services, for example) and make Italians like them more. In his own words, “you can not, of course, travel through Italy using nothing but your hands to communicate. But you will certainly ingratiate yourself with the Italians by supplementing your language skills with the easily understood and appreciated hand gestures” (p. 124). Many of the gestures included in this guide are obscene or very particular to specific situations and do not lend themselves to general situations. Obviously, the purpose of this book is to teach Americans a few gestures to practice on their trips to Italy as tourists, which explains the informal tone of this book (including the gesture selection).

Following is a list of the types of gestures discussed in Leone’s (1983) guide: The first section of the book demonstrates (through drawings) and explains regional gestures divided among typically Sicilian gestures (e.g., stealing gestures), Neapolitan gestures (e.g. lowering the price gestures), and Roman gestures (e.g., crazy traffic, offensive gestures). The rest of the book depicts and discusses gestures that mean appreciation, hellos and goodbyes, aggression, superstition, character analyses, attitudes, and miscellaneous gestures.
Munari (2005) put together a supplement to the Italian dictionary in the form of a gesture review. The first print of this work was published in 1958. In the book’s introduction, we read, “we have collected a good many gestures, leaving aside vulgar ones, in order to give an idea of their meaning to foreigners visiting Italy and as a supplement to an Italian dictionary” (p. 11). While this book sounds similar in purpose to Leone’s (1983) book discussed earlier, Munari’s attempt is much more serious and formal. In fact, his audience seems to be made of people who are sincerely interested in learning Italian gestures. There is no division of gestures into categories or alphabetical ordering, but it is still a good guide comprising approximately fifty different types of gestures and other types of nonverbal communication. Another improvement from Leone’s book is that Munari uses pictures of actual people performing the different gestures. Furthermore, Munari also examines not only gestures, but even facial expressions and body posture. Last but not least, his guide begins with a representation of several of the old Neapolitan gestures discussed by De Jorio in his early work.

Finally, Cocchiara (1977) also discusses the meaning of several gestures of the Italian language. His approach is not pictorial; therefore, his goal is not to teach foreigners about how to make certain gestures in Italian. His objective seems more of a discussion and analysis for an audience already familiar with the gestures he describes. In fact, after an introductory chapter in which he defines gestures and a chapter that discusses the psychological aspects of using nonverbal communication, Cocchiara writes a chapter that focuses on the origin of gestures by analyzing magic, religion, and dance in ancient tribes and also in contemporary tribes described by various ethnographers. He also looks at the origin of some gestures stemming from tribal rites, such as the rite of
silence imposed on women for a period of time after the death of their husbands. Because those women had to resort to gestures to communicate, the word for “widow” derives from the Hebrew word for “silent woman” or “mute woman” (pp. 50–52).

After the first three chapters, Cocchiara (1977) proceeds to a more systematic discussion on gestures by analyzing what he calls “aggregation” (p. 54) and “neutralization” (p. 66) gestures. In the first category, he includes gestures associated with prayer, with greetings, and with weddings such as hugging, kissing, slapping, and hitting. In the second category, he includes obscene gestures. His discussion of obscene gestures is very different from the one by Leone (1983). In fact, Cocchiara looks at the origin of obscene gestures as rooted in ancient religious and magic rites and traditions. The last two chapters of the book discuss the function of the hand in gesture usage and the relationship of gesture and speech. In his conclusion, Cocchiara states that gesture is a language that is not secondary to oral language, but “it is the expression of concrete ideas” (p. 90).

**Summary**

Chapter Three has presented an overview of the literature on gesture and nonverbal behavior from a historical point of view, a contemporary stance, and an Italian language and culture standpoint. In particular, it has emphasized the importance of this topic and has hinted at the present gaps existing in current gesture literature which this study is hoping to begin to bridge. Chapter Four takes the next step and outlines the dissertation with its research questions, goals and methodology.
CHAPTER FOUR

METHODOLOGY OF STUDY

Chapter Four presents the rationale and methodology for this dissertation. First, Chapter Four provides a brief overview of some of the reasons why gesture is an important aspect of SLA and it should be studied further. This section is meant as a summary of the review of literature presented in Chapter Three and as a liaison between theory (i.e., gesture literature review) and practice (i.e., current study). Second, it provides the purpose of this dissertation followed by the research questions guiding it. Next, this chapter lists the settings, participants (including human subjects consent), and recruitment procedures and consent for this study. A discussion on data collection follows, with details pertaining to the teacher background survey, video recordings, instructor follow-up interviews, and student online survey. An overview of the methodology employed for data analysis, and a description of factors to consider for privacy and confidentiality, risks, and benefits of the study are listed next. Finally, the last section provides a brief overview of the connection to theory and conclusions.

**Why Gesture?**

Much of the research pertaining to gestures and SLA is related to general theories of SLA. Historically, the first obvious connection between the two was the interest in the evolution of language (Hockett & Ascher, 1964) and the notion that language started off as gestural first and vocal later (Hewes, 1973). This notion was confirmed through studies that examined how chimpanzees can learn to use signs as a form of language (Gardner & Gardner, 1969, 1971). Progress made in this area was then related to how young children learn sign language (Bronowski & Bellugi, 1970) and then their first
language (e.g., Bates, 1979). It was proposed, for example, that infants learn both gestures and language through socialization with their mother. This belief is in direct relation with Vygotsky’s (1978) theory and with McNeill’s (1992) research on child language and gesture development in which he saw gestures and speech developing simultaneously.

Gullberg (2006) wrote an article dedicated to delineating reasons for studying gestures in an L2 framework. Her review was meant as a tribute and an echo to Kendon’s (1986) work, as she framed her discussion into two parts. In the first, she discussed “what learners can acquire with a new language” (p. 104) while examining issues such as learnability, teachability, testing, and assessment of gestures. In the second, she discussed how gestures “are interesting in and of themselves for acquisition” (p. 104) while examining issues such as learner’s gesture use, development, and change as part of communicative and cognitive characteristics.

In her quest to find a strong relationship between gesture and SLA, and as we have also seen in the review of literature in Chapter Three of this dissertation, Gullberg (2006) attested that gestures have been characteristically seen as used to compensate speech and support interaction, as underlined by studies that have shown a higher number of gestures in the L2 when compared to the L1 of a particular subject (e.g., Adams, 1998, for Foreigner Talk; Gullberg, 1998, for SLA; Lazaraton, 2004, for Teacher Talk). Furthermore, gestures have issues of transferability. In fact, most research in this area underlines the notion that L2 learners use and are influenced by their L1 gesture repertoire (e.g., Negueruela et al., 2004). Another aspect that parallels gesture to SLA is the claim that both are developing systems (like an interlanguage), “so L2 gestures can be
studied as a system with inherent structure” (p. 114) and can be used as a strategy to reduce cognitive load (e.g., Goldin-Meadow, 2003). Gestures are also social/interactional in the sense that they can assist in comprehension and learning between teachers and students in the classroom (e.g., Lazaraton, 2004).

To sum up her conclusions, Gullberg states, “Gesture analysis can contribute to a range of familiar theoretical SLA issues, ranging from how native and non-native speakers (NS and NNSs) deal with communicative difficulties in usage, to an expanded view of transfer, a multimodal view of properties of learner varieties, input processing, and learning” (p. 111).

**Purpose**

The purpose of this study is to examine the use of mimetic forms of identity (specifically gestures) as a type of meaning making and presentation of self employed by native speakers of Italian who are instructors of Italian as a foreign language at the college level as well as their students. Student and teacher mirroring of each other’s gestures are also scrutinized.

Through videotaped classroom observations, an teacher background survey, a follow-up interview with instructors, and a follow-up online survey with students, I attempt to analyze the occurrences of mimetic forms of identity exhibited by teachers and students in order to a) determine their frequency, b) identify and categorize their types, c) thoroughly describe the context in which such occurrences were displayed (e.g., the content and background, including the topic discussed, the position of the person in the classroom, and the language used before, during, or after each instance), and d) gain insight into the instructor’s and students’ views and identity.
Research Questions

Because the aim of this dissertation is to observe the use of gestures, especially mimetic forms of identity found in the interaction between teachers and students in Italian as foreign language classrooms as a form of meaning making, this study endeavors to answer the following four questions:

1. To what extent do native speakers of Italian teaching Italian as a FL use forms of gesture (especially mimetic gestures associated with Italian identity) in the classroom?

2. To what extent do students use gestures in the classroom, especially mimetic forms associated with Italian identity?

3. In what ways do students take up their teachers’ use of gesture during classroom interactions?

4. What are teachers’ and students’ perspectives of their own and each other’s use of gestures in the classroom, especially those gestures associated with Italian identity?

Project Settings

This study encompasses all relevant data gathered at two separate venues. The first setting for the study is a beginning (first year) FL Italian course based on grammar taught at a community college in a western state in the U.S. The second setting includes three upper-division Italian courses at a large western U.S. university. These courses comprise an Italian poetry (fourth year) class, an Italian art history (fourth year) course, and an advanced conversation (third year) class. This university is known for their excellent language programs, high enrollment, native and non-native language teachers, and high proficiency levels of both teachers (performance) and students (learning). While
Italian courses at the college are taught mostly in English and most students have never been (but are hoping to travel) to Italy, all of the upper division courses at the university are taught exclusively in Italian and many of the students in the third- and fourth-year level classes have been to Italy, typically for two years.

**Human Subjects**

Consent was obtained from the Offices of Research Integrity – Human Subjects Research (IRB) at UNLV to perform both parts of the study at the college and at the university. The corresponding office at both institutions was also informed of the research taking place on their campus.

**Participants**

The teacher participants involved in this study are native Italian speakers who were teachers of beginning Italian courses at the college and advanced Italian courses at the university. Four teachers were observed. These instructors consisted of three long-time Italian professors holding Ph.D.s. and one student instructor undertaking his undergraduate studies while teaching, thus representing varying degrees and years of teaching experience (the latter ranging between approximately 2 and more than 30 years). “Teacher A” taught a beginning grammar course at the college, “Teacher B” taught Italian poetry, “teacher C” taught Italian art history, and “teacher D” taught advanced conversation. Teacher D was the student teacher. Teachers A and D were male and B and C female. Though coming from differing formative backgrounds, all Italian teachers are considered native speakers of Italian, although some have spent more time in Italy than others (the length of time spent in the United States ranging between approximately 5 and 40 years).
The student participants involved in this study were students enrolled in the aforementioned teachers’ Italian courses. Respectively, these were beginning Italian as a FL students who had never taken Italian before or had had minor exposure to the language and advanced Italian as a FL students who had taken at least 2 years of Italian already and who may have spent some time living in Italy. At the university level, although unfortunately there is no exact number that I can account for with regards to how many student participants actually spent time in Italy, many of them had. For most of those students who did go to Italy, I do know that their time spent in Italy varied between just under 18 months and just under 2 years. Each course had a maximum enrollment of 25 to 30 students, but most were smaller classes; therefore, no more than 100 students were asked to participate in this study. All participants were 18 years old or older, and they included both males and females. Several students were not native English speakers. In fact, a few were native speakers of Spanish, while others spoke Romanian or other Eastern European languages.

Recruitment Procedures and Consent

All Italian as a FL instructors were contacted via e-mail and asked for their willingness to participate in the study. Those teachers who replied positively made an announcement in their classes about the researcher coming to videotape, interview, and survey both teachers and students. All instructors indicated they were willing to participate and were therefore given consent forms in their mailboxes located at the community college and university campuses at least one class period before the first observation. After the instructors had time to read the consent form, they were given the opportunity to ask the researcher any questions about the research via email and/or in
person. The instructors who agreed to participate in the study signed the forms and turned them in to the researcher.

The teachers also told their students about the research project and distributed the consent forms. The students were given the Student Consent Form in advance of the class observation so that they had time to read the form at home. The students took the forms home and brought them back on the day of the observation. If students forgot their forms at home, new forms were provided on site. If students had not filled out their forms at home, they were given time to do so at the beginning of class. On the first observation day, the researcher explained the observation process and that the students could decide whether they wanted to participate in the study or not. They were also given the opportunity to ask me any questions about the research. The students who wanted to participate in the study turned in their signed consent forms.

Data Collection

All data collection components used in this study aided in gathering a large amount of data through direct video recordings and in receiving and encouraging teacher and student feedback as well as background information. The data were gathered at the community college first and less than six months later at the university over the course of approximately one week in each setting. The teacher background surveys were collected first, followed by the videotaped lessons, the teacher follow-up interviews, and finally the student online surveys.

There were three main differences as far as specific data collection elements between the two sites for this study: the amount of data collected, the student online survey, and the pin-on microphones provided for the teachers. Specifically, the teacher at
the community college was observed fewer times (and hours) than the university instructors, the student online survey was not available for community college students, and pin-on microphones for the teachers were only available at the university.

**Teacher Background Survey**

The teacher participants were asked to fill out a background survey (see Appendix A). The survey was written in English and all responses were also in English. Questions about their background were also asked during the follow-up interviews.

**Video Recordings**

The most substantial data source was the classroom video recordings. The teachers and their students were videotaped over one full week of classes, that is, approximately three hours each at the university and two hours at the community college. One camera was set up at the back of the classrooms and manned by one of the researchers, who followed the movements of the teacher to catch every particular of hand and arm gestures as well as body movement and facial expression. Two other cameras were placed at the front of the classroom, on either side of the teacher to capture the students, who all sat in rows facing the teacher. This allowed the researchers to record virtually all interactions in the classroom, including teacher–student and student–teacher interactions, although at times it was necessary to view the recordings of two different cameras in order to see the gestures of both a student and the instructor. Moreover, the teachers at the university were provided with a pin-on microphone by the researcher to ensure clarity of the audio recording, especially when the teachers walked around the classroom, addressing students during group or individual work.
mentioned, no such microphones were available for the instructor at the community college.

**Instructor Follow-up Interviews**

Another important data source was the post-observation interviews with the instructors. All teachers were asked to participate in the interview part of the study. All four teachers participated in a private interview with the researcher and all at the end of the week’s classroom videotaping (see Appendix B for a list of basic questions; additional questions were asked as they applied to each individual interviewee’s answers).

The interviews lasted approximately 30 minutes each and were aimed at establishing each teacher’s background (linguistic, educational, and professional) through general questions and at understanding their thinking about and reactions to their own teaching in relation to nonverbal communication. This was accomplished both by asking the teachers to reflect on their teaching and by providing the opportunity for them to view themselves teaching through short clips taken from classroom recordings.

**Student Online Survey**

An online survey for the students who participated at the university was set up after the classroom recordings ended in order to receive student feedback (see Appendix C). None of the students at the community college had this opportunity as too much time had elapsed between the recording of that data and the start of recording at the university (where the survey was designed and implemented) to try to contact the participants. The survey was written in English and all responses were also in English.
As with the teacher interviews, the purpose of the student survey was first to determine students’ background (native language, how they learned Italian, their proficiency in Italian, as well as their academic major, and reasons for studying Italian). Additionally, there were questions aimed at understanding their perceptions of both the teachers’ and students’ use of gestures in the classroom.

A total of roughly 25 students attending the large university agreed to be contacted outside of class to participate in an online survey, however, only four students, two females and two males, responded: Student 1, a fourth-year student of Italian, was getting ready to do a study abroad in Italy; Students 2 and 3 had initially learned Italian while living in Italy for approximately two years and had continued learning Italian afterwards through enrolling in university language courses; and Student 4 had visited Italy several times, had a parent who was a native speaker of Italian, but had learned Italian through taking university courses.

**Data Analysis**

The data for this study comprise the following four elements: (1) teachers’ gestures as observed and recorded with audiovisual equipment during the course of their lessons within the classroom setting, (2) students’ gestures observed and recorded with audiovisual equipment during the course of their lessons within the classroom setting, (3) a teacher background survey collected before the video recordings and teacher interviews conducted following the instruction periods in a setting outside of the classroom, and (4) an online student survey provided to students following the collection of the data. This section explains how each component of the data was analyzed to find answers to the four research questions.
Because both teachers’ and students’ use of gestures were captured through video recordings, the data gathered were analyzed by looking closely at participants’ examples of mimetic forms of identity (e.g., Donald, 2001; Haught & McCafferty, 2008; McCafferty, 2002) associated with the Italian languaculture (Agar, 1994), in this case, Italian language associated with Italian culture. Thus, the analysis of this research only focuses on those gestures and dimensions of gesture specifically linked to Italian usage, such as those discussed by De Jorio (1832), Kendon (1995), and other researchers (e.g., Cocchiara, 1977; Lamedica, 1987; Ricci Bitti, 1987). I first examined the gestures initiated by the instructors followed by student-teacher and teacher-student gesture mirroring or imitation (Vygotsky, 1978) instances. The mirroring gestures, occurring during dialogic interactions, were reviewed as an indication of “renting” (Bakhtin, 1984) a different languaculture and identity (Holland & Lachicotte, 2007; Marx, 2002; Norton, 2000) on the part of the students. They were also studied to find signs of the teachers using them as a tool for prolepting (Van Lier, 2004) students into a possible future of entering the new languaculture.

In order to better analyze the data as a whole, nonverbal cues identified pertaining to this description were catalogued along with various metadata for each (e.g., type of gesture, length of gesture, person performing the gesture) for later assistance in sorting and further refining the information found. Next, each gesture of interest was transcribed with the accompanying speech, so that the real-time link between the two in production was represented following McNeill’s (1992) conventions. I marked the gesture phrase (duration) of each gesture – its beginning to end across time from preparation to retraction – with the use of square brackets ([ ]) and the stroke of the gesture – the
production of the part of the gesture that expresses meaning – by bolding the word or syllable on which it occurred.

The data collected through the teacher interviews were examined in support of the video-recorded data by examining the researcher’s questions and the instructors’ answers looking for evidence of the teachers’ background and perceived identity (Holland & Lachicotte, 2007; Marx, 2002; Norton, 2000) in relation to living in America but having roots in Italy as well. The interview data also aided in understanding how the teachers perceived their own use of gesture in the classroom after viewing short video clips from the data collection. Additionally, the interviews included questions about how the teachers perceived their teaching, what part gesture played in the process, and what their sense of identity was when teaching.

As with the teacher interview data, the data gathered through the online student surveys were explored to find information concerning their language learning background and identity (Holland & Lachicotte, 2007; Marx, 2002; Norton, 2000) as well as their views on the purpose and usage of their teachers’ Italian forms of gesture during class, if they gestured like their teachers, and what they thought the role of gesture is, overall, in learning Italian. Table 1 (below) provides a summary of this study’s data analysis organized by research question, kind of data to be collected, process of analysis, and place, sequence and time of data collection.
Table 1.

**Data Analysis**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Questions</th>
<th>Kind of Data to be Collected</th>
<th>Process of Analysis</th>
<th>Place, Sequence and Time of Collection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Instructors Gestures</td>
<td>Video recordings</td>
<td>Mimetic forms of identity transcription with accompanying speech, translation, gesture analysis conventions</td>
<td>Community college: 1st data collection, approximately 2 hours of lessons (1 instructor). University: 2nd data collection (less than 6 months later), approximately 3 hours of lessons per instructor (3 instructors).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students Gestures</td>
<td>Teacher background survey, Teacher follow-up interviews, Student online survey</td>
<td>Question-Answer analysis, focus on identity and gesture perspectives</td>
<td>Teacher background survey prior to video recorded lessons; lesson video recordings; Teacher follow-up interviews at the end of video recorded lessons, approximately 30 minutes; Student online survey at the end of video recorded lessons (only at the university).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All data in this study are juxtaposed within each category among its participants and as a whole. In other words, all teacher background surveys, lesson video recordings, instructor follow-up interviews and student online surveys are examined both singularly and compared to one another across categories of analysis and as a whole. The purpose of this data triangulation is to provide different perspectives and to add dimensions to the analysis of this dissertation’s research questions.

**Privacy and Confidentiality**

Neither the names of the community college and university nor the names of the instructors and students appear on any reports of the research. Codes are used in lieu of instructors’ and students’ names. All data is controlled by myself, Ilaria Peltier, and Dr. Steven McCafferty. Two other colleagues have access to the data: Alessandro Rosborough and Natalie Hudson. These colleagues have performed and are performing
similar studies and research projects and collaboration may occur between endeavors. Furthermore, the data were kept locked. All videotaped observations and interviews were transferred to electronic files and the tapes have been erased. The data are stored on UNLV property in CEB 355. The data will be stored for at least three years and will be deleted from all electronic sources. All data on paper will be shredded.

**Risks**

It is not likely that teachers and students suffered any substantial stress from the study. In fact, there was minimal risk involved in this study. The only risk was that teachers and students may have felt uncomfortable being videotaped while in class or during the follow-up interview. However, the teachers and the students were asked prior to videotaping if they were willing to participate. Furthermore, teachers and students alike were simply observed in their regular classroom while conducting regular activities. The teachers and the students were not asked to do anything special in class. The follow-up online survey portion of this research was short (it took 30 minutes maximum to complete) and was voluntary. The students also had the option of choosing not to participate in any part of the study. Students who did not wish to participate were asked to sit behind the video camera, and their participation during the class was disregarded, and they were not interviewed. Furthermore, the audio contributions of students who did not wish to participate in the study were removed from the videotape, thus ensuring that neither picture nor sound depicted those students’ participation in the lessons videotaped. Finally, instructors and students were given the option of participating in the in-class observation but to opt out of the follow-up survey or interview.
In order to try to minimize and prevent any potential risks, I attempted to videotape the instructors as discreetly as possible and be sensitive to the feelings of each instructor. I emphasized that the instructors and the students had the opportunity to withdraw from the research at any time. Other processes as described above were designed as well to minimize and prevent any potential risks.

Limitations

The differences between data collection details provided the researcher with less data from the first setting (i.e., the community college), although the data gathered there was still enough to address the research questions in this study. Furthermore, not having student feedback from the college through the online survey is a limitation of this study; however, because students there were beginning Italian language learners, this dissertation has enough representation through the feedback received at the university in the lower proficiency course. Finally, while no pin-on microphones were provided at the college, the teaching style of the teacher there was such that he did not use small group interactions. Rather, he used a lecture-style and whole-class discussion approach. In addition, the classroom size at the college was smaller, thus still permitting clear audio through the video cameras for both teacher and students verbal expressions.

Connection to Theory and Conclusion

The theoretical framework chosen for this study is the one that best explores all aspects of its research questions, and it is Sociocultural Theory (SCT). Besides Vygotsky’s work (1962, 1978), specific SCT theoretical key elements (though not all) which tie into this study are the role of gesture as a social semiotic in learning another language (e.g., Goldin-Meadow & McNeill, 1999), how teachers use gesture to prolept
students into a possible future (e.g., Van Lier, 2004) as embodied communicators (e.g., Donald, 2001; McCafferty, 2002) of the language (identity within a figured world) (e.g., Boaler & Greeno, 2000; Holland & Lachicotte, 2007), the process of communicative actuation (e.g., Rosa, 2007a, 2007b) as it relates to learning a language across different timescales and environments, and how all of the above relates to the zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1962, 1978) and its application to frontier regions of development. Microgenesis (McNeill, 1992), David McNeill’s (1992, 2005) work on gesture, Italian perspectives and gestures (e.g., Cocchiara, 1977; Lamedica, 1987; Poggi, 1983; Ricci Bitti, 1987), meaning making (e.g., Goldin-Meadow & McNeill, 1999), mimetic forms of identity (e.g., Donald, 2001), and performing (e.g., McCafferty, 2002; Newman & Holtzman, 1993) are also essential to this study. All of these concepts (and more) have been explained in previous chapters and are used to scrutinize the data and to form conclusions.

Through the discussion on theory and the literature reviews conducted and included in the first chapters of this dissertation, it is clear that little research has been conducted in the context of SLA and nonverbal communication in a foreign language classroom with regard to the interaction between teachers and students, particularly in their use of mimetic forms of identity. There is a need for research that looks at how teachers manifest the embodiment of their identity when they are native speakers of the target language. The current study adds to the evidence that native speaking language instructors show their identity through the embodied use of mimetic forms of identity in a meaning-making effort to prolept their students into a future in which they become active and functional members of their target languaculture (Haught & McCafferty, 2008;
McCafferty, 2002, 2008a; Van Lier, 2004). Furthermore, there is a want in the literature for research to examine to what extent and what parts of a teacher’s presentation of self nonverbally (especially gestures) is comprehended by students during class, and if any of these students ever attempt to imitate (mirror) what their teacher models. These aspects have been examined and are set up as a point of focus of the current study in an attempt to fill all of these gaps.
CHAPTER FIVE
FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Chapter Five provides the findings of the current study as well as a discussion of those findings. Short discussions to connect findings to theories appear where applicable throughout this chapter. After displaying this study’s research questions and providing a summary of the data found and analyzed, the bulk of the chapter then describes the study’s findings to answer the research questions, and it discusses those findings throughout. First, a description of the teachers’ use of mimetic forms of identity related to Italian language and culture is put forth. This includes an overview of gestures and varying forms of emblematic gestures. A discussion of findings stemming from the teachers’ interviews follows, especially regarding their feelings of identity and their self-image in the classroom. Next, the chapter describes the use of gesture on the part of students. In particular, a discussion is put forth in relation to student/teacher and teacher/student mirroring of each other’s gestures. Lastly, the data discusses findings in terms of the online student survey with regards to students’ perspectives of their own and their teachers’ use of gesture.

Research Questions

Because the aim of the proposed study is to observe the use of gestures, especially mimetic forms of identity, found in the interaction between teachers and students in Italian as foreign language classrooms as a form of meaning making, this study endeavors to answer the following four questions:
1. To what extent do native speakers of Italian teaching Italian as a FL use forms of
gesture (especially mimetic gestures associated with Italian identity) in the
classroom?
2. To what extent do students use gestures in the classroom, especially mimetic forms
associated with Italian identity?
3. In what ways do students take up their teachers’ use of gesture during classroom
interactions?
4. What are teachers’ and students’ perspectives of their own and each other’s use of
gestures in the classroom, especially those gestures associated with Italian identity?

Table 2 (below) displays and summarizes all data analyzed in this dissertation. It
does so by listing the gesture categories found in the data; specifically, three kinds of
emblematic gestures (i.e., Mano a Borsa, Mani Giunte, Pagare), two types of gestural
space use (i.e., exaggerated beats, exaggerated gestures), gesture frequency and
repetition, teacher-student and student-teacher gesture mirroring, and a gesture mirroring
mini case-study. A list of figures pertaining to these categories are displayed for each of
the four teacher participants and for their students where applicable.
Table 2.

*Data Display of Figures Related to Teacher and Student Gestures Use*

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**Teacher Use of Gestures**

**Gesture Use**

Teachers not only produced large numbers of gestures, but they also each produced different forms of gestures discussed in the literature. Additionally, teachers used similar Italian gestures and different versions of the same gesture in each distinct classroom context.

In terms of general reflections on each participant’s gesture usage, Teacher A has a teaching style that reflects a lecture approach to classroom teaching. The teacher is always standing in front of the students, often behind his desk, other times between his desk and the first row of seats, and he regularly holds either a textbook, a white board
marker, or both in his hands. In Italian culture, when a professional is giving a speech or lecture in front of an audience, gesturing should be somewhat limited. This principle is reflected in Teacher A’s use of gestures, in particular at the beginning of being videotaped. He starts off with his hands in his pockets (an attempt to look more formal and professional). However, as the lesson progresses and he begins to relax, he is seen to gesture more as a reflection of his Italian identity. His gestures are predominantly beats as he speaks in English to the class, and they become more emblematic when he switches to Italian. There is also an instance in the data in which Teacher A is speaking in Italian with the researcher during a classroom break, and his use of gestures increases dramatically during the short exchange. These two last characteristics are an indication of the instructor’s embodiment (Efron 1941/1972; Haught and McCafferty, 2008; McCafferty, 2002) of his L1 languaculture (Agar, 1994).

Teacher B is a dynamic teacher who moves around the classroom. She stands in front of the class as she lectures and walks up and down the rows of seats while students do pair or group work. Teacher B predominantly uses beats as she lectures, but because she lectures in Italian (as opposed to Teacher A), she often displays a use of Italian emblematic gestures (De Jorio, 1832; Diadori, 1990; Kendon, 1995) intermingled with her speech. A few specific Italian emblematic gestures are recurrent in her nonverbal communication (e.g., mano a borsa - see below). Teacher B gestures characteristically with her arms bent at the elbow, thus predominantly using her forearms rather than her entire arms (as opposed to, for example, how Teacher C forms her gestures - see below). Furthermore, she habitually uses her fingers in a way that they stand out more than for other teachers. For example, she stretches them, holds them apart, and brings them
together in ways that are difficult to miss. Thus, her fingers play a big part in her nonverbal communication.

Teacher C generally forms her gestures characteristically high toward the top of her body. She also tends to display a high rate of gesture repetitions that do not necessarily always coincide with the syllables of her utterances. It seems that she gestures quickly and frequently, while her speech is paradoxically calmer and slower, so that the first is often ahead of the second. Teacher C constantly uses Italian emblematic gestures (De Jorio, 1832; Diadori, 1990; Kendon, 1995) when addressing the class. Additionally, whenever she switches out of the official Italian language and into her local Italian dialect (she spent a number of years in central Italy), which she does at times when making a side comment, pausing to ask the class a question, or commenting on what she or one of the students has said, she increases her use of emblems, expressing her embodiment (Efron 1941/1972; Haught and McCafferty, 2008; McCafferty, 2002) of the Italian languaculture (Agar, 1994), much like Teacher A. Teacher C is a very expressive person. She uses her entire body in addition to her vast and wide use of gestures, conveying what Donald (2001) described in his definition of mimesis. Her facial expressions are particularly accentuated, she moves about the room constantly, and it really looks like she is performing (McCafferty, 2002; Newman & Holtzman, 1993) in front of the class. This is particularly noteworthy since, as will be discussed later, she was completely unaware of what she looks like in front of her students having never seen herself teach before this study. She also speaks in a slower manner than the other teachers, which I feel only highlights her nonverbal expressions in that she has more time to accompany her speech with gestures and body language. Although it is difficult to describe with words all facial
and body expressions she makes in conjunction to the gestures highlighted in this study, they definitely add to the nonverbal communication between her and the students in her class.

Teacher D, finally, is more conservative in his gesture usage. His teaching style is also that of a lecture approach, and although he often employs whole-class discussions in his lessons, he rarely moves about the classroom and is predominantly standing or sitting in front of the class. His speech is slow, purposely, because of the nature of the class he teaches (i.e., an advanced Italian conversation class). His use of gestural space is limited for regular gesture usage such as beats. However, as he uses gestures to aid in speech comprehension (Haught & McCafferty, 2008; McCafferty, 2002) he accentuates his gestures with repetitions and wider gestures, thus using gestures as a meaning-making tool (Goldin-Meadow & McNeill, 1999).

All in all, Teachers A and D share a more similar teaching style and therefore are also more similar in their somewhat more conservative gesture usage. They also teach lower proficiency Italian courses compared to Teachers B and C. Interestingly, these teachers share nonverbal communication characteristics, even though Teacher A employs the use of English in his lectures while Teacher D does not (he speaks exclusively in Italian). In contrast, Teachers B and C employ a more comparable teaching style and consequently are additionally more similar in their expansive gesture usage. The nature of the classes they teach are also related, as they are both upper-level courses. These two teachers speak exclusively in Italian in class.

To provide an illustration of these teachers’ gestures and the context in which they were used, frame grabs from the data appear below. In general, the vast majority of
gestures produced were from the instructors, and the data showed similarities and variations in how each instructor used gestures within a series of categorizations that were applied to the gesture analysis. The various subdivisions of the observations are also discussed below.

**Emblematic Gesture Usage**

Emblematic gestures are those that are so well commonly known within a languaculture that they may be considered to have a direct translation into specific words or ideas (Allen, 1995; McCafferty, 2002). The current study takes special note of Italian emblematic gestures catalogued in the dataset because of the strong correlation between these gestures and the expression of Italian identity (De Jorio, 1832; Diadori, 1990; Kendon, 1995). Students are prolepted (Van Lier, 2004) into an Italian world (Boaler & Greeno, 2000) when exposed to their teachers’ use of Italian emblematic gestures. This means that teachers go beyond the here and now; instead, they teach the language as embodied communicators (Donald, 2001; McCafferty, 2008b) of what their students will experience in the future, either in higher language courses or in Italy itself. In fact, the instructors hold high expectations of their students’ future proficiency levels in the Italian languaculture (Agar, 1994). All of this, of course, is done at a spontaneous and subconscious level.

All four of the teachers produced Italian emblematic gestures. This chapter presents a few poignant examples from the dataset. De Jorio (1832) outlines 100 Italian emblematic gestures. Three extremely common gestures of these were targeted for collection in the dataset (i.e., *mano a borsa*, *mani giunte*, and *pagare*). Instances of the three emblematic gestures of interest for this study are included in this chapter for all four
teachers when possible. It is clear and communicative gestures such as these upon which the dataset focuses.

The four teachers commonly return to these three examples of Italian emblematic gestures, among other gestures, which aides in the study of patterns of nonverbal communication initiated by the four instructors because the lexical equivalent of the gesture is clear in each case and leaves no or little room for interpretation of the concept the instructor was looking to communicate through the nonverbal cue. As such, the sections that follow will outline key instances when the various teachers used each example of the gesture. Each of these examples will contribute to the discussion and analysis contained in this chapter and the conclusions presented in Chapter 6.

**Mano a borsa.**

*Mano a borsa* (hand purse)—the hand cupped resembling a woman’s small purse—is a gesture that is present in various forms in a number of cultures but commonly known as an Italian gesture. As described by Armstrong and Wagner (2003), it is executed by raising the hand to one’s chest, pressing the fingertips to the thumbs, and shaking the hand either back and forth (at the wrist) or up and down (by moving the forearm) or by making both movements at the same time. This gesture is most typically used with questions and with the word *cosa/che* (what). For example, Italians can use it when asking someone a question or for clarification. Other commonly understood meanings are to say, “What do you want,” “what are you saying” or “what are you doing” and, interestingly enough, they can be communicated with the gesture alone and without the use of words. The *mano a borsa* gesture can be associated with feelings and meanings of sarcasm, impatience, incredulity, and even taunting. As meaning associated with this
gesture becomes even more sophisticated, we see this gesture used with more literal meanings, such as a union or group of things (shown through the grouping of the fingers), or we see it connected to the concept of the mind. Several of these examples of meanings are shown in the data samples below.

Teacher A.

In the first example, Teacher A is asking the class to translate from Italian into English a phone conversation they are reading together. He asks a student to translate the first part in which one of the interlocutors says, *buongiorno* (good day). The student translates the word to mean “hello,” to which the teacher objects and asks for a literal translation. The student pauses to think, so the teacher encourages her and tries to elicit the correct translation by repeating the question, *Che significa “buongiorno”?* (What does “buongiorno” mean?) With his right hand in his pocket, the book lying open on a desk in front of him, Teacher A forms the *mano a borsa* gesture (Figure 1).
Figure 1. Teacher A, Mano a Borsa.

Che [significa ‘buongiorno’?] (What does ‘buongiorno’ mean?)

Teacher A has his forearm already lifted by the time he utters this sentence because he has just completed a different gesture coinciding with his previous words. As he begins saying “Che,” his forearm makes a loop in preparation for the downbeat part of the mano a borsa gesture, which coincides with the syllable “gni” in the word “significa.” His arm is close to the body and he holds the gesture in place all through the end of his question and while he waits for the student to answer. His entire body stands still awaiting for and listening to the student’s reply. After she gives him the correct literal translation (good day), he begins to move again and transforms the mano a borsa gesture into his subsequent gesture coinciding with his next utterance in response to her correct translation.
As these teacher-student dynamics occur, an interesting aspect to notice is the tone of voice associated with the *mano a borsa* gesture used by the instructor. Although not expressed through words, Teacher A passes along further insight into his thinking that the translation in question is fairly easy by using a sarcastic if not slightly taunting inflection in his tone in addition to his gesture. This could be expressed in words with something like, “Come on. You know this one. Don’t disappoint me.” It could also mean, “Don’t worry. This is easy. You can do it.” The fact that the student hesitates for several seconds is what seems to trigger the tone. When the student finally replies with the correct translation, the teacher uses words, sounds, gesture, and whole-body demeanor to communicate that the answer was obviously the one the student finally gave, and that the question had been easy, indeed.

**Teacher B.**

Like Teacher A, Teacher B also regularly uses the *mano a borsa* gesture during the course of her teaching. As illustrated below (Figure 2), Teacher B has just finished separating the class into small groups and assigning them a poem to analyze and discuss. While she asks the class what they are supposed to do with the poem they were assigned, she uses the emblematic gesture of *mano a borsa* to refer to the groups and immediately after to underline her question.
Ogni [gruppo] (Every group)

Teacher B’s left hand forms the gesture of a cupped hand, with the thumb touching the other fingertips (finger bunch) while making a downward beat with it, indicating the topic of her discussion. The meaning of her gesture is that of a group.

Cià la [sua] [poesia], e [che] [ci] [facciamo] [con] [questa] [poesia]? (Has its poem, and what do we do with this poem?)

Holding the same gesture above, she switches from a “finger bunch” to a “mano a borsa” (hand cupped like a purse) meaning by making a small beat (up and down movement) on almost every syllable of each word, thus underlining her question. She makes this movement once with sua, twice with poesia (first and third syllables), once with che, once with ci, twice with facciamo (first and second syllables), once with con,
twice with *questa* (first and second syllables), and twice with *poesia* (first and third syllables).

Although the *mano a borsa* gestures made by Teacher B eventually coincided with her question of clarification (what do we do with this poem?), it is important to note that she began forming and repeating this gesture ahead of the eventual question to portray the meaning of the groups (by bunching her fingers) she is addressing. This worked very well with her next part of the utterance because she did not have to even change gestures. In fact, this sequence of words and gestures seems to indicate that the teacher was gearing up to ask the question, and her gesture was ahead of her verbal communication in that it had already formed a question mark before even beginning to ask the question. This makes for a huge advantage to her students in this case, as they know (visually) ahead of time that a (verbal) question will come their way. Another aspect of an instance like this also shows how the *mano a borsa* gesture is so common in Italian that it is sometimes used as a beat gesture to emphasize speech.

**Teacher C.**

Teacher C is predisposed to the use of the *mano a borsa* gesture, in similar ways to Teachers A and B. However, the example below was chosen to portray one of the more refined meanings associated with this gesture, that of an abstract concept of the mind. The teacher in this case is about to introduce the topic of Neo-Platonism. As she introduces the topic to the class, she explains that Neo-Platonism is a fundamental concept of the Renaissance movement. She underlines her words with the *mano a borsa* gesture (Figure 3).
Parliamo di questo Neoplatonismo (Let’s talk about Neo-Platonism)

At the very end of this part of her utterance, she begins to form the mano a borsa gesture which she will actually make to coincide (mostly) with the word “concetto” below. She does so by raising her right arm up toward her head and by beginning to shrink her body down toward her hand, giving the impression of wanting to get her hand close to her head and her head to her hand as quickly as possible.

[Che è un concetto] fondamentale (which is a fundamental concept)

Teacher C forms the mano a borsa gesture first with “che” (which) and the first stroke coincides with the word “è” (is). Subsequently, she repeats the gesture quickly three more times to coincide with each syllable of the word “concetto” (concept), as in con-cet-to. It is interesting to note that the first gesture is formed very close to her forehead, which gives away the relationship between the gesture she is making, the word she is saying, and the meaning of “concept,” the latter being formed inside someone’s brain (often associated with the top of one’s head like the forehead). She gradually
descends with the gesture on each syllable as she moves on. By the time she says, “fondamentale” she has already moved (literally) toward the desk to place her book on it.

*Del Rinascimento.* (Of the Renaissance.)

The teacher moves back toward the front of the class and gets ready for her next sentence.

*Teacher D.*

Teacher D also uses the *mano a borsa* gesture in a way similar to the other teachers, although in the example below he rotates his hand more than the others by pointing his fingers sideways and almost slightly downward (instead of upwards). He also uses this emblematic gesture to communicate a more visually literal meaning, that of grouping, as his separate fingers become united when they come together and all touch his thumb. Teacher D is talking about how the Catholic Church, with Pope John Paul the II, has been trying for many years to group all churches, especially Christian churches, into one church. He uses the *mano a borsa* gesture to underline the concept of union (Figure 4).

*Figure 4. Teacher D, Mano a Borsa.*
Quello di poter [riunire tutte le chiese] (that of being able to group all churches)

Teacher D lifts his right forearm in front of his chest with the word “poter” (be able to) in preparation for his gesture. He pauses his speech right there, as if he is looking for the right word he wants to say next. He obviously knows what concept he wants to communicate because he is getting ready to make the mano a borsa gesture with the meaning of “uniting, grouping;” he is however hesitating as he finds the exact word he wants to utter with his gesture. He then closes his fingers into the mano a borsa gesture and repeats the stoke twice with the first and second syllable of the word “riunire” (group or reunite). He holds the gesture in place until the end of the word “chiese” (churches) and then proceeds to transform the mano a borsa gesture into a different one with his next words.

**Conclusion.**

All in all, the mano a borsa gesture is an emblematic gesture in that it can be interpreted with one single word or concept. It is one of the most widely used gestures in the Italian language, so much so it can at times be used as a beat gesture or without any accompanying words. Its meanings extend from a simple question mark to more sophisticated and literal meanings as seen in the examples above. Its production can also vary in terms of height, articulation of movement, and direction of fingers. However, it remains one of the most typical and universal Italian gestures to date. All four teachers used this particular gesture repeatedly during the observed lessons, which means that their students were also constantly exposed to its verbal and nonverbal applications. Thus, students were exposed to their teachers’ Italian identity (Holland & Lachicotte, 2007; Marx, 2002; Norton, 2000) not merely through the language they were using but
also through the embodiment of their languaculture (Haught & McCafferty, 2008; McCafferty, 2002).

**Mani giunte.**

*Mani giunte* (hands together) is similar to the *mano a borsa* gesture in that *mani giunte* is a common expression in a number of contexts that has particular uses within Italian culture. The gesture is performed either with two hands (thus, the “hands together” title), or with one hand only. Although forming this gesture with one hand could be considered a separate gesture in and of itself, for the purposes of this study both versions will be considered as a variation of the *mani giunte* gesture. In the first variation, both hands are pressed together at the palms or at the finger tips. The fingers may be interlaced or not, if they are not they are usually closed together, the arms can be kept close to the body forming a 90 degree angle at the elbow or they are extended forward, and they are moved up and down as if to express and emphasize supplication. In the second variation, the fingers can be closed (like in a karate position) or more loosely held, and the gesture takes place either by the side of the face or more toward the front or side of the body. The gesture appears to intone a desire for pity and prayer from the listeners for whatever or whoever the topic of the conversation may be. Often the gesture implies exhortation, encouragement or advice. The tone of the meaning can also be one of genuine concern or it can also be condescending and preaching. In fact, the gesture may also reflect (as with *mani a borsa*) frustration and aggravation as in the embodiment of the phrase, “Lord, help me!” or even “You’d better listen to me and do what I say.”

It is also interesting to note that native Italians so commonly use the gesture that even when limited from using two hands, such as in the first example listed below where
the instructor is holding an object in one hand, the same instructor proceeds to gesture one-handed. Sometimes when this happens, Italians use exaggerated beats (seemingly unconsciously) to reiterate the fact that they were gesturing. In other words, holding objects or other impediments do not stop Italians from gesturing (Rimé et al., 1984). However, in such cases, the gesture may look slightly different, as is the case with Teacher A below. Because he is unable to join his hands in front of his body, he lifts his one free arm higher and brings his hand to the side of his face. However, with this particular gesture of *mani giunte*, because it is also widely used as a one-handed gesture even when there are no impediments (as in the second example below), interlocutors may simply chose to make the gesture with only one hand.

*Teacher A.*

Teacher A is explaining the difference between saying “un gelato” (an ice-cream) and “del gelato” (some ice-cream) and is speaking in English to the class as he often does in this low-level language course. After explaining the difference in both languages, he exhorts the students to keep the two grammatical elements (“un” and “del”) separate in their mind in order to avoid thinking they are or mean the same thing. As he urges them, he uses the *mani giunte* gesture. Because he is holding a book in one hand, he does so with his free hand (Figure 5).
Figure 5. Teacher A, Mani Giunte.

*Keep those things distinguished* in your mind

Teacher A is talking while resting his left hand on his left cheek. As he gets to these words, he flings his hand forward and forms the *mani giunte* gesture one-handed and repeats the gesture twice to punctuate the words “those” and “things.” He makes the gesture up high, next to his face. He then rests his hand on his cheek again through the word “distinguished” and proceeds to make a different gesture with the next set of words.

*Teacher B.*

Teacher B uses the one-handed version of *mani giunte*. She is recalling a study abroad experience in which a few of her students participated. Specifically, she is remembering a particular concert that they attended in Siena during their stay in that city. She asks two of her students if they had attended the concert, and after they reply negatively, she communicates to them her regret for their loss of missing out on something special. To emphasize her sorrow, she uses the *mani giunte* gesture (Figure 6).
[Ah! Che vi siete persi!] (Ah! You don’t know what you missed!)

When the teacher says, “Ah!” her whole body communicates regret for their loss. She looks slightly downward then closes her eyes for a brief moment, and she seems to slouch a little. She has just pointed to the two students in the back previous to her exclamation, so her hand is still raised up, elbow bent, fingers holding a whiteboard marker. She repeats the gesture three times, the first two higher up to the side of her face, and the last at shoulder height. The beats coincide with the first syllable in “siete” and both syllables in “persi.” The meaning of the utterance and accompanying gesture is surely sadness for their loss mixed with the very Italian cultural aspect of recriminating, as if to say, “You should not have missed it.” Hence, the mani giunte aspect of lecturing and giving advice.

**Teacher C.**

Teacher C gives a brilliant example of the mani giunte gesture using both hands (Figure 7). It occurs when she is asking the class a question, expecting them to know the
answer because she has previously taught them the required information. She energetically reminds the students that she has told them that particular piece of information before, and she repeats her words in the same form several times in her regional dialect along with the accompanying gesture of *mani giunte*. This gesture communicates her plea to her students for the answer that she knows they know:

![Image of Teacher C with "mani giunte" gesture](image)

*Figure 7. Teacher C, Mani Giunte.*

\[Ve l’aggio [detto] (I’ve told you it)\]

Teacher C puts her hands together in a “praying” position in the middle of her body (she places the marker she was holding in between her hands to facilitate the gesture) and moves the gesture down and up with short, quick movements of her wrists (beats) as if begging her students. She repeats the movement two times on each of the two syllables of the word *detto* while holding the same gesture.

\[Ve l’[aggio] [detto] (I’ve told you it)\]
She repeats the same gesture with the same movements five more times, twice with *aggio* (once per syllable), twice with *detto* (once per syllable), and one more time at the end of the word and before the next utterance.

*Ve l’aggio* [detto] (I’ve told you it)

She repeats the same gesture with the same movements three more times, once on the first syllable of *aggio* and twice with *detto* (once per syllable).

*[Son]* [sicura] (I’m sure)

She repeats the same gesture two more times, once with *son* and once with the stressed syllable of the word *sicura* (second syllable). By repeating words and gesture this way, there is no room for doubt that Teacher C is expressing plea (please tell me that you remember), exhortation (try to remember), but also frustration (I have given you this information before) and perhaps even preaching (you really should remember).

**Conclusion.**

In summary, *mani giunte* is an emblematic gesture, which transmits an array of clear meanings. It is so universally used in Italy that it has two versions, which are equally popular: the two-handed and the one-handed styles. The two-handed version still seems to be more dramatic in conveying meaning, although the one-handed version can easily be made its match by increasing the use of space or by adding facial expressions or body movement. Tone is certainly also at play when using *mani giunte*. In fact, tone can aid in deciphering which of its meaning is being portrayed, from simple plea and exhortation to preaching and giving strong advice as shown in the data samples. Three of the teachers were observed using this particular gesture in its various forms and meanings, thus exposing students to the languaculture embodied by their teachers
Pagare.

*Pagare* (to pay) is another emblematic gesture worthy of discussion. Interestingly, this gesture can be formed in a couple of different ways (as was the case with *mani giunte* above). Because “paying someone” and “money” are two interconnected terms, their accompanying gestures are also closely related and even interchangeable. I discuss them here as one gesture with different formation and articulation and they are illustrated in the examples below. The *pagare* gesture is formed similarly to the *mano a borsa*, which features fingertips and thumbs pressed together. However, while in the *mano a borsa* gesture four fingers surround the thumb, in the *pagare* gesture only the first two or three fingers interact with each other. Additionally, the gesture can be animated with the first two or three fingers (thumb, index and middle finger) rubbing together at the fingertips as if pinching or shining a coin between them. The hand can look upwards or sideways in this case, and the most prominent meaning associated with this form of the gesture is “money,” although it can also mean “to pay.” If the fingers are left still, the thumb rests on the side of the index finger while the entire hand stays in a loose sideway fist. Rather than shaking the hand at the wrist in an upward movement like in *mano a borsa*, the wrist motions away from the body and toward an imaginary third party, in a similar way to that of throwing a Frisbee to somebody. The gesture commonly accompanies verbal expressions of financial transactions or topics generally involving money, such as paying somebody. The gesture can also imply a high cost or paying someone under the table.
Teacher A.

Teacher A is talking about idiomatic verbs. Particularly, he emphasizes the many uses of the verb “fare” (to do or to make) in Italian, which has dozens of uses and meanings depending on its application. One of the students in the class asks the teacher about the meaning of “fare un biglietto” (literally, to do or to make a ticket and meaning to get a ticket) and if it is correct to say “faccio il biglietto” (I do or make the ticket). He asks if that means that one does the ticket himself. Teacher A corrects him to say that it is the ticket seller who issues a ticket, and he uses the *pagare* gesture as he explains (Figure 8).

![Figure 8. Teacher A, Pagare.](image)

Il bigliettaio fa i biglietti (The person who sells tickets makes the tickets)

*but you have [to purchase the tickets]*

Teacher A switches from Italian to English to show the student the correct usage of the verb “fare” in this case and to differentiate between what a ticket seller does and what you (as the buyer of the ticket) do. In the second part of the utterance, the one with
the person buying the ticket, there is no verb “fare” and the teacher finishes the sentence in English. Teacher A hesitates with his speech as he gets to the word “to” and repeats the word three times. As he is looking for the words he wants to say next, in that moment of hesitation, he makes the pagare gesture with his left hand and repeats it twice, and hence giving away his thoughts before his words come out. Coinciding with the word “purchase,” Teacher A forms the same gesture but opens his fingers, literally as if he had just flung a Frisbee at his interlocutor (he is speaking directly to the student who asked the question and who happens to be sitting in the front row, right in front of the teacher). The teacher then forms the gesture two more times but with fingers closed as in the initial version of the gesture coinciding with the first syllables in the words “purchase” and “ticket.”

Teacher C.

Teacher C is discussing the fact that Florence was the center of Humanism because they had the De’ Medici family who would pay for and finance art. She first forms the gesture closely related to the term “money” by rubbing her fingertips (Figure 9), then she proceeds to also make use of the gesture more closely connected with the term “to pay” (Figure 10). All gestures are interrelated and fluid. She could have used either form of the pagare gesture throughout the entire utterance, but she instead uses both during her very short explanation:
E Firenze, [col fatto che aveva] [i soldi], (And Florence, with the fact that it had money,)

Teacher C lifts her right arm in front of her chest and rubs her thumb and index finger together in a typical money gesture. She rubs them continuously until the first syllable in the word “soldi” (money) when she stops rubbing her fingers but holds the gesture in place. Additionally, coinciding with the words “i soldi” (literally, the money), she also brings up her left arm, forms the same gesture with her left hand by joining her thumb and index finger shortly once, and finally she mirrors her right hand and simply holds the gesture in place through this part of her utterance. Teacher C virtually forms a double-handed pagare or money gesture simultaneously with the actual money word. (Please note that there are no bold syllables in this part of her speech because of the continuous nature of this particular gesture in which a stroke is difficult to identify.)
[Che aveva] [la famiglia De’ Medici] (that it had the De’ Medici family)

Teacher C rubs her thumb and index finger in both hands simultaneously twice while she says “che aveva,” then holds the gesture in place with loosely open hands, palms facing upward, thumbs and index fingers standing out because they are more open compared to the other fingers. She continues to hold the gesture as explained above, but now she makes four small beats with her forearms as she finishes this part of her utterance. The pagare or money gesture is still there for her students to see.

Figure 10. Teacher C, Pagare.

[Che riuscivano a finanziare questo tipo di arte] (that they were able to finance this type of art)

Teacher C switches gesture version and uses her right hand (only) to show the passage of money from her to a third party. She repeats the gesture nine times. The first three are more accentuated and look like she is throwing a Frisbee, then the gesture goes
more up-and-down rather than away from her body and by the end it looks almost like a beat.

*Teacher D.*

Teacher D is explaining how the Catholic Church in southern Italy carries out processions. He tells his students that people bid to pay money to secure the privilege of helping to carry the statue of Christ. When he says the word “pay,” he uses an emblematic gesture that portrays the image of someone giving money to someone else (Figure 11).

![Figure 11. Teacher D, Pagare.](image)

*[Deve]* *[pagare]* (s/he has to pay)

Teacher D lifts his right hand to chest level, curves his fingers in a loose vertical fist (his thumb facing upward), and he flicks his wrist in a forward/outward movement (from himself toward his students) and back two times, on the stressed syllables in each
word (the first syllable in *deve* and the second syllable in *pagare*). This gesture represents the giving of money and is similar to the movement one might make while tossing an envelope into a basket. Teacher D then brings his wrist into a resting position as he pauses in his speech as well.

*Deve* [pagare] (s/he has to pay)

After pausing for a few seconds, he repeats the same words with the same gesture and movement before going on with his explanation. This time he repeats the gesture only once coinciding with the second syllable in *pagare*, and although the movement is the same, it is a smaller gesture in space.

**Conclusion.**

Overall, *pagare* is an emblematic gesture tightly associated with financial and transactional meanings, such as to pay somebody or to simply relay the concept of money or the value of an object. Words are often unnecessary to convey such meanings, as was the case with some of the examples illustrated above where teachers were using the gesture before the corresponding utterances, which gave away their implied thoughts. Whether *pagare* and *soldi* are seen as two separate gestures or as different versions of very similar concepts, they have been explained here as the latter. All variations were also illustrated in the examples, such as the Frisbee movement, the rubbing of the fingers version, using one hand versus two hands, orienting the gesture in different directions, using body language, and so on. Three of the four teachers used at least one version of this particular gesture. They also repeated it more than once, thus modeling nonverbal behavior coinciding with oral language that students had the opportunity to observe and absorb (Van Lier, 2004). Whether consciously or not, these students were witnessing the

Gestural Space

The gestures in the data pool were examined to determine the largess or exaggeration of the gesture and the relative amount of space that is used to create the communication. Italian gestures are well known for being wide and larger-than-life. This characteristic is part of what makes a gesture culturally “Italian.” In this study, as explained earlier during the general description of each teacher’s gestural style, Teachers B and C in general make use of a much wider space (both gestural and with movements around the classroom) when they gesture compared to Teachers A and D. For purposes of this dissertation and lack of existing terms, I propose that extended use of gestural space in relation to its “Italianness” can be divided into three categories:

1. **Normal** – These are normal looking gestures (e.g., normal beats), gestures that can still be considered to be Italian (e.g., *mano a borsa*), however they do not stand out as far as use of space is concerned;

2. **Extended** – These are gestures that can be Italian-looking because of their extended use of space, but they are not extreme; and

3. **Exaggerated** – These are gestures that are very much exaggerated, extreme, and look unequivocally Italian.

Because Italian gestures characteristically use a wide area of space, the larger the space used, the more “Italian” looking is the gesture. Therefore, if a (non-emblematic) gesture falls under the "normal" category, the space it uses renders it to be not “Italian”
enough with regard to the gesture space. Only the "extended" and "exaggerated" categories are, therefore, considered “Italian” in this sense, as in the examples that follow.

**Exaggerated beats.**

Beats are rhythmic gestures that accompany speech, usually marking syllables (normally stressed syllables) at regular intervals. The gestures categorized as beats in this study are limited to those of an extended or exaggerated nature, which is typically associated with the Italian production of these forms.

**Teacher A.**

In the first example below, Teacher A uses an exaggerated beat (Figure 12) to emphasize the difference between the usage of two expressions (“tutti” and “ogni” – every and each), which are similar in meaning in Italian but different in sentence construction. After giving an example sentence with the first term, he now reproduces the same sentence with the second term making necessary syntactical changes. His exaggerated beat coincides with the use of the second term and the difference in how the sentence is constructed (i.e., the omission of an article). To form his exaggerated beat, he extends his arm above and behind his head and ends the gesture in front of his chest; he uses body posture, facial expressions, and louder tones of voice to help emphasize his point as well.
Figure 12. Teacher A, exaggerated beat.

[Facciamo] [l’esame] (We take an exam)

Teacher A produces a beat gesture with his head on each word, while his right hand is behind his head (he appears to be scratching it for a moment, although he is also holding a marker in it, and holds his hand there for a few seconds). His beats coincide with the second syllable of facciamo and of esame. At the end of the utterance, his hand comes away from his head and is held next to it.

[ogni] giovedì (every Thursday)

He stresses the word ogni with a louder voice and flings his arm forward (still holding a marker) in front of him forming a very wide arc that ends with his arm almost fully extended in front of him (a beat). Also, the instant he utters the word ogni, he takes a step forward, as if the movement of this gesture carries his body forward, and his eyes open wide for the duration of this word.
Teacher B.

Teacher B uses beat gestures throughout her lessons. Characteristically, she uses beats by joining her thumb and index fingers into an OK sign or an inverted *mano a borsa* (fingers closed together around her thumb, palm down) and moving her forearms up and down in front of her body while holding her fingers in one of these positions. The image she portrays with the movement of her forearms resembles that of an orchestra director. She regularly uses these beat gestures, but she also makes use of exaggerated beats from time to time. In the particular example analyzed below, she forms her exaggerated beat gestures by making circular motions with her arms (Figure 13). In this instance, Teacher B is reading a poem out loud and discussing the meaning of each verse with her class. She has just asked her class the meaning of the word *libeccio* (no translation) and now confirms the answer of one of her students who spoke up and said it means a wind.

*Figure 13. Teacher B, exaggerated beat.*
[E appunto] (And indeed)

Teacher B makes a wide outward circle with her left hand in front of her body (her right hand is holding a paper packet from which she is reading the poem). Her fingers are outstretched but tight together except for her thumb, which she holds straight up. The stroke of the gesture coincides with the stressed second syllable of appunto. She fluidly continues the gesture in preparation for her next beat stroke for the next part of her utterance. To clarify, the stroke of this movement is at the most downward part of the circle before her hand and arm start moving upward to prepare for the next stroke.

[C'è quest'immagine della natura.] (there’s this image of nature)

Teacher B repeats the same exaggerated beat gesture and times the circular motion just right so that the stroke coincides with the stressed second syllable of immagine. Again, the motion is continuous and fluid; she does not stop making the circular motion and is again preparing for the next beat stroke for the next part of her utterance.

[Del vento.] (of the wind)

The teacher repeats the same gesture in the same fashion as the previous two. This time the stroke of the exaggerated beat gesture corresponds to the stressed first syllable of vento.

[Il vento che sferza] (a wind that blows)

Teacher B forms the same exaggerated beat gesture one last time before moving on to a different type of gesture with her next words. The stroke of this beat concurs with the stressed first syllable of sferza.
Teacher C.

Teacher C never stops gesturing while she speaks. Her gesture usage is almost an entire language, meaning that one can almost understand everything she is saying in words just by looking at her gestures and body language. (An entire study should be devoted to the way she gestures.) Her beat gestures are characteristically circular in nature. Instead of up and down wrist or hand movements, she forms wide circles with her arms, making use of wide gesture space. In this particular example, Teacher C is explaining how Humanism started as a reaction to the Middle Ages mentality that men were inherently bad. She tells her students that people began to realize that there was also a spiritual side as well as an earthly side, which entailed a series of characteristics. As she lists examples of such characteristics, she simultaneously uses wide circular beats (Figure 14).

![Teacher C, exaggerated beat.](Figure 14. Teacher C, exaggerated beat.)

*Abbiamo la parte spirituale e abbiamo la parte terrena* (We have the spiritual part and the earthly part)
Through this part of her utterance, Teacher C uses different gestures (not exaggerated beats).

[La parte materiale], (the material part)

Teacher C uses both hands to make a wide outward circle in opposing directions in front of her body (the left hand makes a circle to the left, and the right hand makes a circle to the right, as if mirroring one another). The hands are closed in a fist as she forms the wide circle, then they open at the stroke of the gesture, which coincides with the first syllable of materiale. When she opens her hands, the palms are facing upward and her fingers, particularly her first three fingers on each hand, are outstretched and stand out.

[La parte sensuale.] (the sensual part)

The teacher repeats the same movement just described above. The stroke of the gesture this time coincides with the first syllable of the word parte. When she utters sensuale she is already starting to make her circle again in preparation for the next part of her utterance.

[La parte] [inventiva.] (the inventive part)

The teacher forms the same exaggerated circular beat gesture with the first part of this utterance. The stroke falls on the first stressed syllable of parte. She pauses her speech to think of the word inventiva for a moment. She is still holding her gesture through her pause and then makes two normal-looking beats, without the circle, coinciding with the second (stressed) and third syllables of inventiva. She does this by simply leaving her arms where they are at the end of her last circle and making small up and down movements with her forearms. Her hands and fingers are immobilized in the same position as the end of her last exaggerated beat gesture through the two small beats.
[La parte del cervello.] (the part of the brain)

Teacher C repeats her exaggerated circular beat gesture once, just as in the first two examples above, except that she does not close her hands into fists during the circular movement. Rather, she keeps her hands open and her fingers outstretched. The stroke occurs with the first syllable of the word parte.

[Usiamolo!] (Let’s use it!)

This utterance is a command form referring to the last item on her list, the brain. Teacher C repeats the same exaggerated beat gesture one final time in this utterance, not closing her hands into fists (as in the last instance described above), with the stroke of the gesture corresponding with the second syllable of usiamolo, which is the stressed syllable in this word. She pauses her speech again before her next sentence, and while she pauses she holds the end of her exaggerated beat gesture in place. She begins moving her arms and hands into her next gesture as she audibly inhales air before her next utterance.

Conclusion.

Generally, when Italians use beat gestures, they do so in a number of ways; they vary in gestural space usage between normal, extended and exaggerated. Exaggerated beats look Italian precisely because of their extended use of space, although they do not necessarily all look alike. Personal gestural style, as always, plays a part in what each native Italian speaker’s gestures look like. The teachers observed in this study displayed numerous instances of exaggerated beats. The more animated the conversation, the more passionate the discussion, the more “Italian” the situation, the better the chance to observe clear examples of Italian nonverbal behavior along with its language. Thus, teachers were observed performing (Newman & Holtzman, 1993; McCafferty, 2002)
their languaculture in front of their students, hence prolepting them (Van Lier, 2004) into their potential new identity (McCafferty, 2008b).

**Exaggerated gestures.**

Native Italian speakers characteristically gesture often. Additionally, they tend to overextend their use of gestural space when wanting to emphasize what they are saying, when they are agitated, or when they feel passionate about the topic of their conversation. In other words, emotions and the expression of those emotions guide Italian speakers in their gesture usage in relation to gestural space. In this study’s dataset, we have instances of exaggerated gestures even in the classroom. The best ones are described next.

**Teacher C.**

Teacher C is explaining that Neo-Platonism, Humanism and the Renaissance were all movements born in Tuscany and expanded to Rome. She then proceeds to list what characteristics Rome had that enabled these movements to begin and to develop as they did. As she explains that Rome had the Pope and the Catholic Church, she makes and exaggerated gesture to communicate the idea of a religious iron fist that did not let people express themselves as they wished but had to do so within strict theological parameters (Figure 15).

*[Roma ha il Papa]. [Roma è soffocato]*. (Rome has the Pope. Rome is suffocated.)

Teacher C makes two extended gestures that are presentational in nature coinciding with these two sentences. She forms an outward circle twice (from her body toward her audience) with the first sentence, and she reverses the circle once (from her audience toward herself) with the second sentence.
Figure 15. Teacher C, exaggerated gesture.

[Roma cià questo pugno di ferro cattolico] (Rome has this Catholic iron fist)

Teacher C prepares for her exaggerated gesture in two stages. Coinciding with the word Roma she forms a fist with her right hand and begins lifting her forearm up to the level of her head. She makes a small pause in her speech after Roma while she continues lifting her arm up. With the words cià questo, the teacher continues lifting her arm up far above her head, this time bringing her elbow up first (first image), then her forearm (second image). She pauses her speech slightly again while she continues to prepare for her gesture. Finally, Teacher C swings her arm and closed fist forward and down in front of her body (third image) in an attempt to illustrate a giant hammer coming down. She immediately repeats the gesture so that the downswings coincide with the stressed syllables in pugno and in cattolico. The second repetition does not start up above her head as the first, but it begins from the top of the teacher’s head.
One interesting aspect of this particular gesture is that Teacher C repeats it about six minutes later in her lesson to refer back to this first visual representation of the hammer coming down. However, only the gesture is repeated while her words are different. The word meaning refers back to her original words with the first nonverbal representation of the giant hammer while the nonverbal cue is repeated for the benefit of the students. Also, this second gesture is not as dramatic as in the first instance because Teacher C uses less visual space to form it (Figure 16).

Teacher C asks the class what were the main principles during the Middle Ages. A student replies that man was seen as evil. Teacher C asks why man was considered evil, and a student replies that it was because man sinned. The teacher then makes a list of reasons to support this answer and refers to the religious (Catholic) beliefs of the time. She discusses how man fell (referring to the Garden of Eden), man sinned, and how there existed an old-fashioned theology that if you do nothing about it, God punishes you. This is the point in which she repeats her hammer gesture.
Figure 16. Teacher C, exaggerated gesture.

[Dio ti punisce] (God punishes you)

Teacher C prepares for the gesture by lifting her arm, elbow included, up to the top of her head with the words Dio ti, then swings her arm forward and down illustrating the same hammer gesture as six minutes earlier in her lecture. The downswing coincides with the stressed syllable in punisce. In this case, the hammer image represents the punishment from God rather than from the Pope and Catholic church, but the implication is that the two are obviously related.

Later on, Teacher C is telling the class that Florence was a city that was more open compared to Rome and was ready to let Humanism bloom. As she explains the part about blooming, she uses and repeats an exaggerated gesture accompanying it also with facial expressions and body movements to emphasize the concept (Figure 17).
Figure 17. Teacher C, exaggerated gesture.

[Che sta ... che ha questo grande desiderio di sss... di sbocciare] (That is ... that has this great desire to b... to bloom)

Teacher C makes a gesture that resembles fireworks. She makes an outward movement with her forearms and hands beginning in front of her face and moving out to the sides of her face as far as her forearms will go, as if she were trying to depict a firework, an explosion of some kind, or, as her words point it out, as a light or a flower that is ready to bloom. The swiftness of her movements communicates a quick blooming. Her eyes open wide through this entire utterance as if to emphasize a bright light. Her head moves forward with every stroke to underline the movement even more, and her body leans forward. This gives the idea of someone (her face) trying to come out into the light she is creating with the movements of her hands. Teacher C repeats the gesture eight times, all coinciding with the bold syllables highlighted above, including once during a pause in her speech and once during a hesitation in forming a word. On the last word,
instead of only producing the gesture once coinciding with the stressed syllable in the word *sbocciare*, she repeats it twice, even on the first unstressed syllable of the word. *Sbocciare* is definitely the word that carries the meaning of her entire utterance, and the six repeated exaggerated gestures build up to this one word.

**Conclusion.**

Generally, I propose that when Italians use gestures, they do so in a number of ways; they vary in gestural space usage between normal, extended and exaggerated. Exaggerated gestures look Italian precisely because of their extended use of space, although they do not necessarily all look alike even for the very same gesture. Personal gestural style, as always, plays a part in what each native Italian speaker’s gestures look like. Teacher C clearly has a preference for exaggerated nonverbal behavior, as seen in the last examples. Again, the more passionate the discussion, the more convincing the speaker is trying to be, or the more authentic Italian language the teacher is using, the more exaggerated the accompanying gestures tend to be. This is true regardless of the particular topic of conversation or gesture used. Native Italian speaking teachers of Italian are therefore very much performing in front of their students (Newman & Holtzman, 1993; McCafferty, 2002). They are in fact prolepting them (Van Lier, 2004) into figured worlds (Boaler & Greeno, 2000) of the languaculture created within the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) that is their classroom (Vygotsky, 1962, 1978). As a result, students who are in Italian language classes taught by native Italian speakers are likely to be repeatedly exposed to this type of gesture usage and to eventually absorb it in the classroom as one would absorb it in Italy itself (Holland & Lachicotte, 2007; McCafferty, 2002).
Frequency and Repetition of Gesture

Generally speaking, Teachers A and D were observed to have used fewer gestures (of any kind) overall than Teachers B and C. While Teachers B and C were both teaching upper-level Italian language courses, Teacher A was teaching a low-proficiency course and Teacher D was teaching a low conversational course. In Teacher D’s course, he spoke relatively little, allowing his students to do most of the talking. Teachers B and C mainly lectured to the class and engaged students in the discussion or through small group work. In their classrooms, Teacher A spoke primarily in English, Teacher D spoke in Italian, and Teachers B and C spoke often and exclusively in Italian.

As we have seen, Italians characteristically gesture often, they use wide gestural space, but they also repeat the same gesture many times during a given utterance. The figures below are randomized sequential still shots of the four teachers using gesture repetitions (i.e., multiple representations of the same gesture) during their lessons. Each set of eight pictures is representative of the pattern of repetition and frequency of a gesture, which was (exactly or approximately) repeated multiple times at a variable rate depending on the teacher and gesture for the given timeframe observed. For example, Teacher A repeated the illustrated gesture 30 times within 57 seconds (Figure 18), while Teacher B repeated her gesture 12 times within 10 seconds (Figure 19). Teacher C repeated the illustrated gesture 10 times in a five-second frame (Figure 20), while Teacher D repeated his gesture 30 times over approximately 17 minutes (Figure 21).
Figure 18. Teacher A, gesture frequency and repetition.

Figure 19. Teacher B, gesture frequency and repetition.
The number of gesture repetitions that each teacher used during a gesture phrase was catalogued for each one of the gestures (emblematic and exaggerated) illustrated in this chapter up to this point. These repetitions were counted in order to gain insight into
how the instructors were “externalizing the linguistic structure” of the Italian they were teaching (McCafferty, 2004).

Table 3.

*Gesture Repetitions by Teacher and Gesture Type*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gesture Type</th>
<th>Teacher A</th>
<th>Teacher B</th>
<th>Teacher C</th>
<th>Teacher D</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mano a borsa</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mani giunte</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pagare</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exaggerated Beats</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>2 and 8</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3 illustrates that not all teachers were observed to have used the same gestures. For example, only Teacher C was observed in all five categories of gestures, Teacher A was observed in four, teacher B in three, and Teacher D in two. Therefore, looking exclusively at the numerical data for the teachers’ gesture repetitions *as a whole* provides an incomplete representation of each teacher’s individual gestural use. When examined individually, we see that Teachers B and C are always the teachers who repeat their gestures more often, followed by Teachers A and D. Also, we notice that Teachers B and C have at least one category in which their gesture repetition is far higher than everyone else’s and also when compared to their own gesture repetition patterns. However, this is not true of Teachers A and C who seem to use gesture repetitions more conservatively and uniformly.

**Conclusion.**

Table 3 is therefore consistent with the general nonverbal behavior patterns described and illustrated throughout this chapter for each teacher. In fact, it seems to
underline the similarities between Teachers B and C as the teachers in this study who use more gestures, more space when gesturing, and more gestural repetitions. In contrast, Teachers A and D are the teachers in this study who use fewer gestures, a more restricted gestural space, and fewer repetitions, though they both still exhibit all of these characteristics sufficiently for the purposes of this study. The students in these teachers’ classes are therefore exposed to Italian nonverbal behavior according to the extent to which their teacher uses Italian mimetic forms of identity (Donald, 2001; McCafferty, 2008b) and creates a figured world in their classroom (Boaler & Greeno, 2000; Holland & Lachicotte, 2007). Through performing (McCafferty, 2002; Newman & Holtzman, 1993) and simply being embodied communicators (Donald, 2001; McCafferty, 2002) who use gesture as a social semiotic in a language learning environment (Goldin-Meadow & McNeill, 1999; Thibault, 2004; Tomasello & Call, 2007), each teacher, in his or her own way, is prolepting students into a possible future (Van Lier, 2004) of a newly acquired identity within the new languaculture (Holland & Lachicotte, 2007; Marx, 2002; Norton, 2000).

**Teacher Background Survey and Follow-Up Interviews**

**Identity**

In their interviews, all four of the teachers identified with being Italian, although both Teachers A and C thought of themselves as having multiple identities—that they were both Italian and American—and that these identities were each separate. Additionally, Teacher C proclaimed a German sense of identity as well, having lived for two years in Germany and speaking the language. She did not want students to know her true nationality and so remained somewhat of a mystery among students in the
department. Teacher B was born and raised in Italy, moving to the United States in her 20s, and considered herself to be thoroughly Italian (a view of her held by the students and the other teachers at the university as well). Teacher D was born in Eastern Europe and moved to Italy at the age of 8, living there until his 20s, at which point he moved to the United States. He considered himself Italian.

Identity through Gesture Usage

Each of the teachers has differing backgrounds and differing perspectives of their own Italian identity. As mentioned above, each also had various rates and forms of gesture usage within their classrooms. In addition to the compiled data showing the types and forms of gestures each teacher used, the teachers’ own perceptions of their identity and their gesture usage was recorded in interviews conducted following the classroom filming. Teachers were shown various footage of their classroom behavior and asked to comment on their impressions.

Interestingly, none of the four teachers had ever been video recorded while teaching before this study, and so they had never seen themselves in action in this important aspect of their professional lives. When each of the teachers first viewed herself or himself teaching, the teachers had not been told that the focus of the study had to do with gesture, yet the first response of each upon seeing herself or himself related to the perception of looking Italian with regard to embodied activity, and gesture was explicitly brought up.

Teacher A’s first response was, “See, I’m so damn Italian. See my gestures? I’m so dammed Italian.” Teacher B said, “I move a lot!” referring to her gestures and nonverbal behavior, including her movements around the room. When describing what
she had seen in the clip, she added, “Of course I use my hands because I’m Italian.”
Teacher C first responded with, “I move my hands like an Italian,” at the same time
making broad gestures with her entire body to emphasize and illustrate her point. When
asked to comment further on the video clip, she highlighted the point that she is “visually
a communicative person,” again marking her words with broad gestures. Finally, Teacher
D’s first comment also referred to his obvious use of gestures. He said that for the first
time he understood why his non-Italian friends and students often comment on how
Italian he looks because of his “talking with [his] hands.”

It is noteworthy that the first comment of each of the teachers upon viewing the
video footage was with regard to their propensity to use gesture and the relation of their
identity or pride as an Italian to the frequency or extent to which they used gesture as a
form of communication in their classroom. As these statements reveal, the teachers had
no conscious awareness of using Italian gestures while speaking, yet they all produced
them in large numbers. In other words, though subconsciously, these instructors had a
clearly established Italian identity (Boaler & Greeno, 2000; Holland & Lachicotte, 2007)
and were prolepting their students (Van Lier, 2004) into their new languaculture (Agar,
1994) by simply being embodied communicators (Donald, 2001; Haught & McCafferty,
2008; McCafferty, 2002) of the language (Boaler & Greeno, 2000; Holland & Lachicotte,
2007) through the use of gesture as a social semiotic in the teaching and learning of the
Italian language (Goldin-Meadow & McNeill, 1999; Thibault, 2004; Tomasello & Call,
2007).
Identity in Teaching and Learning

Another important element of the interviews had directly to do with what the teachers thought about the role of nonverbal behavior in the teaching and learning of Italian. Each teacher felt affected by her or his Italian sense of identity in relation to teaching, even though until this study was executed none of them were aware that their Italian identity was greatly influenced by and clearly shown through their Italian nonverbal communication. Their concept of personal (Italian) identity, then, did not consciously comprise their use of gesture until our interviews.

Teacher A stated that being Italian allowed his students to gain insights into the language in use, that simply teaching the grammar was not enough. This is a sentiment echoed by Teacher B as well, who said, “Italian per se is not just a language. It’s not just rules and ability to communicate in the correct way. It also has a cultural background that needs to be conveyed when you speak.” Unlike any of the other teachers, Teacher C was aware of trying to be Italian when teaching. She said, “Because I’m bicultural besides being bilingual, I try to be as Italian as I can be in the class and deemphasize the American.” Teacher D focused on the importance of his Italian background when learning Italian himself as an aspect of his teaching, saying, “When I teach something about grammar I remember how my teachers in Italy taught.” He felt that this methodological approach to his teaching was key to his practice.

Additionally, all teachers were asked if they ever explicitly taught about gesture, or taught specific gestures in class; all replied negatively. However, all of them brought up students’ positive evaluations of their ability to present the cultural aspects of the Italian language in their classrooms as an important aspect of their teaching. Teacher A in
particular was pleased when watching himself teach because he had received positive teacher evaluations from his students concerning his outwardly Italian demeanor, and he was finally able to understand what his students saw. The other three teachers also mentioned that students had evaluated them positively for their “Italianness”.

Thus, teachers considered language just one component of the teaching and learning that happens in a language classroom. In fact, the instructors clearly expressed that the concept of culture is another dimension that adds to the language learning experience. Moreover, although not at a conscious level, all teachers sensed that gestures and nonverbal communication are a part of another dimension of language teaching and learning. This subconscious recognition was substantiated when the instructors viewed their own teaching on a videotape and recognized these nonverbal aspects as crucial and very much a part of their Italian identity. In other words, these teachers saw themselves as performers (Newman & Holtzman, 1993) of their identity (Boaler & Greeno, 2000; Holland & Lachicotte, 2007) in their languaculture.

**Identity and Imitation**

Additionally, three of the teachers (Teachers B, C, and D) recognized that the students imitated their gestures. Teacher B noted the imitation of her nonverbal behaviors by students and related an anecdote in which several students put on a skit that was meant to be a portrayal of the Italian language faculty at the university:

> It’s interesting how much they hit the nail on the head because they would say phrases we repeat all the time, they would make gestures the way we make them. . . . So, it’s interesting how much they catch from how we dress, how we act, how we move, how we talk.
Teacher B further thought that students acquire a bit of an Italian identity as they learn, and that this happens, “mainly through the love for the country.”

Teacher C said that she too had seen students imitate her nonverbal behaviors. In fact, she stated that when teaching second-year courses, she purposely tries to “clone” students who have never been to Italy into a version of herself as an Italian. According to her, some students model her and become ingrained after a while with Italian nonverbal behaviors. She related that the most courageous students start imitating her after Week 3 into the semester and that half the class has followed suit by the end of the semester. However, she also said that she could not reach about one third of the class, that she always has students who never display any of her behaviors, even in the case of highly motivated students. She felt strongly that to learn Italian they need to go beyond the words.

Teacher D was aware that some of his students imitated his nonverbal behaviors, including what he considered to be “common” Italian hand gestures. He also said:

Usually the people who use gestures also are people who really want to learn the language and they really want to learn the culture. They really love Italy. Usually it’s those kinds of people that use the gestures. The others learn just words.

Teacher A was the only teacher to not know whether his students imitated him, perhaps due to the beginning proficiency level of his course. However, he did feel that his use of gesture in the classroom was appropriate in that it allowed him to represent himself as Italian, something he felt that his students could only benefit from. He also noted that taking on his Italian identity and the use of Italian nonverbal behaviors in the classroom helped him maintain a sense of who he wanted to be in the classroom, “That’s
spontaneous. As I teach, I live. There’s no dichotomy there. It’s not acting. It’s not following A, B, and C.”

As previously stated, then, the instructors in this research were not aware of their own use of gestures prior to their interviews. However, they were aware that some of their students imitate them to differing degrees (Lantolf, 2000; Vygotsky, 1962, 1978). The teachers encouraged this imitation, in an effort to guide their language learners into a possible future of entering their new languaculture. This is curious because it indicates awareness on the part of the teachers, even if at a subconscious level, of what an Italian identity is and how important it is for a language learner to absorb and embody this aspect of the language classroom learning experience together with the language itself (Kendon, 2004b; McNeill, 1992, 2005). It also shows a cognizance on the part of these instructors of their own role in the classroom.

**Conclusion**

As discussed throughout this section, although none of the teachers had a clear idea of the extent of their nonverbal behavior in the classroom prior to this study, once they saw themselves on the short video clips, their nonverbal behavior is the first element they noticed. All four teachers commented on this aspect immediately and without having to be prompted by the researcher. Their sense of Italian identity is clearly strong and important to them (Boaler & Greeno, 2000; Holland & Lachicotte, 2007). They act as authentic Italian speakers in the classroom, thus embodying (Donald, 2001; McCafferty, 2002) the Italian languaculture (Agar, 1994) for their students to see, absorb and imitate (Lantolf, 2000; Vygotsky, 1962, 1978). These teachers are prolepting their students into an Italian languaculture (Van Lier, 2004). Indeed, these instructors follow McNeill’s
(1992) Growth Point and Microgenetic theory and Kendon’s (2004a) and McNeill’s (2005) application of the theory to gesture usage, in that speech and gestures come together for and through these instructors. They believe that language and thought should both be expressed as embodied beings in their role as language teachers, and they put that into practice even if at a subconscious level and while realizing that their students do notice and at times imitate them.

**Student Gesture Usage**

**Gesture Use**

Students, although less frequent in their use of gestures than their teachers, provided a significant amount of data for analysis. As is to be expected, the data for this study shows a much higher number of gesture usage instances on the part of the teachers when compared to the students’ nonverbal behavior. The course level (low- versus mid- or high- proficiency) and the instructional style of each teacher (mostly lecture-based) are likely the two most prominent reasons for this discrepancy. However, student gestures were indeed observed in the higher Italian proficiency courses during whole-class discussions, small-group activities, and teacher-student and student-teacher interactions.

Generally, in the lowest linguistic proficiency contexts observed for this study, students seem reluctant to adopt any spontaneous gesture or similar gestures produced and modeled by their teachers. It seems that on a language ability scale, the adoption of gestures comes rather slowly for most at the lower end. Eventually, as their abilities and confidence grow, a few pupils tentatively attempt to mirror the gesturing that the teachers are performing for them, and they gradually try to apply the gestures in similar contexts to where they have seen their teachers do the same (Lantolf, 2000; Vygotsky, 1962,
Thus, gesture usage on the part of students seems to be proportionally related to their language learning level and proficiency.

When exposed to their teachers’ use of Italian emblematic gestures, students are prolepted (Van Lier, 2004) into a figured world (Boaler & Greeno, 2000), an Italian world. Accordingly, classrooms of Italian as a FL are figured worlds in which teachers and students work together in meaning-making activities. The result is the construction of identities that are directly tied to the Italian culture, social environment, and context. As is shown in gesture studies (e.g., Allen 1995), groups of students exposed to emblematic gestures tend to have greater recall of the language they are studying. In the current study, we review the use of mimetic forms of identity (Donald, 2001; McCafferty, 2008b) and how students pick up on those cues (Rosa, 2007a, 2007b) in forming the gestures (Newman & Holtzman, 1993) and, by proxy, an Italian identity of their own (Boaler & Greeno, 2000; Holland & Lachicotte, 2007) based upon the teacher’s use of these gestures (Thibault, 2004; Van Lier, 2004). In other words, we are focusing on examining gestural mirroring rather than self-actualized gestures.

While the cataloging of gestures performed by instructors was broken down into a number of separate categories (e.g., type of gesture, gesture repetition, expansiveness), these categories were ultimately abandoned for the gestures students used. The rate of student gestures was predictably lower as the ratio of presentation time allotted in the classroom environment heavily favors the communication of the teacher. Therefore, student gestures are not deemed significant for analysis with regard to type of gesture, frequency, gesture repetition, or other categorizations for the purposes of this study in the way that it was significant for the teachers.
In this section, I analyze eight examples of mirroring from the dataset. Of those, three are students mirroring the gestures presented to them by the teacher, and five are gestures the teachers mirrored from those produced by their students. Additionally, a mini case-study is included at the end of this section gleaned from a student presentation in the middle of a video-taped lesson. This mini case-study points out both self-actualized and mirrored gesture instances. This sampling of mirroring gestures gives a good indication of various circumstances in which either the student or the teacher found it beneficial (consciously or not) to teach or learn through gesture mirroring. Conclusions reached by these data points are further discussed in Chapter 6.

**Teacher-Student Mirroring**

The data include a number of incidents in which students and teachers were found to mirror each other’s emblematic gestures, which consisted of two variations. In the first, students mirrored a gesture produced by the teacher as described in this section.

**Teacher B.**

Teacher B is discussing a poem with her class. She asks them what they think about the poet’s way of life and what that means. As she elicits answers that struggle to come, she starts gesturing more vehemently. When students finally start throwing out ideas, she validates their answers by using wide gestural space (Figure 22).
Figure 22. Teacher B, teacher-student mirroring.

[Manca qualcosa] (Something is missing)

Teacher B uses a double-handed gesture with beat function but also used to emphasize her words. Her fingers are outstretched and spread apart, palms are facing upward, arms bent at the elbow, hands at chest level, and she makes up and down movements coinciding with her speech. The first two strokes occur with the stressed syllable in manca and the first (unstressed) syllable in qualcosa.

[Non ho] (I don’t have)

The teacher repeats the same double-handed gesture twice with the words non and ho.

Avevo [la possibilità] di vivere (I had the possibility to live)

Teacher B repeats the same gesture twice again, this time only with her right hand (her left hand is now holding papers).

[Tanto] (A lot)
The teacher repeats the gesture after switching her papers from the left to the right hand. This time she gestures with both hands, even with the one holding papers, coinciding with the stressed syllable of *tanto*.

*Di fare* [tante cose] (To do many things)

She repeats the same gesture two more times, although the movement of the final stroke is almost imperceptible if one is not paying attention. The strokes occur on the stressed syllables in the words *tante* and *cose*. She finishes her thought by saying that instead the poet’s life was limited to a low level and uses slightly different gestures to close her utterance.

Immediately after the end of her sentence, Teacher B calls on a student who reiterates her thoughts, and in doing so he also mirrors her recent gestures (Figure 23).

![Teacher B student, teacher-student mirroring.](image)

Figure 23. Teacher B student, teacher-student mirroring.

*Non ha trovato [lo scopo nella vita]* (He hasn’t found the purpose in life)

The student makes the same gesture his teacher has just modeled at least nine times within the last minute or so. His first sentence (not included here) is not
accompanied by gestures. However, when he says *scopo*, he mirrors his teacher’s gesture only with his right hand at first, even though it is holding a pen.

*E [dice] (And he says)*

He repeats the same one-handed gesture coinciding with the first syllable of *dice*, then he pauses his speech and starts his sentence over in a different way.

*[Finalmente ha visto] [che c’è più nella vita] (Finally, he has seen that there is more to life)*

The student repeats the same gesture again twice, but this time he brings up his left hand to mirror the teacher’s previous gestures exactly. The strokes fall on the stressed syllables of *finalmente* and *vita*. He is quite fluent in Italian and speaks quickly and smoothly without making too many errors in his oral utterances.

*[E non ha vissuto] (And he hasn’t lived)*

He repeats the same gesture again with the word *vissuto*.

*Queste esperienze (These experiences)*

He moves both arms to the right, starting from the ending of his last gesture, as if to show that those experiences that the poet did not live are “on the side” because they did not happen.

*[Che fanno parte della vita] (That are a part of life)*

The student forms three beats with his right hand as he brings it back to the front of his body, coinciding with the stressed syllables in *fanno, parte* and *vita*.

*[Ha fatto soltanto il cinque percento] (He only did five percent)*

The student rolls his hand toward his chest and then brings it back out into his original and repetitive gesture one more time, this time again only with his right hand.
Di ciò (Of what)

He repeats the same gesture one more time.

[Che avrebbe potuto fare] (He could have done)

This last time, the student reverses the gesture, so that instead of making a circle outward (to the right) with his right hand, he makes it inward (to the left). This is not a typical way of forming this particular gesture, but it still looks very similar.

Teacher C.

In the next example discussed below, Teacher C interacts one-on-one with a student who has asked a question concerning the status of the rulers of a city-state in medieval Italy. As she explains that theirs was a benevolent dictatorship in that people loved them despite their being despoti (despots) and autoritari (authoritarian), she uses an Italian emblematic gesture (Figure 24) meaning “final,” “everything,” or “I’ve said it all,” which is intended not to finish her discussion (as evidenced by her repetition of the gesture at the key words) but to emphasize her portrayal of the despot as being the end-all of medieval Italian authority.
Figure 24. Teacher C, teacher-student mirroring.

[Lo\textit{ro}] [er\textit{ano}] \textit{despoti}. [Lo\textit{ro}] [er\textit{ano}] autoritari. (They were despots. They were authoritarian.)

Teacher C lifts both hands at shoulder level, palms out (though she’s holding a marker with her left hand) and makes quick outward movements (as if her forearms were windshield wipers that move in opposite directions). Each outward movement coincides with the first syllable in each word (which is also the stressed syllable in each of the words uttered) except for the last word.

Immediately, the student responds with a follow-up question and mirrors the emblem the teacher has just produced (Figure 25). The student uses the emblematic gesture somewhat differently but correctly with the word \textit{basta} (that’s it/that’s enough), as the meaning of his question implies finality.
Figure 25. Teacher C student, teacher-student mirroring.

Erano [loro] e [basta]? (It was just them and that’s all?)

The student lifts his hands from the desk and mirrors the teacher’s gesture at a lower level (in front of his chest). His right hand is holding a pen, but he still opens his fingers during the gesture, and his left hand moves in the opposite direction of the other (i.e., windshield wiper movement) although holding the page of a book. He repeats the gesture twice on the first and stressed syllable of loro and basta.

Teacher D.

One student in Teacher D’s classroom mirrors one of his gestures. This is particularly interesting as this Italian course is not as advanced as Teachers B’s and C’s. Gestures in Teacher D’s classrooms are generally more timid and often times used to clarify meaning, especially on the part of the students who are not able to express themselves orally as they would like and resort to gestures to get their meanings across. In this instance, Teacher D uses one particular gesture (Figure 26) several times
accompanying eight utterances as he discusses how people in Italy pay large amounts of money to have the honor of carrying a cross or a statue during Catholic processions in exchange for exoneration from sin.

![Teacher D, teacher-student mirroring.](image)

Figure 26. Teacher D, teacher-student mirroring.

1. *Se una persona* [vuole portare] *la croce* (If a person wants to carry a cross)
2. *O* [vuole portare] *una statua* (Or wants to carry a statue)
3. *[Per portare] le statue* (To carry a statue)
4. *[Se si porta] la statua* (If one carries a statue)
5. *Non è solamente [portare una statua]* (It’s not just carrying a statue)
6. *Ci sono le [statue] che vengono portate* (There are crosses which are carried)
7. *Le persone in realtà [che portano la croce]* (In reality, the people who carry the cross)
8. *Poi [portano] la croce* (Then they carry the cross)

In all of the above eight utterances, Teacher D repeats the same gesture: he forms fists with both hands and holds them one (the right arm) above the other (the left arm) just below his right shoulder and makes a slight downward movement. This gesture paints a picture of a person carrying something heavy (like a cross or a statue) over his/her right shoulder. Each repetition coincides with the bold and often stressed syllable of the verb *portare* (to carry), or once with the verb *volere* (to want) or the noun *statua* (statue).

A student in the classroom tries to repeat the concept and gets stuck on the word *portare*. She mirrors her teacher’s gesture (Figure 27) as she tries to finish her sentence by using a word that does not exist in Italian.

*Figure 27. Teacher D student, teacher-student mirroring.*
Ma [se la *cargano*... Cargano? Cargano? È una parola?] (But if they *wrong word for carry*... *Wrong word*? *Wrong word*? Is that a word?)

The student mirrors the gesture the teacher just made, but with only one hand over her right shoulder. She does not close it into a fist, but she is making the gesture of placing something on her right shoulder. She makes a downward movement twice, coinciding with the first two syllables of the wrong word she says the first time. She then holds the gesture until the end of her third question. At that point a student says the correct word for her to hear, and as she corrects herself she breaks out of this gesture and points to the student who just helped her.

**Conclusion**

Through these Teacher-Student mirroring examples, we can see that students pick up on their teachers’ nonverbal cues. Teachers perform (McCafferty, 2002; Newman & Holtzman, 1993) their Italian identity (Holland & Lachicotte, 2007; Marx, 2002; Norton, 2000) in their role of embodied communicators (Donald, 2001; McCafferty, 2002) of the Italian languaculture (Agar, 1994) they are teaching. They do so through the use of mimetic forms of identity (Donald, 2001; McCafferty, 2008b), especially Italian gestures (Cocchiara, 1977; Lamedica, 1987; Poggi, 1983; Ricci Bitti, 1987). Students notice and imitate (Vygotsky, 1962, 1978) or mirror their teachers’ nonverbal cues when they are ready to do so according to their different timescales (Rosa, 2007a, 2007b) and based on the environment, or figured world (Boaler & Greeno, 2000) that the classroom participants construct together. In a sense, students act as a reflection in a mirror when they actuate their instructors’ gestures in their own communication back to the teacher. Students, in fact, are learning to perform (McCafferty, 2002; Newman & Holtzman,
1993) as they have seen their teachers do, and they are renting (Bakhtin, 1984) their instructors’ languaculture identity.

**Student-Teacher Mirroring**

The other variety of mirroring found in the data relates to what appeared to be a confirmation by the instructor of a student-initiated Italian gesture. In this case, the student would introduce an emblematic gesture in interaction with the teacher, and the teacher would produce the same gesture as part of her or his response, as in the following example.

**Teacher B.**

In Teacher B’s class, during small-group work while the teacher is walking around and interacts with the groups, a student provides an example of the concept the teacher has been talking about to their small group, *canicola* (hot humid weather), and in doing so, he uses an emblematic gesture (Figure 28) to indicate “pay attention to what I am saying,” “I have a good example,” or “listen to this.”


Anche a [Milano] . . . [unintelligible speech] (Even in Milan . . .)

The student lifts his right arm so that his open hand (palm facing forward) is close to the right side of his face, just in front of him. He then brings his arm and hand back toward his body and he makes a beat-like gesture with his hand stopping just in front of him. He produces the gesture the first time with the end of the word Milano (last syllable, which, interestingly, is not the stressed syllable in the word), then repeats the gesture three more times as he presumably keeps talking about the canicola that happens in Milan each summer.

Although not repeating the same verbal example as given by the student, the teacher mirrors his gesture (Figure 29) along with her own verbal example after agreeing that Milan is indeed a good example of what she was just talking about.
Figure 29. Teacher B, student-teacher mirroring.

*Uh, [Firenze è terribile]* (Ooh, Florence is terrible)

Teacher B lifts her left arm and mirrors the student’s gesture, though she extends her arm much more in front of her, as if wanting to get closer to the student with whom she is interacting, and her hand comes to her shoulder level rather than her face. Her thumb is also more spread out than the student’s was. She reaches forward with this gesture to coincide with the stressed syllable in the word Firenze (second syllable) and holds the gesture there until the end of the word *terrible.*
When talking to a different group of students, one of them asks Teacher B what the poet is saying in a particular verse. As he asks the question, he makes a gesture that is commonly used as an alternative to the mano a borsa when asking questions (Figure 30).

Figure 30. Teacher B student, student-teacher mirroring.

[Che cosa sta dicendo?] (What is he saying?)

The student opens up his hand(s), palms up, fingers open and pointing upwards, and he makes an up and down gesture several times accompanying his words. (It is difficult to establish the stroke of the gesture in this example because of the fact that the student is seated in a difficult corner to capture on camera.)

Teacher B repeats both his exact words and his gesture. She forms her gesture with both hands (Figure 31).
Che [cosa sta dicendo?] (What is he saying?)

Teacher B’s gesture stroke coincides with the one-syllable word *sta* and the stressed syllable in the word *dicendo*. She then holds the gesture with one hand while she asks a follow-up question and points to another student behind her with the other hand.

While talking to the same small group of students, the same student from the previous example asks whether the poem they are discussing is actually one poem or is one of many. As he asks the question, he forms a gesture (Figure 32) to indicate “a part of” a collection of poems.
Even though it is difficult to see the student’s gesture on this still photo, during the recorded video interaction the gesture is clearly visible. However, because the student does not have a microphone, and since the entire class is chatting during their small-group activity, it is impossible to hear the exact words he says. However, from the teacher’s answers, we can gather that he is asking if the poem is one single poem or one of a collection. As he asks the question, he forms a “C” with his thumb and index fingers as if to indicate a paragraph, or a short piece of writing, or, as implied by the conversation, one piece of a collection of poems.

Teacher B mirrors his gesture but not immediately. She first makes a different gesture to show that the poem is not one long, uniform poem. She then explains that it is
indeed one piece of a collection of poems, even if they do not have separate titles, and in saying so, she mirrors the student’s gesture exactly (Figure 33).

![Figure 33. Teacher B, student-teacher mirroring.](image_url)

_Sono varie_ poesie (It consists of various poems)

This gesture is made in a fluid way. The teacher forms a “C” in front of her face with her right thumb and index fingers and makes a left-to-right movement with her arm as if to indicate the way one would write. She makes this movement twice, the second time just below where she made the first, as if she were writing on a second line on an imaginary paper in front of her. Her fingers hold the “C” the entire time. The strokes of her gestures coincide with the first and stressed syllable in _sono_ and the first and stressed syllable in _varie_.

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Teacher D.

Teacher D mirrored his student gestures in his classrooms as well. In the example below, a student talks for a few minutes about the difference between people who live life religiously and have good morals and people who do not. She makes gestures with both hands (not simultaneously, but one after the other) (Figure 34) to point out the two different groups of people.

*Figure 34. Teacher D student, student-teacher mirroring.*

*[Ci sono quelli]* ... (There are those people)

The student has her left elbow on her desk, forearm raised in front of her face. She has her fingers together around her thumb in a resting position, then swings her forearm forward a bit and opens up her fingers (stroke of the gesture) coinciding with the first syllable in *sono*, as if to “show” the group of people with her left hand. Her fingers are facing forward (palm in front, away from her face).
E loro [vedono gli altri] (And they see those other people)

The student makes a movement with her right hand, not exactly mirroring her previous movement. In fact, she extends her right arm to the right, elbow on the desk, but this time her hand is loosely open from the start, the palm is facing upward. She repeats the gesture twice, once with the stressed syllable in vedono and once with the stressed syllable in altri.

Teacher D lets the student finish her remarks, which are accompanied by similar left-side and right-side gesture repetitions to indicate the two groups of people she is discussing for a few more seconds. He agrees with what the student just said and paraphrases her words while mirroring her gesture usage (Figure 35).

Figure 35. Teacher D, student-teacher mirroring.

[Può influenzare] (Can influence)

The subject of Teacher D’s utterance here is a group of people. The teacher explains that this group of people can influence others. As he utters può influenzare, he
mirrors his student’s gesture. His elbows are also on a surface (although he is standing), his forearms are raised toward his face. His right hand makes a movement to the right in front of him three times, with the strokes of the gesture coinciding with the three central syllables of *influenzare*.

*[Altre persone]* (Other people)

Teacher D mirrors his student’s second gesture with his left hand now, by making a downward movement with his left forearm to mirror his previous gesture with his right arm. He repeats the gesture twice, with his gesture strokes coinciding with the first syllable in *altri* and in *persone*. Both are stressed syllables. By the time he finishes the word *persone*, his arms have already returned into a resting position in front of him.

During another part of a whole-class discussion in Teacher D’s classroom, a student forms a gesture that the teacher immediately repeats while asking a follow-up question to elicit a specific response. The class is discussing an article they read for homework on the topic of sexual harassment in the workplace. Students are taking turns summarizing the article, until this particular student explains that a woman filed a lawsuit against her boss for sexual harassment. As she explains what happened, she uses a gesture several times as shown below (Figure 36).
When she pauses, the teacher asks her what the verdict was. The student does not understand the question immediately, so Teacher D paraphrases the question and mirrors her previous gestures (Figure 37) as he asks her a clarifying question.
Figure 37. Teacher D, student-teacher mirroring.

[Qual è stato il giudizio?] (What was the judgment?)

Teacher D mirrors his student’s exact gesture once, slowly, with the stroke of the gesture falling on the stressed syllable of giudizio.

Conclusion

Through these Student-Teacher mirroring examples, we discover that teachers pick up on their students’ nonverbal cues. When students are attempting to perform (McCafferty, 2002; Newman & Holtzman, 1993) as embodied communicators (Donald, 2001; McCafferty, 2002) of the languaculture (Agar, 1994) they are studying, they are essentially renting (Bakhtin, 1984) their teachers’ languaculture identity (Holland & Lachicotte, 2007; Marx, 2002; Norton, 2000). Their instructors recognize their efforts, albeit subconsciously, and validate them by mirroring their students’ gestures in their communication back to their students (Vygotsky, 1962, 1978). In this way, teachers seem
to validate their students’ gestures and their spoken utterances. While giving feedback to students is certainly a component of what makes good teaching practices, the extra element to notice here is that the instructors give feedback about their students’ nonverbal communication through the same means (i.e., through gesture mirroring) while additionally and simultaneously giving oral feedback about their students’ spoken language. In essence, these teachers are using gesture mirroring as a tool for prolepting students (Van Lier, 2004) into a possible future as proficient speakers of Italian in the Italian figured world environment (Boaler & Greeno, 2000) they have jointly constructed right in their classroom (Vygotsky, 1962, 1978).

**Mirroring Mini Case-Study**

In one example gleaned from the dataset, we first see Teacher B giving instructions in a classroom context. Her hands gesticulate as she speaks. She accents her points with beats, as expected and previously discussed. Within the video stills, we can also see a student in a striped blue shirt who is watching the instructor (Figure 38).

*Figure 38. Teacher C, mini case-study.*
A few minutes following the moment where the student in the striped shirt is
watching the teacher, he is asked to stand at the front of the class and give a presentation
in Italian. The series of images shows his initial awkwardness, as he hides his hands,
putting them in his pockets at times, and generally keeping them at the level of his waist
(Figure 39).

![Figure 39. Teacher C student, mini case-study.](image)

As he moves along in his presentation and becomes more comfortable and he
begins to attempt more difficult formulations with his verbal Italian, we can see the
student’s hands come up, and he very tentatively forms gestures that look similar to
gestures regularly used by his teacher (for example, the *mano a borsa*) as he answers a
question from a student (Figure 40).
Figure 40. Teacher C student, mini case-study.

*Vuol dire che [lui conosce]* (It means that he knows)

The student makes a normal-looking gesture for someone who is making a presentation in front of a class full of students. Hand open, palm facing upward, three strokes coinciding with *lui* and the stressed syllable in *conosce*. The last two are almost imperceptible.
Figure 41. Teacher C student, mini case-study.

[La persona] [personalmente] (The person personally)

The student makes a similar gesture (Figure 41), but this time he uses a more vertical space with the stroke falling on the stressed syllable in *persona*. He subsequently closes his fingers into a vertical *mano a borsa* type of gesture with the stressed syllable of *personalmente*. 
Figure 42. Teacher C student, mini case-study.

[Che lui sa...] (That he knows)

The student repeats the first gesture (Figure 42). This time the stroke does not coincide with words but with a small pause in his speech after the word *sa*.

Figure 43. Teacher C student, mini case-study.
*Quello che [...] (That which)*

Again, the student forms a gesture in between his words, as if he is looking for a way to help his words come out. This time the gesture looks like the *mano a borsa* (Figure 43).

![Image: Teacher C student, mini case-study.](image)

*Figure 44. Teacher C student, mini case-study.*

*[Sta dentro] [della persona] (Is inside the person)*

The student brings his arm in toward his chest to show that he is talking about what is inside a person. The stroke of the gesture falls on *sta*. He then makes a small downbeat motion coinciding with the stressed syllable in *della* and holds the gesture until the end of this utterance (Figure 44).

Shortly thereafter, we see the student continually more animated, giving a series of beat-like gestures in a non-conventional way. In fact, they seem quite exaggerated for the words they accompany. It is almost as if he is “trying out his wings” during his entire
speech; first, not gesturing, then gesturing very conservatively, and now going a bit over the top (for the given speech and context) with his gesturing. In this particular sequence (Figure 45), he uses these beat-like gestures that look like the single-handed *pregare* with the addition of a hand “receiving” the gesture at the bottom.

![Figure 45. Teacher C student, mini case-study.](image)

*Lui elimina l’articolo spesso* (He eliminates the article often)

The student is explaining typical characteristics of the poet and how he writes his poetry. Here he forms a gesture that looks like a performing type gesture. He does not use a lot of gestural space. He raises his right hand and slaps it gently into his waiting left hand, both palms facing upward. The stroke of the gesture coincides with the stressed syllable in *elimina*. The student holds the end of his gesture through his utterance, although at the end it looks more like he is holding his hands.
What is interesting here is that the student repeats this gesture two times in disjunction with his speech. He is reading lines from a poem he is discussing, and he forms the gestures (Figure 46) as he pauses his speech after the words *prendi* and *trassi*. Again, here is the idea that he is trying out his gestural identity and uses gestures not always in a conventional Italian way, much like one would learn a language and make mistakes while attempting to speak at first. His gestural space in these two repetitions has expanded from the previous example, as if he is gaining confidence in his gestural usage.
Figure 47. Teacher C student, mini case-study.

Ci sono questi [versi brevissimi] (There are these very short verses)

Dove si sono [... eh... corti] ... velocemente (Where they are ... uh... short... quickly)

The student repeats the same gesture two more times (Figure 47). This time he is looking at a PowerPoint slide, which shows the verses of the poem, he just read. He is explaining that the poet writes very short verses. This time, his gesture usage with this utterance gives the idea of chopping something off (thus, keeping verses short). His gestural use of space has grown again, and his articulation is very clear and clean, contrasting his earlier tentative attempts. Looking back, one could infer that his previous attempts at this same gesture were also to communicate the idea of cutting something short. However, the gesture was not so clear until this last utterance. Presumably, he was trying to communicate this idea of keeping verses short, of cutting words out (a characteristic of this particular poet), and in this last utterance both words and gestures seem to come together in expressing that meaning.
A little while later, the student makes another Italian-looking gesture in terms of gestural space (Figure 48).

Figure 48. Teacher C student, mini case-study.

*Lui voleva [aiutare l’uomo]* (He wanted to help men)

*Attraverso la poesia* (Through poetry)

The student pauses his speech after *voleva* and brings his hands up close to his chest, fingers forward. He then quickly moves his arms forward to communicate the idea that the poet wants to help by getting something out of him and to someone else in front of him. The stroke coincides with the stressed syllable in *attraverso*, then he makes another small beat close to where his hands are. This stroke coincided with the stressed syllable in *l’uomo*. He repeats the same beat coinciding with the stressed syllable in *attraverso*, then joins his fingers at the fingertips in a gesture that looks a lot like the *pregare* gesture. He holds it until the end of this utterance.

Finally, in one big last gestural instance, the student uses a gesture that looks very much like the *pregare* gesture (Figure 49). He uses it in a single-handed manner and not
in a correct context, but just looking at the gesture itself, one can observe the similarity of this gesture to ones used by his teacher during her lectures:

*Peso* sul telegrafo (Hanging from the telegraph pole)

The student uses this visual cue with his right hand in front of his chin, fingers open, arm bent at the elbow, to illustrate the fact that someone was hanging from a pole. It appears that he is using the gesture to communicate point in space rather than action (i.e., he seems to be showing with his arm where the person was hanging rather than that the person was hanging).

As one will note from viewing the illustrations above of both the teacher and the student, the single-handed pregare gesture used by the student in the striped shirt is the same gesture his teacher used moments before asking him to give his presentation in front of the class. Also, his other gestures are very similar to his teacher’s general gesture usage throughout the data analysis in this study.
Although his mimicking of man a borsa and pregare do not seem necessarily coherent with the words being expressed, the fact that he is (likely subconsciously) using gestures that he has seen his Italian teachers use before (in correct contexts) shows that the student is acquiring a sense of language and identity not just through words but also through nonverbal cues.

**Conclusion**

Through this mirroring mini-study, it is clear once again, as was the case with the Teacher-Student section above, that students notice and mirror their teachers’ gestures. Nonverbal communication is part of having an Italian identity (De Jorio, 1832; Diadori, 1990; Kendon, 1995). Therefore, students exposed to teachers who are native speakers of Italian and who are embodying (Donald, 2001; McCafferty, 2002) and performing (Newman & Holtzman, 1993) their Italian identity (Holland & Lachitotte, 2007; Marx, 2002) in the classroom, absorb this particular aspect of learning a languaculture (Agar, 1994) along with oral language. Following their own process of communicative actuation and in different degrees and proficiency levels (Rosa, 2007a, 2007b), these learners imitate and mirror their instructors’ nonverbal communication (Vygotsky, 1962, 1978) by way of renting their teachers’ languaculture identity (Bakhtin, 1984) and learning to perform in it (Newman & Holtzman, 1993) as was the case with the student in this mini case-study.

**Student Online Survey**

Because the Student Online Survey was optional, only four students participated in this part of the study. However, these four participants are enough to give us an idea of how students feel about the nonverbal aspects observed in their Italian courses (see
Interestingly, the participants varied in linguistic proficiency, Italian course level, and time spent in Italy; thus, providing a broad overview on this topic that reinforces the observations made up to this point.

All four students who responded to the survey wrote about the importance of understanding and appreciating Italian culture as an aspect of learning the language. This idea was emphasized in the extreme by Student 2, who, having lived in Italy and reached an advanced level of proficiency in the language, suggested his goal was to experience what it is like to be Italian. All four students placed high esteem on the notion that their teachers were real Italians and thought that having native speakers of Italian as teachers helped them become more knowledgeable of the language and culture. Moreover, the students were aware of the nonverbal, Italian character of their teachers when communicating, commenting on eye movement, facial expression, and a generally dramatic sense of interaction that also registered nonverbally. The students who had been to Italy considered these characteristics to be simply an attribute of the teachers being native Italians.

Additionally, of interest to the study is a student who did not fill out the online survey but spoke to one of the researchers during videotaping, saying that he had returned from Italy a few months earlier, where he had been for two years. As it happened, he was a student in Teacher B’s course and had initiated two different Italian emblematic gestures that she in turn mirrored. This action suggests that he might have become accustomed to using Italian gestures as a part of interacting with people in Italy.

When asked to consider their teachers’ use of gestures, it was clear that the four students had different levels of Italian experience and awareness of gestures from native
Italian speakers. This was obviously due to their distinct contexts of exposure to the language and to native speakers of the language. However, the students who took the survey responded that they all understood most or all of their teachers’ gestures. Additionally, they felt that gestures helped to clarify the meaning of words at times, and that if they did not fully understand a particular gesture, they were typically able to “figure it out” from the contexts of use. Furthermore, Student 2 wrote, “The language calls for [gesture]. It is a part of the Italian identity.” Student 4 added that Italian gestures are “part of communication” and “a natural thing” when speaking Italian. Also, the two students who had lived in Italy for an extended period (Students 2 and 3) commented on becoming involved in conversations and using gesture as a component of their exchanges. Student 2 particularly expressed how he was actively pursuing “being Italian.” Student 4 also mentioned that she knew that she used gestures when struggling to get her meaning across (she was at a lesser level of proficiency than the others).

Conclusion

The responses received on the student online survey indicate, once again, that students do notice their instructors’ Italian identity (Holland & Lachicotte, 2007; Marx, 2002; Norton, 2000) and embodiment (Haught & McCafferty, 2008; McCafferty, 2002) of the Italian languaculture (Agar, 1994). Those students in particular who have been to Italy and lived there for an extended period of time know and expect their instructors to perform (McCafferty, 2002; Newman & Holtzman, 1993) and prolept them (Van Lier, 2004) into their languaculture. Furthermore, these same students actively imitate and mirror their teachers in an effort to become more like them in acquiring an Italian identity of their own (Vygotsky, 1962, 1978). They are aware that gestures are used by their
instructors as a social semiotic in learning another language (Goldin-Meadow & McNeill, 1999; Thibault, 2004). The students who are at a lower language proficiency level and who have never been to Italy interestingly do not have these well-articulated expectations; however, they still notice their teachers’ mimetic forms of identity (Donald, 2001; McCafferty, 2008b) and use them, especially gestures, as an aid to their language comprehension (McCafferty, 2004). The difference between levels of awareness and expectations underline the process of communicative actuation that every learner undergoes (Rosa, 2007a, 2007b).

Summary and Conclusion

Chapter Five has presented the best pieces of evidence found in the data collected for this study with regards to how native speaking language instructors of Italian, at a subconscious level, show their identity (Holland & Lachicotte, 2007; Marx, 2002; Norton, 2000) through the embodied use (Donald, 2001; Haught & McCafferty, 2008; McCafferty, 2002) of mimetic forms of identity (Donald, 2001; McCafferty, 2008b) in a meaning-making effort (Donald, 2001; Goldin-Meadow & McNeill, 1999) to prolept their students (Van Lier, 2004) into a future in which they become active and functional members of their target languaculture (Agar, 1994). Additionally, this research found indications that students of instructors of Italian recognize their teachers’ embodiment of their Italian identity and see their teachers’ use of Italian mimetic forms of identity (De Jorio, 1832; Diadori, 1990; Kendon, 1995), especially Italian gestures (Cocchiara, 1977; Lamedica, 1987; Poggi, 1983; Ricci Bitti, 1987), as a social semiotic in teaching and learning another language (Goldin-Meadow & McNeill, 1999; Thibault, 2004). Accordingly, students were found to imitate or mirror their teachers’ use of gestures and
instructors were observed imitating or mirroring their students’ use of gestures (Vygotsky, 1962, 1978), all in all emphasizing the co-constructiveness of Italian figured worlds in the classrooms (Boaler & Greeno, 2000) and the application of the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development in such contexts (Vygotsky, 1962, 1978). This evidence was provided through illustrating and discussing numerous examples of nonverbal behavior on the part of the teachers and of the students, and through analyzing and discussing the teachers’ and students’ own views on the subject. Conclusions about what all of this means is offered in the final chapter of this study, Chapter Six.
CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSIONS

Chapter Six provides the conclusions based on the findings, analysis and discussion of the current study drawn from Chapter Five connecting it to the theoretical framework and literature presented in previous chapters. First, Chapter Six summarizes the purpose of the study and asks the four research questions restated throughout this dissertation. Second, conclusions for each major section of the findings and discussion in the previous chapter are drawn. Next, final conclusions for this study are proposed and summarized. Implications for teaching and learning and further research complete the final chapter of this dissertation.

Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to examine the use of nonverbal communication, particularly mimetic forms of identity (Donald, 2001; McCafferty, 2008b), by teachers and students in beginning, intermediate and advanced Italian as a foreign language university classrooms taught by native Italian speakers as a form of meaning-making (Goldin-Meadow & McNeill, 1999) that enhances communication. Data were gathered from four different classrooms and were presented in Chapter Five along with an analysis and discussion. This chapter presents general conclusions about the data as a whole (in this section) and later by topic as outlined in the sections of the previous chapter.

The four research questions which have guided this study are listed below:

1. To what extent do native speakers of Italian teaching Italian as a FL use forms of gesture (especially mimetic gestures associated with Italian identity) in the classroom?
2. To what extent do students use gestures in the classroom, especially mimetic forms associated with Italian identity?

3. In what ways do students take up their teachers’ use of gesture during classroom interactions?

4. What are teachers’ and students’ perspectives of their own and each other’s use of gestures in the classroom, especially those gestures associated with Italian identity?

**Teacher Use of Gestures**

**Gesture Use**

Gesturing is an integral part of the way Italian people communicate (De Jorio, 1832; Diadori, 1990; Kendon, 1995). Asking Italians not to use their hands is like asking them not to speak. As is common knowledge, generally speaking, Italians tend to regularly use their hands and arms in conjunction with their speech, especially in informal situations. What is perhaps less obvious is that Italians also use the rest of their body to communicate, or mimesis (Donald, 2001). In fact, they use their head, facial expressions (including eye and mouth movements), posture, legs, and feet in conjunction with the more typically known hand and arm movements. Furthermore, Italians use their voice (tone, volume, enunciation, etc.) to emphasize certain parts of speech or emotions. An additional characteristic of Italian mimesis is its wide range of movements. Even when Italians use a type of gesture that is not typically Italian per se (for example waving to someone), the range of their movement is wide. So, if Americans would just raise their arm, keeping their elbow close to the body and wiggling their fingers to say hello, Italians would raise their arm higher, they would detach the elbow from the body, and they would
shake their hand making a bigger movement to communicate the same word (i.e., hello) in an informal context, often adding other body movements to emphasize the gesture.

In formal situations, Italians tend to behave differently and to inhibit their movements, as they are not seen as proper formal behavior. Kendon (2004b), in discussing the subject of “oratoria” (i.e., public speech), refers to the work of Quintilianus (dating back to the first century AD) where he explains that public figures and even upper-class people (e.g., royalty, leaders, politicians, philosophers, etc.) among the Romans were essentially trained in the art of public speech and were taught to use gesture and mimesis effectively and properly during their public speeches. In fact, some types of gestures were perceived as too informal and inappropriate for people who spoke in public because they would detract from aural speech (i.e., the words that were said), which was considered as the primary part of communication.

In this study, data showed that teachers used similar Italian gestures (Cocchiara, 1977; Lamedica, 1987; Poggi, 1983; Ricci Bitti, 1987) in each differing classroom context and teaching style. This is largely due to their common Italian identity. In general, teachers expressed strong notions of self and the cultural contexts that contribute to their language instruction (Holland & Lachicotte, 2007), but none had consciously engaged in the use of gesture as a method for transmitting meaning during their lessons. However, nonverbal behavior and common Italian gesture forms were prominent in all classroom contexts observed.

Each Italian course level was also a component in the preponderance of nonverbal behavior. In fact, an increase in gesture and mimesis use seemed proportionally related to how advanced the course was – more gesture in more advanced courses (beginning
Italian - Teacher A, intermediate Italian - Teacher D, advanced Italian literature - Teacher B, advanced Italian history - Teacher C). Class size also influenced how formal or informal the teacher role was perceived. Smaller enrollment (e.g., Teacher D) created a more informal and perhaps less “serious” environment than the larger course enrollment of the other classes.

It was also evident that nonverbal behavior was strictly related to an Italian identity, in that gestures, especially Italian emblematic ones (De Jorio, 1832; Diadori, 1990; Kendon, 1995), were more prominent and increased in simultaneous use with the Italian language as opposed to the English language (Kellerman & Van Hoof, 2003; Negueruela et al., 2004; Stam, 2006, 2008; Yoshioka, 2008; Yoshioka & Kellerman, 2006). For example, Teacher A, who taught primarily using the English language, intermingled with Italian, showed an increased usage of nonverbal behavior when speaking Italian as opposed to English. Also, the more advanced courses (Teachers B and C) were exclusively taught in Italian and had generally higher rates of gesture compared to the other two courses. Furthermore, when Teachers B and C sporadically broke into their local Italian dialects, their Italian nonverbal identity was far more accentuated and it included whole-body mimesis, vocal tone, and the other features discussed above.

**Emblematic Gesture Usage (Mano a Borsa, Mani Giunte, Pagare)**

The teachers in this study all used emblematic gestures. The three Italian emblematic gestures that are highlighted in this study (i.e., *mano a borsa, mani giunte, pagare*) are all prominent among Italian speakers. While the specific meanings of these three emblems are articulated in detail in Chapter Five, it is interesting to note here that the one gesture of the three more tied to its meaning (i.e., *pagare*) was the one that was
used every single time that meaning was communicated with words by the teacher participants. In contrast, *mano a borsa* was not used every time someone could have potentially used it, likely due to this gesture’s many meanings and possible implications and applications. In fact, the meaning for *mano a borsa* in any given context is, of the three emblematic gestures, the most difficult to interpret, as the gesture can be used in multiple contexts of meaning. For example, it is used to express doubt or to raise a question, and given the vast number of contexts an instructor might be able to find to ask questions during class time, the gesture is the one most used by all of the teachers. On the contrary, *mani giunte* and *pagare* are much more tied to contexts not as common to a classroom period (i.e., begging someone and talking about paying something, respectively). All in all, the teacher participants in this study were embodying (Donald, 2001; Haught & McCafferty, 2008; McCafferty, 2002) and performing (McCafferty, 2002; Newman & Holtzman, 1993) their Italian identity (Holland & Lachicotte, 2007; Marx, 2002; Norton, 2000) in the classroom.

**Gestural Space (Exaggerated Beats, Exaggerated Gestures)**

All teachers with the exception of Teacher D used wide gestural space at least sporadically during the lessons observed for this study. Teacher C stands out for her prominent use of wide gestural space on a more regular basis. Exaggerated beats and gestures seem to want to emphasize what is being said, often accompanied by other body movements or varied tone of voice. This is a nonverbal way of getting the students’ attention on particular (new or difficult) concepts or terms that need extra notice. In this way, the teachers embody the concepts and terms and make a visual representation of them, either literally and concretely or in an abstract way.
**Frequency and Repetition of Gesture**

As illustrated in Chapter Five, while all teachers used gestures, they did not display the same frequency or repetition rate. For example, Teachers A and D were observed using fewer gestures than Teachers B and C. They also used fewer repetitions and fewer gestures in general. Teaching style, the linguistic level of each course, the course content, and the amount of Italian language spoken by each instructor are all factors that may have influenced this disparity. In fact, a teacher’s personality and teaching style would have an influence on how expansive the gestures are or how often they are used. A teacher using more English than Italian in a beginning course that emphasizes vocabulary and grammar will also embody his or her Italian identity differently than a teacher who speaks only Italian in an advanced literature class in which all students speak at an advanced proficiency level.

Teacher C, who is the instructor who displayed the highest frequency and repetition of gestures, is clearly a teacher who, though subconsciously, regarded *all* of her teaching (i.e., verbal and nonverbal representations) as input for the students to absorb. By repeating an exaggerated gesture several minutes after forming it for the first time (as was the case with her *pugno di ferro* gesture, see Chapter Five), Teacher C clearly wanted students to recall the background knowledge already established through the first exaggerated gestural instance. The teacher did not repeat the words, but she helped the students recall the words said with the first nonverbal representation by repeating the same gesture later in her lecture. The fact that the second gesture is not as exaggerated as in the first instance also shows how this second representation was made as a reference to and a recall of the first occurrence. The frequency and repetition of gestures displayed by
the instructors is an indication of embodiment on the part of the teachers in an effort to prolept (Van Lier, 2007) students into their new languaculture.

Instructor Background Survey and Follow-Up Interview

Identity (Gesture Usage, Teaching and Learning, Identity and Imitation)

All four teachers were proud and pleasantly surprised to see themselves on video looking so “Italian” because of their mimesis and use of gestures. Even the teachers who used fewer gestures (Teachers A and D) instantly identified this characteristic as the first element they noticed when watching the short clips. Teacher A commented, “See, I’m so damn Italian. See my gestures? I’m so dammed Italian.” Teacher B expressed the words, “Of course I use my hands because I’m Italian.” Teacher C said, “I move my hands like an Italian.” Teacher D’s words conveyed his recognition of Italian embodiment through “talking with my hands.” All comments were uttered with pride and happiness to have discovered this side of their personhood, seeing themselves for the first time as their (non-Italian) students (and non-Italian friends) saw them. The teachers were pleased to discover they looked and acted so Italian. Using mimetic forms of identity, especially gestures was for them, until this study, a non-voluntary component of their process of prolepting their students into Italianness.

It is clear that these teachers found nonverbal communication an essential aspect of teaching and learning Italian, and that teaching and learning Italian went beyond teaching language through words (McNeill, 1992). None of them knew to what extent they were embodying their Italian identity and were pleased to discover that their students indeed benefited from their Italian authenticity. Past teacher evaluations, student
comments and feedback and imitation attempts, clicked in their minds as they made this discovery, seeing what their students saw for the first time.

**Student Use of Gestures**

**Gesture Use**

Students in this study produced observable gestures that point to a sort of evolution of gestural language as students progress through learning the Italian language and learning about the culture (Rosa, 2007). In other words, as learners progress through the continuum of acquiring, renting (Bakhtin, 1984) or appropriating (McCafferty, 1998a; McCafferty & Ahmed, 2000) a new languaculture, they take on their new identity as Italian speakers. This phenomenon was easily recognizable in the data through the student’s use of emblematic gestures typically used by Italian speakers and through gesture mirroring.

**Teacher-Student Mirroring**

Teacher-student mirroring instances in the data point to the fact that taking on a new identity as part of learning a new language and culture is very much a learning process. Learning a language in and of itself inevitably means trial and error. The same seems to be true of learning a languaculture, and in the case of Italian, learning nonverbal communication. The three examples presented in Chapter Five show students who are learning to be like their teachers. They do so by imitating and mirroring their teachers’ gestures, and they do not always get it exactly right as they learn to correctly articulate gestures in the proper contexts.

What is even more interesting is to note that the student who mirrors a gesture in the lower-proficiency Italian class does so to help her oral production. She is unsure
whether the word she is using is an actual Italian word (it is not), and petitions the teacher
to give her feedback on her oral language by showing him a gesture that she had mirrored
from him. When a second student notices her difficulty and says the correct word the
teacher had just used, this second student has just shown that she, too, has learned
through the use of gestures displayed by the teacher and has recognized the first student’s
mirroring him. The first student, after receiving help from her classmate, then breaks off
the gesture, points to the classmate (as if to validate what she just said) and repeats the
correct word in Italian. She no longer needs the gesture because she has the Italian word
now. Thus, gesture seems to serve as a language tool in the early stages of learning a
language when students do not know how to express meanings (McCafferty, 2002). This
appears to be an example of language learning at an intermediate level. The other two
examples in Chapter Five, however, show how the students at a more advanced level and
who mirror their instructors’ gestures are not necessarily asking for feedback on their
language use, but they are focusing on the content of the lesson and discussing it in
Italian while they practice renting (Bakhtin, 1984) their new identity through gesture
mirroring. These examples in Chapter Five point to the gesture learning process as a
continuum, as Rosa (2007) describes with his communicative actuation theory as related
to learning a language across diverse timescales and environments.

**Student-Teacher Mirroring**

Although the teachers in this study were not aware of their own gesture use at a
conscious level, it appears that subconsciously they were. In the five examples presented
in Chapter Five, Teachers B and D use gestures along with words to teach and provide
feedback to their students by mirroring their students’ gestures. This characteristic is
common in language teaching - teachers repeat their students’ words as a way to provide feedback and sometimes model and correct their errors. Similarly, the teachers in these examples are providing validation and feedback both with words and with gestures by mirroring their students’ non-verbal nonverbal production.

I speculate that while part of teachers mirroring students is due to the nature of good teaching practices (i.e., providing feedback to students), it may also be due to these teachers’ Italian identity. Since nonverbal communication is such a prominent part of how Italians talk, it follows that these teachers are aware of and pick up on this aspect of communication, whether consciously or not. I also speculate that, much like with oral language, students will be more inclined to test their nonverbal skills when they have teachers who provide such thorough feedback and validate their efforts by mirroring their gestures.

**Mirroring Mini Case-Study**

The mini case-study is yet another indication that nonverbal communication is taught and learned through a process similar to oral language (Allen, 1995; Jungheim, 2006, 2008; Lazaraton, 2004; McCafferty, 2002). The student in this example (see Chapter Five) is not only progressing through a learning continuum of the Italian languaculture (Rosa, 2007), but he is also exemplifying his learning of gesture usage symbolically through performing (McCafferty, 2002; Newman & Holtzman, 1993) during his short presentation in front of the class. In fact, he begins his presentation with shy mannerisms, using little or no gestures at all. As he gains confidence, he displays a conservative use of gestures that grows into more expansiveness as he builds momentum. What is fascinating at this point is that the student does not always use the correct form of
gesture for the given linguistic context. He tends to use emblematic Italian gestures (likely because those are the gestures more typically used and therefore more observable by a learner) either not quite correctly articulated, not coinciding with the most appropriate syllables or words, or not quite appropriate to the word choice that coincides with the gesture. Yet, his language and nonverbal communication are understandable. Particularly, he mirrors many of the gestures his teacher regularly uses or used just prior to his presentation.

Again, students are aware of their teachers’ nonverbal cues. Perhaps they realize (albeit subconsciously) that Italians gesture, and they try to learn typical Italian (emblematic) gestures first. Emblematic gestures are easier to learn because they represent a word, so it is like learning the gesture that goes with the word. It is like learning another language together with the oral language. Certainly within the contexts of the study, learning nonverbal communication parallels the process of learning the spoken language.

**Student Survey**

The feedback from the four students who took the survey confirms what has been discussed above. Namely, the students in this study did notice their teachers’ nonverbal communication; they even expected it. In fact, gestures assisted in comprehending the language (McCafferty, 1998b) for students at a lower linguistic proficiency. For students at a higher proficiency level, gestures were an anticipated, natural and predictable part of production when communicating with Italian speakers. Furthermore, the advanced students actively pursued learning the Italian culture along with the language, particularly imitating their teachers’ and other native Italian speakers’ use of nonverbal
communication. Gesturing, therefore, seems to be an expected characteristic of a native Italian speaker, and students have been found to absorb it, mirror it and internalize it (Lantolf, 2005; León, 2001; McCafferty, 2006), as an implicit part of learning the Italian language.

Final Conclusions

Overall, Italian mimetic gestures of identity were found in great abundance for all four teachers, despite their being unaware of them during the moment-to-moment timescale of speech production. The integration of speech and gesture (McNeill, 1992) in the making of meaning (Goldin-Meadow & McNeill, 1999) as represented through the transcription system for the examples from the data indicates that gesture production was idiosyncratic at the level of the individual teachers, for example, the use of particular emblems. Other features are not represented, however; for instance, differences in articulation related to handshape and hand position and gender. The use (whether self-actuated or mirrored) of Italian mimetic gestures of identity were also found among students.

Teaching in an Italian FL classroom, that is, the contexts of activity (Lantolf, 2000; Leontiev, 1978) as interpreted by the teachers, was the primary force behind the use of their Italian gestures. First, all four of the instructors clearly were aware of the esteem that being Italian, or embodying their Italian identity within the figured world created in the classroom (Boaler & Greeno, 2000; Donald, 2001; Holland & Lachicotte, 2007; Marx, 2002; McCafferty, 2002; Norton, 2000) held for them among the students, who had indicated on teacher evaluations and in the four student responses to the survey that they found this to be of benefit to their efforts to learn the language and culture. One
student (Student 2) even wanted to pursue “being Italian,” thus developing and embodying his own Italian identity. The three teachers at the university site also mentioned that they had witnessed students imitating their gestures, another reason for the teachers to feel that their nonverbal Italian identity was of value in the classroom. Moreover, Teacher C suggested that she intentionally tried to have her advanced students imitate her Italian nonverbal behaviors, she and the other teachers in the study indicating that communicating in Italian goes beyond the use of words.

The use of Italian mimetic gestures of identity then, was not an incidental aspect of how the four teachers presented themselves to their students in the act of teaching the language. Instead, it appears that this aspect of their identity also operated as a pedagogical tool, providing sense and prolepting students into possibly undertaking the actuation of these communicative forms as a part of the languaculture. The teachers created a figured world based on the real-world goal of helping students to “communicate as Italians do.” This was a dramaturgical construction, a performing (McCafferty, 2002; Newman & Holtzman, 1993) of Italian that included the students as well, who were found to imitate Italian emblems produced by the instructors. Students also reflected the Italian articulation of gestures (beats and other gestures) produced by their instructors when asking questions or responding to the teachers in interaction. Italian gestures, particularly beats are integrated with the prosody of language, which might in and of itself be reason enough for students to imitate them, that is, to externalize (materialize) this aspect of the language through gesture as a means for self-regulation and eventual internalization (Gal’perin, 1989), a process in regard to SL gesture that has been studied (McCafferty, 2006).
Even though encountering diverse contexts of exposure to the Italian languaculture (e.g., living in Italy, growing up with Italian relatives in the United States, enrolling in a university course) as well as different sequences of contextual exposure across time and place (e.g., living in Italy, then taking classes in the United States, then returning to Italy), I surmise that students nonetheless likely followed a similar pattern of actuation—accumulating a sense of the meaning and use of Italian gestures through observation of their use in contexts, next imitating the gestures of others, and finally engaging in the conventional use of gestures through their own initiative (McCafferty, 2006), as was found for the one student who talked to the researcher about having recently returned from Italy. Also, the two students who responded to the survey as having spent extensive time living in Italy both recalled their use of gesture when conversing with Italians. However, even in the case of these two students, I argue that the particular dynamics of whom they interacted with in the language, where they lived in the country (region, city, neighborhood), and how their experiences and knowledge cohered across time likely would have influenced each differently with regard to the process of actuation. Also, I recognize that not all learners of Italian necessarily will deploy these forms of gesture; for example, Teacher C pointed out that even highly motivated students in her classes never produced them in some cases. Thus, motivation (Leontiev, 1978) can be a determining factor in the process of communicative actuation undertaken by any individual student. Nevertheless, internalization (Vygotsky, 1986) should be the goal for students and teachers alike – to become Italian like their teacher by embodying their new languaculture. Students need to rely on imitating what they see their teachers do and say
what they hear, until their Italianness becomes internalized and led by culturally based activities (Roth & Lee, 2007).

Finally, I argue that those students in the classes studied who were actually invested in learning the language and culture and not just about the language and culture were moving in a trajectory that necessarily involves confronting frontier regions of the Zone of Proximal Development. The dialogic and dialectical process of creating identity is at the frontier between the internal and the external. Through the external, material affordances of a new language and culture, the learner begins to develop new ways of being in the world. This is a dynamic, dialogic, and embodied process that, given this description, naturally includes the social semiotics of mimetic gestures of identity. The dialectic between the individual and society is also addressed, because language learners are at once moving outside of the parameters of their own culture in an individual act of growth and personal development, which, paradoxically, is simultaneously the act of engaging in a social community—a situation that can be fraught with tensions.

Furthermore, mimetic gestures of identity inhabit both the material and the symbolic planes at once (Gal’perin, 1989), deriving their meaning from the materiality of culture and actions, which also become symbolic. As such, a language learner’s exploration of the external, material plane of gesture is also an exploration of symbolic meaning, the two ultimately becoming inseparable at some point. Additionally, the act of stepping into another social world as a player and not just an observer is to embrace the evolutionary (or revolutionary) and not the static. However, actual development, once again, is contingent on successfully navigating the dialectical tension between these two realms; that is, finding dialectical unity (Vygotsky, 1986).
Implications

The use of Italian gestures by both teachers and students may prove, with further research, to be an important aspect of teaching and learning, although recognizing that student orientation and communicative actuation (Rosa, 2007) have a good deal to do with whether these forms of communication are perceived and acted upon as affordances (Goldin-Meadow & McNeill, 1999). Moreover, the process of performing (McCafferty, 2002; Newman & Holtzman, 1993) the languaculture (Agar, 1994), I feel, is an underappreciated aspect of teaching and learning in FL and SL classrooms. In fact, little emphasis has been placed on exploring the dramaturgical dimension of SL acquisition in general. Also, a more direct focus on gestures of identity (Donald, 2001; McCafferty, 2008b), that is, making them explicitly known to students through videos of naturalistic/authentic interaction along with explanations of specific gestures, might prove to be a positive step, particularly with regard to Italian emblems because they are so common and so numerous. Indeed, there is a need for further exploring how certain gestures can help students understand Italian, especially at the early stages of language acquisition, and how at later stages students can use gestures to begin their own path through imitation (Vygotsky, 1986) and performance toward becoming embodied communicators (Donald, 2001; McCafferty, 2002) of their new languaculture.

Furthermore, teachers should be made aware both of their embodiment of their languaculture and of the importance of openly teaching gestures to language learners. Thus, it is important to have teachers understand the functions of gesture in language teaching and learning. It would be interesting to follow up with the teacher participants in this study to see, after having discovered the Italianness of their embodiment as
instructors of the Italian language, and having made the connection between their performing in the classroom and their students’ feedback both on evaluation forms and in gesture imitation and mirroring, if anything has changed in the degree to which they subsequently gesture while they teach, their awareness of their own and their students’ use of Italian nonverbal communication, and their perspectives on the importance of this aspect of teaching.

Of course, these implications are also applicable to other languages, particularly ones in which mimetic forms of identity (Donald, 2001) are an integral component of the languaculture. The language classroom in general would benefit if instructors understood the significance of their role as one of creating figured worlds (Boaler & Greeno, 2000) in which identity (Holland & Lachicotte, 2007) meaning making (Goldin-Meadow & McNeill, 1999), social semiotics (Thibault, 2004; Tomasello & Call, 2007) and prolepsis (Van Lier, 2004) are at the core of teaching and learning. The concepts of figured worlds and prolepsis go hand in hand. Indeed, it would be good practice for a language teacher (or any other teacher) to extend an invitation to students, to interact with them as if they will become competent communicators in the target language (or in any content area), thus prolepting the students into their classroom’s figured world – something that also, of course, that might well (or even should) be the goal of teachers and students alike. It is my hope that with further research, gestures and their different functions in language classrooms and in the wild will garner more attention as an integral aspect of meaning-making in face-to-face contexts.
APPENDIX A: TEACHER BACKGROUND SURVEY

1. Please list all Italian class(es) you are currently teaching
2. Please indicate your country of birth
3. If you were not born in the United States, please indicate the age at which you moved to the United States.
4. Please list your native language(s)
5. Please indicate any other language(s) spoken and how you learned each language.
6. Please describe in detail your experience living in other countries. (List the countries you have lived in and the amount of time you lived there.)
7. Please describe in detail your experience traveling to other countries.
8. Please list your education including major(s).
9. Please list your teaching experience (include school, years teaching, grade, and subject)
APPENDIX B: INSTRUCTOR FOLLOW-UP INTERVIEW

GENERAL QUESTIONS:

1. How do you know Italian?
2. Do you consider yourself a native speaker of Italian?
3. What do you think about being an Italian person teaching Italian?
4. Do you feel that your students gain anything from having you, a native speaker of Italian, rather than a non-native speaker of Italian as a teacher?
   a. If yes, what are some examples?
   b. If no, why not?
5. How would you define a successful student of Italian? What characteristics would he/she have that other students would not possess?
6. What would be the most important thing (or some of the most important things) that a student of Italian should do in order to really learn the Italian language?
7. In your opinion, what does it mean to have an “Italian identity”?
8. Do you feel like you have an Italian identity as a teacher of Italian?
9. Do you think it helps if a student of Italian tries to understand what having an Italian identity is?
10. Have you ever had students of Italian who seemed to acquire not only the language but also a little bit of an Italian identity?
    a. If yes, how could you tell so?

QUESTIONS ABOUT CLIPS:

1. What is your reaction to watching yourself teach?
2. What did you notice about your nonverbal behavior in this clip?
3. Can you please explain what you meant by student investigator indicates a particular gesture/mimesis from the class observation?
4. Are you aware of the gestures/mimesis that you use in the classroom? If yes, can you give me some examples of gestures/mimesis that you consciously use to help you explain something?
5. Do you teach your students specific gestures/mimesis? If yes, which ones?
6. Why do you think you use (these) gestures?
7. Do you think that your students understand these gestures as being typically Italian?
8. Do you think that your students’ understanding is enhanced or hindered by your usage of (these) Italian gestures?
9. Have you ever seen students mirroring your gestures, and why do you think they did that?
   a. If yes, at what level of language learning were they?

FINAL QUESTIONS:

10. What is your teaching philosophy?
11. How do you situate yourself in your philosophy?
12. Does knowing about the nonverbal aspects of being Italian change your view in any way about how pedagogy should be approached? Does it inform you in any other way?
APPENDIX C: STUDENT ONLINE SURVEY

BACKGROUND AND GENERAL QUESTIONS:
1. What is your full name? (This information will remain confidential).
2. How do you know Italian? (Please indicate how you have learned the language, including how many years of formal instruction you have received and course level – high school, college, etc. – and your experiences abroad in Italy – including how many times and for how long.)
3. What do you think about having a native or quasi-native speaker of Italian as your teacher?
4. What have you gained, if anything, from having a native speaker of Italian, rather than a non-native speaker of Italian, as a teacher? What are some examples? If you feel you've not gained anything, why not?
5. How would you define a successful Italian student? What characteristics would he/she have that other students would not possess?
6. In your opinion, what does it mean to have an “Italian identity”?
7. Do you feel like you have an Italian identity to any degree? Please explain.
8. Do you think it helps if a student of Italian tries to understand what having an Italian identity means? If yes, how?
9. If you have any other comments, please write them here:

FOCUSED QUESTIONS:
1. What sort of nonverbal behavior (gestures, facial expressions, etc.) have you noticed your teacher using during class?
2. In your opinion, why do you think your teacher uses these gestures?
3. Would you consider any of his/her gestures as being typically Italian?
4. Do you understand all gestures your teacher uses? Which gestures of those your teacher uses do you not understand?
5. Do you think that your understanding of class content is enhanced or hindered by your teacher’s usage of Italian gestures? Why?
6. Have your Italian teachers specifically taught you gestures? If yes, which ones?
7. Have you ever noticed yourself using nonverbal behavior during class? If yes, what do you think about it?
8. Have you ever tried to mirror your teacher’s gestures? If yes, why do you think you did that?
9. If you have any other comments, please write them here:
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