

Research Project

From Multimodality to Multisensoriality: Language, Body, and Sensoriality in Social Interaction (intSenses)

Third-party funded project

Project title From Multimodality to Multisensoriality: Language, Body, and Sensoriality in Social Interaction (intSenses)

Principal Investigator(s) [Mondada, Lorenza](#) ;

Organisation / Research unit

Departement Sprach- und Literaturwissenschaften / Französische und Allgemeine Linguistik (Mondada)

Department

Project start 01.01.2018

Probable end 30.09.2022

Status Completed

Sensoriality is a fundamental dimension of the human experience in and of the world — since people engage in the material world using their entire body, their senses and their language. However, despite a growing interest in language and embodiment in various disciplines the role of sensoriality is still neglected. Moreover, sensoriality is often considered as relying primarily on individual and private perceptions. Although some research on the senses exists in cognitive linguistic and historical-anthropological fields, sensoriality remains largely ignored from an interactional perspective.

The *intSenses* project aims at filling these gaps, by recognizing sensoriality a central theoretical and empirical role within an integrated model of language and body in social interaction. Rooted in conversation analysis, the project aims at developing current research on *multimodality* in social interaction — that is, the way participants mobilize together language, gesture, gaze, body postures and movements in order to act and communicate — on the new territory of *multisensoriality* – that is, the way participants collectively engage in sensorial practices involving all of the senses.

More particularly, the project will develop empirical analyses of how people smell, taste, and touch food within joint activities such as cooking together, how their body and their language feature in these practices in specific and complementary ways, how they manifest publicly and communicate intersubjectively what they sense within social interaction. These empirical analyses will inspire conceptual advances, reflecting on the role of sensoriality in the multimodal organization of social interaction. Thus, the project's general aim is to propose a new approach to multisensoriality based on a multimodal approach of social interaction.

- The focus of the study are *sensory practices* – that is, meaningful social acts of sensing – carried out via movements of the hand and the body. These sensory practices are embedded within specific courses of action and broader activities in talk and social interaction.
- The focus will be on the more neglected sensory practices – *tasting, touching, and smelling* – and their interrelationships. *Gazing* and *hearing* will also be considered as they are crucial for establishing the intersubjectivity of sensory practices.
- Multisensoriality will be studied using an innovative methodology involving video recordings of sensory practices and detailed multimodal transcription and analysis of these recordings. The data will document how people in authentic social settings, speaking different languages, experience their senses during ordinary activities.
- The analytical focus will be on the *multimodal* resources (language, gesture, gaze, facial expressions, body postures, movements, etc.) that organize these practices in a publicly intelligible

way. This also entails the study of how language and the body, i.e. *audible* (verbal and vocal) and *visible* resources, achieve the *intersubjectivity* of sensory practices in social interaction.

- An empirical focus will be given to tasting, touching, and smelling in *food activities* as an exemplary domain for empirical investigations of sensoriality in action. Instances of sensory practices in selecting, preparing, and discovering food will be studied in detail.

On the one hand, the project aims at analyzing how people collectively engage in sensory practices – such as tasting food, for example – by mobilizing different aspects of their body and their language in a way that is publicly and intersubjectively intelligible. On the other hand, the project aims at showing how sensoriality features in the multimodal organization of interaction, by showing how not only visual and audible but also haptic, aromatic, and tasty features are oriented to by participants in building the accountability of their mutual and coordinated activities

Financed by

Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF)

Add publication

Add documents

Specify cooperation partners