

## From ‘body language’ to ‘linguistic bodies’: Towards a new popular science of the body/language relation

Is there such a thing as ‘body language’? Research in gesture studies, multimodal interaction, and embodied cognitive science suggests there is not. Evidence that language is *embodied* and our bodies are *linguistic* calls into question the separations on which ‘body language’ has been based. So how can we convince non-specialists to reconsider how body and language relate? In this talk, I propose one line of reasoning that might work. I start with the simple idea that we can’t have ‘body language’ because we already have ‘bodies with language’. This formulation has its own problems, which I will address, but helps by shifting focus from a type of language (a ‘body language’) to a type of body (a ‘body with language’). With language now an integral feature of the body, we can arrive at the *linguistic body* described both in gesture studies (Müller, 2013; Müller, Bressemer & Ladewig, 2013; Harrison, 2018) and in enactive cognitive science (DiPaolo, Cuffari & De Jaegher, 2018), as well as at the *enculturated* and *cognitive body* found in philosophy of mind (Clark, 2011; Menary, 2013; Gallagher, 2017) and the *multimodal, collaborative, and situated body* found in multimodal interaction (Streeck, 2017; Mondada, 2019). In other words, ‘bodies with language’ might serve as a Trojan Horse to smuggle these more technical but scientifically robust ideas into the mainstream conversation (Harrison, in preparation). Having given an overview of this argument, I will illustrate my analyses of the *cognitive body* in interaction with empirical data from everyday contexts in China.

### References

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