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”The baking stick thing”: Automatization of co-speech gesture during lexical access

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Abstract: Multiple studies (Galati & Brennan, 2014; Hoetjes, Koolen, Goudbeek, Krahmer, & Swerts, 2001; Jacobs & Garhnam, 2007) have shown reduction in co-speech gesture across repetition. Reduction can be interpreted in terms of demonstrating automatization of effort (Vajrabhaya & Pederson, 2014). This study specifically investigates a special type of gesture used when speakers are accessing a low-familiarity lexeme. These gestures are assumed to aid lexical retrieval (Rauscher, Krauss, & Chen, 1996) and might be expected to not reduce as long as lexical access remains difficult. Unexpectedly, results show that these gestures also reduce across repetition like any other gesture and independent of lexical access difficulties. This suggests gesture automatization is a broad phenomenon across diverse gesture functions.