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Gesture Restrictions effect on Silent Pauses in Emotional Narratives: An Embodied Emotion Perspective

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Abstract

Gestures and silent pauses are integral to the pragmatic, semantic, and temporal organization of speech. However, how gesture inhibition affects silent pauses in emotional context remains unexplored. This study examined how narrative type and gesture conditions affect (a) the distribution of silent pauses [short (250–500 ms), medium (500–1000 ms), and long (>1000 ms)], measured by frequency, average duration, and time ratio, while controlling for speech rate, and (b) self-reported emotional intensity. Thirty participants ($M_{age}=20.61$) narrated negative (sadness, fear, anger) and neutral (daily routine) experiences in Hindi-English under gesture-restricted ($N=15$) and gesture-free ($N=15$) conditions. A significant main effect of narrative type was found: short pauses increased in neutral narratives under the gesture-free condition, and long pauses increased in negative narratives under the gesture-restricted condition. No significant effect of gesture condition or interaction effect was observed. Gesture restriction also appeared to increase self-reported emotional intensity during negative narratives.