Co-speech gesture in negative questions:
Evidence from American soap opera actors

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In this talk, we present gestural profiles of different negative questions. These questions are considered marked due to the presence of a negation, which does not impact their semantics. Unlike positive questions (1a), negative questions (1b-c), are asked to double-check a proposition (previously) considered to be true, or for which there is evidence in the context that it is true; therefore, there is a bias in the speech situation (see Romero's 2020 overview). Another pragmatic effect of negative questions (but also some positive ones) is that they can be easily used as suggestions, thus not actually having the discourse effect of asking.

(1)   *Mary attends a party at Peters house. After a fun evening, Mary begins to worry about getting home. The last bus just left. Peter says to Mary*:

    a. Do you want to stay?   (Polarity Question; PQ)

    b. Why don't you stay?   (*Why-Don't-You* Question; WDQ)

    c. Don't you want to stay?   (High Negation Question; HNQ)

    d. You want to stay, don't you? (Negative Tag questions; NTQ)

An interesting issue arising here is whether the different question types, resp. the range of discourse effects they may have, are characterized by different patterns of co-speech gesture that potentially guide the interlocutor in interpreting the intended discourse effect and thus arriving at the intended illocutionary interpretation.

Our data comes from 4 actors of the American soap opera *Bold and Beautiful* from the years 2010-2020. For each actor, we selected 80 questions of four different types (PQs, WDQs, HNQs & NTQs). We annotated all questions using the 3MD guidelines (Rohrer et al. 2023) with additions for body posture and eyebrow movement. Our preliminary results suggest that the negative questions considered here do not form a natural class with a uniform gestural encoding but all differ from what is reported for PQs. For instance, WDQs showed more hand gestural activity than other types, and these gestures are more beat-like than others. NTQs had the fewest gestures and were also the least beat-like. They also showed the smallest amount of head-movement. Nevertheless, NTQs had more eyebrow movements than both WDQs and NTQs, contrary to the trend we found in manual gestures.

References: • Rohrer, P. *et al.* (2023) The MultiModal MultiDimensional labeling system, doi: 10.17605/OSF.IO/ANKDX. • Romero, M. (2020) Form & function of negative, tag, and rhetorical questions. In Dépraz & Espinal, *The Oxford Handbook of Negation.* 235-254. OUP.