

## Departmental Seminar

# Gesture: Its relationship to thinking and speaking

## Gesture, language and thought

**Prof. Sotaro KITA**

*University of Warwick*

### About the speaker

After studying engineering in Japan (B.Eng., Mathematical engineering, University of Tokyo, 1986; M.Eng. Information engineering, University of Tokyo, 1988), Prof. Kita moved to Chicago (USA) and received a Ph.D. in psychology and linguistics from the University of Chicago (1993) under the supervision of Professor David McNeill. In 1993, he joined Cognitive Anthropology Research Group (lead by Stephen Levinson) at the Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics in the Netherlands as a postdoc. Prof. Kita worked at the Max Planck Institute as a postdoc (1993-1994), followed by a Senior Researcher in Levinson's group (1994-2003). Throughout his stay at the Institute, he was the leader of the Gesture Project, one of the research foci of the Institute. He was a Senior Lecturer at the Dept. of Experimental Psychology in the University of Bristol (2003-2006), and a Reader at the School of Psychology in the University of Birmingham (2006-2013). He is currently a Professor of Psychology of Language and Deputy Pro Vice Chancellor (Research) at University of Warwick.

### Date

**27 February 2024 (Tuesday)**

### Time

**4:30 pm - 6:00 pm**

### Venue

**Room G6, Ho Tim Building**

### Language

**English**



### Abstract

This presentation concerns a theory on how gestures (accompanying speaking and silent thinking) are generated and how gestures facilitate the gesturer's own cognitive processes. I will present evidence that gestures are generated from a general-purpose Action Generator, which also generates "practical" actions such as grasping a cup to drink, and that the Action Generator generates gestural representation in close coordination with the speech production process (Kita & Ozyurek, 2003, *Journal of Memory and Language*). I will also present evidence that gestures facilitate thinking and speaking through four functions: gesture activates, manipulates, packages and explores spatio-motoric representations (Kita, Chu, & Alibali, 2017, *Psychological Review*). Further, I will argue that schematic nature of gestural representation plays a crucial role in these four functions. To summarise, gesture, generated at the interface of action and language, shapes the way we think and we speak.

**All are welcome**

### **Online Registration**

<https://cloud.itsc.cuhk.edu.hk/webform/view.php?id=13681901>

### **Registration Deadline**

**25 February 2024**

Enquiry:

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