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# Embodied movement as a stratified semiotic mode: how movement, gaze and speech mean together in the classroom

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**Abstract:** This paper develops a model to map out embodied movement as a stratified semiotic mode, that is, a conventionalized set of resources for meaning making. The model describes movement structure as a system that realizes specific meanings activated by contexts of situation. The model establishes an explicit link between contextual meanings and textual patterning by theorizing connections between genre, metafunction, and structure. Drawing upon an empirical study of one teacher's embodied movement in the classroom, this paper maps out movement structure as distinct choices and reveals how movement, gaze and speech function rhythmically to construe information prominence and information boundaries at different levels of discourse organization, which further contributes to coherence and periodicity for the information flow and semantic flow in the lesson. Additionally, the paper reveals that the synthesis of different modes can enact semantic convergence and divergence to aggregate knowledge in pedagogic contexts. The analysis contributes to a systematic understanding of the types of meaning that embodied movement can realize and of the ways in which they are realized together with speech and gaze. The intertwined nature of movement structures, meanings and contexts also indicates that pedagogy is an embodied and situated construction.

**Keywords:** embodied movement; intersemiosis; systemic-functional linguistics; multimodality; tertiary education

## 1 Introduction

The aim of this paper is to grasp more precisely and systematically what types of movement structures our body can afford, how movement, gaze and speech synthesize to make meaning and how contexts are significantly embedded and

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enacted in this communication process. The paper theorizes embodied movement as a stratified semiotic mode that, when contextualized in a specific social practice, carries rich meaning potential. Embodied movement refers to the physical relocation of the entire body in space and involves both dynamic transition and static positioning in space (McMurtrie 2017). Drawing upon empirical case studies of embodied movement, this paper develops a model to map out embodied movement as a stratified semiotic mode, that is, a conventionalized set of resources (e.g., motion orientation, motion range, positioning space, posture, etc.) for meaning making in a given community. The model attends to the materiality of embodied movement in the full affordances of the body, and the context of use that assigns meaning to embodied movement. The model establishes an explicit link between contextual meanings and textual patterning by theorizing connections between genre, meta-function, and structure (Martin 1992). In other words, the model describes embodied movement structure as a system that realizes specific meanings activated by contexts of situation.

In the field of movement studies, there is a well-established recognition that movement constitutes a significant aspect of human communication (e.g., Kendon 2004; Maiorani 2020; Martinec 2000; Mondada 2012). These studies have provided important insights on the communicative role of movement in various contexts and from different theoretical perspectives. Various scholars (e.g., Hao and Hood 2019; McMurtrie 2017) demonstrate with empirical case studies that movement structure, meaning and context are closely related in the meaning-making process, and that in the educational contexts, movement and other semiotic modes such as speech and gaze often co-occur and cooperate with each other to construct pedagogy. In other words, it is widely acknowledged that intersemiosis, the synthesis and coordination of different semiotic modes (Ravelli 1995), is the meaning-making mechanism for the production and interpretation of meaning made in the co-deployment of movement, gaze and speech in specific pedagogic practices. Nevertheless, the teacher's movement in the classroom in a tertiary setting has rarely been investigated in movement scholarship, so there is a relative lack of understanding of its particular nature. In light of this, this paper addresses the following two research questions:

- (1) In the pedagogic context, how are movement structure, meaning, and context interrelated in the meaning-making process?
- (2) How do the teacher's movement, gaze and speech work together to create a coherent lesson in this process?

The site of application for this exploration is a so-called *Active Learning Classroom* in the context of a film studies class in a tertiary setting. The paper first presents a literature review of embodied movement and theoretical concepts utilised in

theorising movement as a stratified semiotic mode. Then, video data that features one teacher's movement in the classroom is introduced, accompanied by the transcription methods. Then, three sections of empirical case analyses are presented to theorize patterns of movement structures as distinct choices and to demonstrate how the teacher's movement, gaze and speech work together to create metafunctional meaning and aggregate knowledge. Finally, the paper discusses the theoretical and practical implications of modelling embodied movement as a semiotic mode from a social semiotic perspective.

## 2 Literature review

The current modelling of embodied movement as a mode of communication (e.g., Bannerman 2014; Blacking 1983; Maiorani 2020; McMurtrie 2013, 2017) “translates” the theory of language such as the pragmatic and the social semiotic theories into movement, relating movement meanings to movement structures in specific contexts. Pragmatic approaches to movement (e.g., Bannerman 2014; Blacking 1983) can be seen as initial attempts to provide a systemic model for the analysis of movement as discourse. Such approaches have made significant contributions to mapping out movement structures as vocabulary and syntax, and to taking context into consideration in movement analysis. However, such “metaphorical” strategies have recently been criticized by some scholars (e.g., McDonald 2013). Also, the meaning potential of movement is only modelled as speech acts, and there is no relationship theorized between movement meaning and movement structure, which significantly reduces the meaning potential of movement, and imposes great challenges for systematic analysis of movement.

Social semiotic approaches to embodied movement, in contrast, draw on Systemic-Functional Linguistics (hereafter SFL) (Halliday 1978) as one of its key theoretical sources. The social semiotic approaches offer a linguistic model of communication whose principles can be applied to the modelling of non-linguistic semiotic modes, such as image (Kress and Van Leeuwen 2006), movement (Maiorani 2020; McMurtrie and Murphy 2016; McMurtrie 2011, 2013, 2017) and space (Ravelli and McMurtrie 2016). These approaches build explicit and systematic connections between movement structures, meaning potentials, and contexts of movement. In other words, these approaches consider movement not only as situated in a specific time and space, but also as a continuously evolving form of social practice shaped through and construing in turn a material and socio-cultural environment. It is noteworthy that while some studies (e.g., McMurtrie 2017) emphasize that the movement choices of users contribute to the meaning potential of space, this paper,

by contrast, highlights the ways in which the meaning potential of movement is conditioned by social contexts.

The teacher's movement in the classroom in the tertiary setting is an interesting phenomenon to investigate the interrelationship of movement structures, meanings and contexts. In spite of a common assumption that the teacher's movement in the classroom is inherent to the spatial and pedagogic experience (Amundrud 2018; Hood 2011; Lim 2011; Ngo et al. 2022), this type of movement is often seen as merely contingent on spatial design features such as layout, rather than a meaning-making mode in its own right (McMurtrie 2017, cf. Bitgood and Patterson 1993). In contrast to these studies, Lim et al. (2012) suggest that patterns of movement can realize a specific spatial pedagogy and enact different interpersonal spaces.

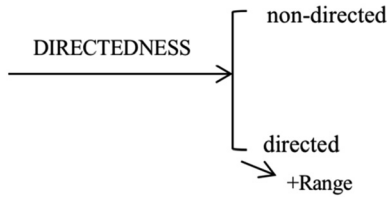
This paper models the teacher's embodied movement as a semiotic mode and uses several concepts in Social Semiotics informed by Systemic-Functional Linguistics (hereafter SFL) in the theorization process, including stratification, axis, metafunction and rank. Stratification provides the theoretical means to model the interrelationship among linguistic structure, meaning and context (Bartlett and O'Grady 2017: 3). In addition to language, the concept of stratification has been employed in the theorization of other semiotic modes such as visitors' movement in an art museum (McMurtrie 2017). Drawing on the notion of stratification, this paper provides a tristratal model of movement – the expression stratum of movement structures, the content stratum of metafunctional meaning, and the context stratum of genre. The interrelationship between each stratum is one of realization (Halliday 2002).

Features of movement structures are represented in a system network. A system is concerned with the choices or meaning potential of a semiotic system, and is a set of opposite features that are realized by a function that gives the structural relations of the choices (Halliday 2009: 63).

Features are realised by functions, indicated by a realisation operator and one or more operands written next to a downward diagonal arrow below the feature, all of which constitutes the realisation statement (McMurtrie 2013: 46).

Two or more systems construct a system network. In a system network, a system is written in all caps and a function is written in initial caps. To illustrate, in Figure 1, the system of DIRECTEDNESS has two features: [non-directed] or [directed], which are mutually exclusive and only one of them can be chosen. The feature [directed] is realized by the presence of the function Range, which formulates a realization statement.

The meaning potential of movement is modelled into three distinct metafunctions: ideational meaning that construes representations of reality; interpersonal meaning



**Figure 1:** A sample system network.

that enacts social relations; and textual meaning that organizes the meaning into coherent texts and units (Halliday 1978). This paper focuses on textual meaning, rhythm in particular, and briefly discusses interpersonal meaning when relevant. The ideational meaning of movement is still a work in progress, but some ideational concepts in speech are used, including semiotic entities that describe abstract features of language, and logical-semantic relations that connect clauses and organize discourse into waves of information (Martin and Rose 2007).

In order to map out the interpersonal meaning made together by movement, gaze and speech, the concepts of contact, involvement and authoritative space are used. According to Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006), a direct eye contact between the participants demands information, a frontal angle between the participants suggests direct involvement, whereas an oblique angle suggests detachment. Additionally, according to Lim et al. (2012: 237) and Amundrud (2022) who further draw on Hall (1966), the semantics of classroom space are conventionalized through a regular unfolding of lesson stages and learning phases. Spaces such as Classroom Front, Lectern, Teacher Whiteboard are described as authoritative space (Lim et al. 2012: 237), where the teacher positions themselves to conduct formal teaching and impart knowledge.

In order to map out the textual meaning made together by movement, gaze and speech, the concepts of periodicity and rhythm are used. Periodicity (Martin and Rose 2007) deals with the coordination of movement with waves of information. Following Martin and Rose (2007), a large stretch of discourse construes a hierarchy of periodicity: multiple layers of predictive prominence constitute the discourse, from clause level Themes to discourse level hyper-Themes and higher level macro-Themes; consolidating prominence is realised through an aggregating hierarchy of News, hyper-News and macro-News. According to Halliday and Matthiessen (2004), Theme refers to the peaks of prominence at the beginning of a clause, which construes the point of departure for information flow, while New refers to another kind of textual prominence at the end of a clause, which culminates the information. Following Van Leeuwen (2005: 181), rhythm is defined as alternations of two

**Table 1:** Movement construing prominence at different ranks.

Mode	Rank	Prominence realization
Movement	Promenade	Point of arrival
	Lesson	Occupation value

polar states. A temporally-based semiotic mode like movement is rhythmically articulated at several ranks at the same time (Martinec 2000: 289). Rank provides a hierarchical arrangement of constituents and any meaningful unit can be split into smaller units at the rank below (Halliday 2002: 120).

Movement construes rhythm at the ranks of the whole lesson and promenade (see Table 1).

Promenade refers to a span of spatial text realized by one moment of Motion straddled by two moments of Stasis (McMurtrie 2017). At the rank of whole lesson, the teacher’s movement in the classroom is rhythmically articulated in relation to classroom space. Occupation value (McMurtrie 2017), that is, the amount of time the teacher spends positioned in a space, creates prominence. On this basis, this paper maps the *Active Learning Classroom* into different zones and then examines how the teacher’s “movement into and out of these zones provides each zone its own unique rhythmic wave” (McMurtrie 2017: 110). At the rank of promenade, the alternation between movement states from Stasis to Motion produces rhythm (McMurtrie 2017: 113). Prominence is realized by the point of arrival, which is analogous to tonic syllable in tone group (Halliday and Matthiessen 2004).

### 3 Data and methodology

#### 3.1 Data

The data collected for this paper is part of a larger project (Wu 2022, 2025) that investigates how space, body and practice function together to construct space as a material, semiotic and social ensemble. Video data is collected at a film studies lesson in an *Active Learning Classroom* at the University of New South Wales, Sydney, whereby technology-integrated spaces and systems are being developed and enhanced. Ethics and copyright agreements of teachers and students of relevant classes to be filmed are obtained by signed consent forms, following the ethics



**Figure 2:** A photo of an *Active Learning Classroom*: the furniture arrangement supports movement.

protocols (HC190413). *Active Learning Classrooms* incorporate multimedia designs that facilitate a multimodal pedagogy and support embodied movement for people situated in this classroom. An *Active Learning Classroom* (see Figure 2) typically features nested tables with movable chairs that are arranged in pods. This design feature allows the teacher to move around and the students to sit together facing each other, so it supports group work and interaction.

The course involved *Hollywood Film: Industry, Technology, Aesthetics*. It is a first-year course concerned with film studies offered by the School of the Arts and Media within the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, as an option within the Bachelor of Arts degree. The overall lesson lasts about 80 min, and is concerned with the topic of academic writing in film studies. This lesson is conducted in Week 9, that is, the penultimate lesson in the first semester of the school calendar. The teacher (male) has more than ten years of teaching experience and the students are very active in participating in lesson activities.

Drawing on curriculum genre theory (Christie 2002) and pedagogic register analysis (Rose 2018), this big and complex lesson is modeled as a lesson genre, which centers on 4 tasks and is realized by 4 lesson stages that are further realized by 19 learning phases (see Table 2). A phase characterizes a stretch of discourse with a significant measure of consistency and congruity in meaning (Gregory 2002: 321).

**Table 2:** Lesson genre in Week 9.

4 Lesson stages	4 Tasks	19 Learning phases
Pre-lesson	Task 1 Referencing	Greeting, specification, attendance,
Lesson initiation	Task 2 Assessment criteria	Task orientation, disruption, closure,
Lesson negotiation	Task 3 Group exercise	Prepare, focus, task, evaluate, elaborate,
Lesson closure	Task 4 Structure exercise	Conferring, supervising, consulting, personal, Checking, next lesson, homework, class finis

### 3.2 Transcription methods

For a nuanced analysis, this paper utilizes a tabular layout in the transcription to represent time vertically in the columns and the intersemiotic interaction horizontally in the rows. Screenshots and visualization techniques are used to represent the structural features of movement, gaze and speech (see Table 3 for an example).

The teacher’s movement trajectory is represented with red stars and green arrows in a bird’s eye view of the classroom. The red star indicates the point of stasis, and the number indicates its duration. The green arrow indicates motion, and the number indicates its duration. In the screenshot, four types of arrows are used to indicate different bodily features: the arrows are white for the teacher’s gaze feature, pink for the students’ gaze feature, yellow for the teacher’s posture feature, and blue for the occurrence of dynamic aspects of movement. In the text column, the single underline indicates the occurrence of movement motion, the double underline indicates the occurrence of gaze shift, and the dotted underline indicates the simultaneous occurrence of movement motion and gaze shift. Also, the waves of information are marked in bold in the text column. In addition to these visualizations, the features of movement, gaze and speech within a single phase are also explained in parallel columns in a comprehensive manner, ensuring a thorough understanding of the data (see Appendix for a list of transcription notations).

## 4 Data analysis

This section demonstrates a tristratal model of movement: movement structures are mapped as distinct choices on the expression stratum (Section 4.1); these choices on the expression stratum do not express meaning in themselves, but serve as realization statements that integrate with gaze and speech to make textual meaning



Table 3: A transcription sample.

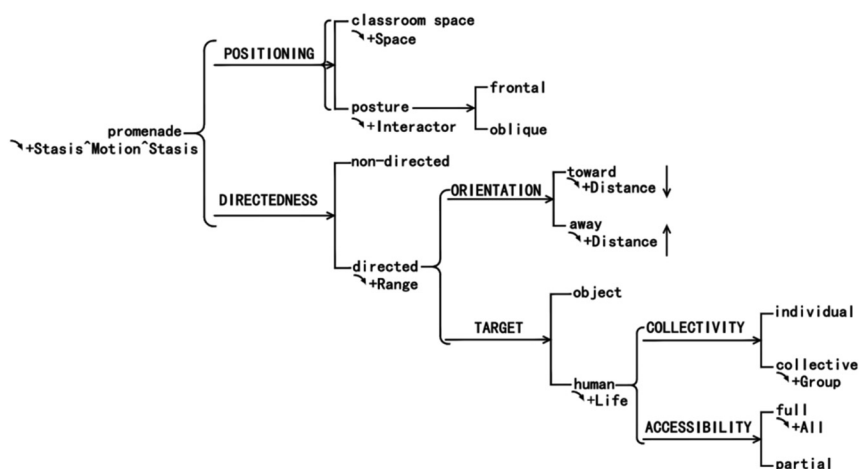
Time & phase	Diagrammatic representation & screenshots	Movement	Gaze	Text	Speech	Periodicity
75:56-76:16 Elaborate	 	Toward: distance ↓ Collective: group Partial: part Classroom space: Student Pod Center frontal	Shift of teacher gaze from one group to another	T: <u>not necessary every single paragraph</u> (gaze shift) but there should be some references at some points in your essay (motion).		Clause Theme

on the content stratum (Section 4.2) and to aggregate knowledge on the context stratum (Section 4.3).

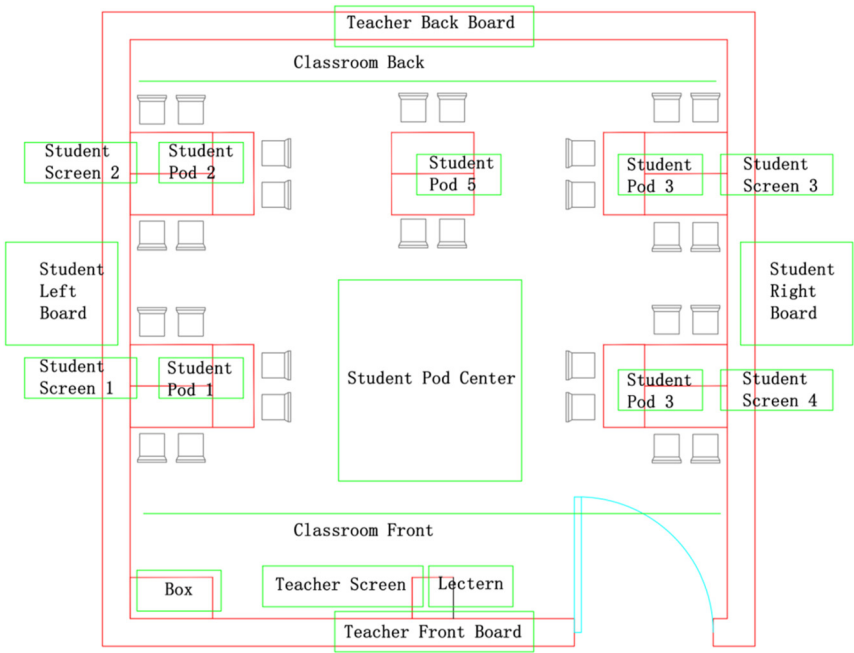
## 4.1 Movement structures on the expression stratum

Figure 3 presents a system network that maps out choices of movement structures for a promenade, which, according to McMurtrie (2017), is both static and dynamic over time.

Figure 3 provides a nuanced modelling of promenade in the context of the teacher's movement in the classroom by proposing two systems: POSITIONING and DIRECTEDNESS that describe the bodily features of a promenade. More specifically, if the state of a promenade is dynamic, then it can be categorized in terms of DIRECTEDNESS. DIRECTEDNESS of a dynamic promenade can be directed or non-directed, based on the presence or absence of a Range (the passive participant in a dynamic promenade at which the promenade is directed at). Directed promenade can be further modified in terms of ORIENTATION and TARGET. ORIENTATION can be toward or away, based on decrease or increase in physical Distance, and TARGET can be human or an object. If the TARGET is human, then it can be further categorized in terms of COLLECTIVITY and ACCESSIBILITY. COLLECTIVITY can be individual if the dynamic promenade is toward One person, or collective if the dynamic promenade is toward people as a Group. ACCESSIBILITY can be modelled as



**Figure 3:** Choices of movement structure on the expression stratum (adapting and extending McMurtrie 2017).



**Figure 4:** The 19 Classroom Spaces for positioning: marked in the green box.

partial if the dynamic promenade can reach Part of the people in the classroom, or full if the dynamic promenade can reach All people in the classroom.

If the state of a promenade is static, then it is possible to modify the promenade in terms of POSITIONING. If the teacher is positioned in the classroom, he will simultaneously construe a relation to the classroom space and to students who interact with him. Classroom space is realized as 19 different Spaces (see Figure 4) where the teacher might position himself once the dynamic aspect of a promenade is completed.

The posture relative to the interactor can be mapped as frontal or oblique. Choices in Figure 3 are used to transcribe movement structures (see Tables 4–8) for periodicity analysis in Section 4.2.1. Spaces in Figure 4 are used to measure occupation value and lesson transitions in Section 4.2.2 and 4.2.3.

## 4.2 Metafunctional meaning on the content stratum

This section provides three empirical case studies to demonstrate how co-patterning of movement, gaze and speech make textual meaning at different ranks, including

Table 4: Multimodal synchronicities at macro-Theme.

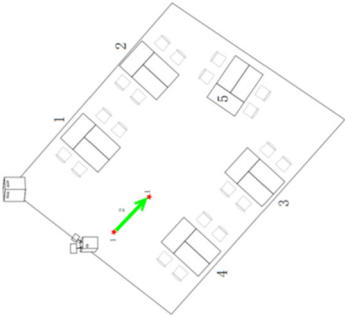
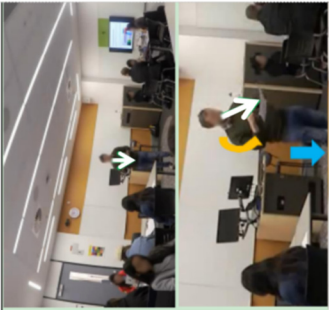
Time & phase	Diagrammatic representation & screen-shot	Movement	Gaze	Text	Speech	Periodicity
75:50-75:53 Focus	 	Toward: distance↓ Collective: group full: all Classroom space: Student Pod Center frontal	Shift of gaze from the document to students	T: <b><u>“further reference to the core argument (motion) of your essay (gaze shift).”</u></b>		Macro-Theme

Table 5: Multimodal synchronicities at hyper-Theme.


Time & phase	Diagrammatic representation & screenshots	Movement	Gaze	Text	Speech	Periodicity
75:56-76:16 Elaborate		Away: distance↑ Collective: group Full: all Classroom space: classroom front frontal	Shifts of gaze from one group to another	T: <u>so</u> (motion) <u>you should make sure you refer to the argument</u> (gaze shift).		Hyper-Theme

Table 6: Multimodal synchronicities at hyper-New.

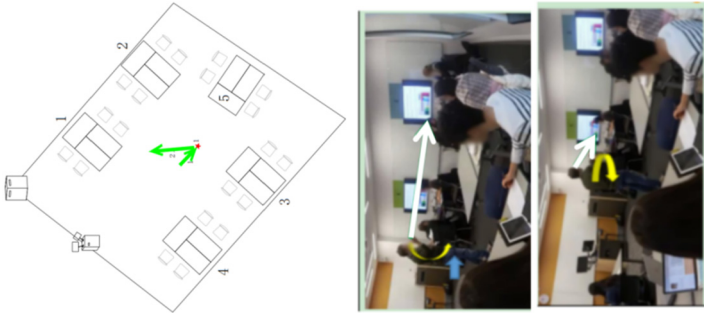
Time & phase	Diagrammatic representation & screenshots	Movement	Gaze	Text	Speech	Periodicity
75:56-76:16 Elaborate		Toward: distance↓ Collective: group Partial: part Classroom space: student Pod Center frontal Toward: distance↓ Collective: group Partial: Part Classroom space: Student Pod 1 frontal	Shifts of gaze among different groups	T: <u>maybe halfway point between introduction and conclusion</u> (motion & gaze shift), <u>something like that</u> (motion).		Hyper-New

Table 7: Multimodal synchronicities at clause level (1).



Time & phase	Diagrammatic representation & screenshots	Movement	Gaze	Text	Speech	Periodicity
75:56-76:16 Elaborate		Toward: distance↓ Collective: group Partial: part classroom space: student Pod Center frontal	Shift of teacher gaze from one group to another	T: <u>not necessary every</u> <u>single paragraph</u> but there should be some references at some points in <u>your essay</u> (motion).		Clause Theme

Table 8: Multimodal synchronicities at clause level (2).

Time & phase	Diagrammatic representation & screenshots	Movement	Gaze	Text	Speech	Periodicity
75:56-76:16 Elaborate		Toward: distance↓ Collective: group Partial: part Classroom space: student Pod Center frontal  Toward: distance↓ Collective: group Partial: part Classroom space: student Pod 5 frontal	Shifts of teacher gaze at different students	T: <u>how your points you are making</u> (motion & gaze shift) are relating back to that <u>question</u> you set to ask(motion).		Clause Theme



the construal of periodicity at the rank of promenade, and the construal of occupation value and information boundaries at the rank of the whole lesson.

4.2.1 Periodicity

The periodicity analysis commences with macro-Theme and macro-New at the highest level (above a paragraph), then with hyper-Theme and hyper-New at discourse level (paragraph), and finally with Theme and New at clause level. The analysis demonstrates how movement, gaze and speech work together to construe prominence by building multimodal synchronicity across a hierarchy of periodicity.

One clip is selected for in-depth multimodal analyses in this section. It occurs at the end of the lesson and lasts about 30 s. This clip is part of a structure exercise and constitutes a learning cycle in the lesson. Following Rose (2018), a learning cycle is often composed by five learning phases – Prepare, Focus, Task, Evaluate and Elaborate – where Prepare and Elaborate phases are optional. This clip has four learning phases and does not include a Prepare phase. In the Focus phase, the teacher asks the students where to place a sentence that further references the core argument of an essay. In the Task phase, the students answer that this sentence should be placed in a paragraph of the essay’s main body. In the Evaluate phase, the teacher affirms the answer. In the Elaborate phase, the teacher elaborates on the necessity to refer back to the argument and specifies the possible placement of such sentences in academic writing – at the halfway point between the introduction and the conclusion.

Table 4 presents an instance of multimodal synchronicities above a paragraph.

As shown in Table 4, one promenade toward All students as a Group occurs and synchronizes with the commencement of the macro-Theme “Further reference to the core argument of your essay” (no macro-New is realized in this clip). This synchronicity reinforces the prominence and flags what is to come. The teacher moves from Pod 1 to Student Pod Center, which brings him physically closer to the students; he transforms his posture from oblique to frontal, which suggests a direct involvement (Kress and Van Leeuwen 2006); at the end of this sentence, whose beginning was quoted above, he shifts his gaze from the document to the students, which demands the students to participate in the goings-on and attend to the knowledge at stake. The transition of space and the shift of posture establish the communicative realm, whereas the shift of gaze demands student participation and expands the communicative realm.

Table 5 and Table 6 present two instances of multimodal synchronicities at the level of paragraph.

In Table 5, one promenade away from All students as a Group occurs and synchronizes with the commencement of the hyper-Theme “So”. The hyper-Theme

commences with a logical conjunction “So”, which realizes an expectant causal relation and signals the transition in meaning (Martin and Rose 2007). The synchronicity foregrounds the logical relation at stake, and this foregrounding is further supported by the shift of the teacher’s positioning in space. The teacher moves from Student Pod Center to Classroom Front, which marks a transition into authoritative space (Amundsdred 2022; Lim et al. 2012). The positioning at Classroom Front enables a maximal mutual vision range between the teacher and the students. At the end of the hyper-Theme “the argument”, there is a shift of the teacher’s gaze from the document to the students at another student pod. This shift synchronizes with the mention of a semiotic entity “argument”, which assigns textual prominence to the ideational meaning, and demonstrates the way textual meaning coordinates ideational prominence.

In Table 6 two promenades synchronize with the hyper-New “Maybe halfway point between introduction and conclusion, something like that”, which summarizes the information.

In fact, what these promenades enact here is not a mere accumulation of what has been verbally articulated but also an interpersonal complementarity and a registerial complementarity. That is, the transition in space from Student Pod Center to Student Pod 1 and the shift of gaze across different student pods actually enable the teacher to distribute his attention and engage with different students, which contributes to interpersonal meanings. This further enacts a regulative register of classroom management that appropriates the instructional register of the knowledge and value that is being taught and learned in speech (Christie 2002: 3). As such, the hyper-Theme establishes the point of departure of the message – the students need to refer back to the argument in their writing, and the hyper-New marks the point of arrival – i.e., this reference could be placed in the middle point of the article between the introduction and the conclusion. These three promenades highlight this message and support its noticeability by reinforcing the peaks of prominence.

Table 7 and Table 8 present two instances of multimodal synchronicities at the level of clause. Overall, three promenades occur and synchronize with four semiotic entities in these two tables: “references”, “essay”, “question”, “points”, thus giving prominence to these ideational meanings. Consider Table 7.

In Table 7, one promenade toward Part of the students as a Group occurs and synchronizes with the clause New “some references at some points in your essay”, thus accumulating the information. A gaze shift occurs and synchronizes with the clause Theme “not necessarily every single paragraph”, which foregrounds the transition of meaning and highlights the ideational meaning – the students do not need to refer back to the argument in every single paragraph. As such, a complementary synchronicity is enacted in this instance: the promenade is synchronous

with the clause *New* that summarizes the information, and the gaze shift is synchronous with the clause *Theme* that predicts what is to come.

In Table 8, two intersemiotic synchronicities occur.

Here we see one co-occurrence of promenade and gaze shift synchronizing with the clause *Theme* “how your points you are making”, and another occurrence of promenade synchronizing with the clause *New* “that question you set to ask”. This assigns textual prominence to both the point of departure and the point of arrival in the local information flow. In these two instances, the teacher moves from Classroom Front to Student Pod Center and then to Student Pod 5, and transforms his posture to Frontal to face different students, which indicates both his shifts of attention, and his efforts to include different students in the communication realm.

To sum up, promenades can converge with periodicity patterns intersemiotically; intersemiotic synchrony can construe and reinforce prominence in the unfolding of a lesson. These synchronous intersemiotic markers tune the students in both to *Themes*, predictive peaks of information that point to what is to come, and to *News*, culminative peaks of prominence that aggregate meaning as *News*. In this way, the students are guided to attend to key knowledge in the lesson, which may help them to adjust their attention and develop an awareness that certain aspects of knowledge are being foregrounded in the lesson and require their closer attention. In addition to amplifying prominence and supporting the noticeability of ideational meaning, intersemiotic synchrony can also enact both metafunctional complementarity and registerial complementarity. The enactment of complementarity not only extends the meanings made by speech, but, at the same time enacts multiple teacher roles: as an instructor who teaches knowledge, as a mentor who encourages student participation, and as a regulator who manages the class.

#### 4.2.2 Occupation value

Figure 5 presents how the 19 classroom Spaces are occupied at the rank of the whole lesson.

The figure shows an unequal distribution of occupation value among different Spaces, which demonstrates that these Spaces have been positioned for a different amount of time. Clearly, Student Pod 2 have the highest occupation value, which demonstrates that this space is used for the longest time in the lesson. A close look at the whole lesson reveals that the teacher has many interactions at Student Pod 2, which gives high occupation value to that place. Figure 5 also shows that there is almost no occupation value for Whiteboard Spaces and Screen Spaces in the classroom, which demonstrates that these Spaces are not used by the teacher in the lesson.

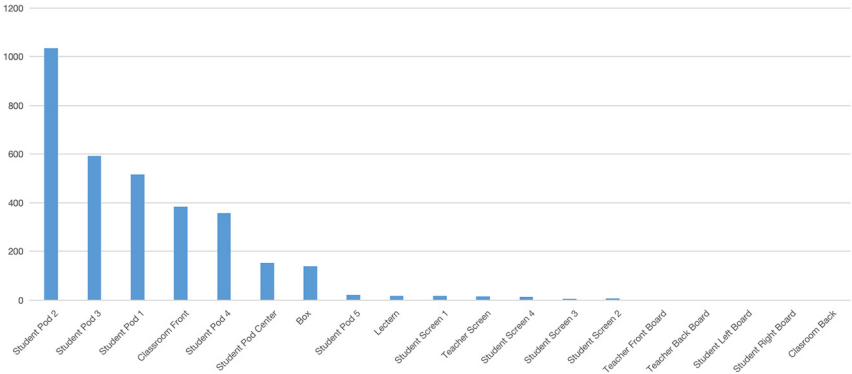


Figure 5: Occupation value.

Figure 6 captures the rhythmic wave for Student Pod 2 by measuring the amount of positioning time as the teacher moves into and out of that zone throughout the lesson.

This figure presents how the occupation value of Student Pod 2 changes in the unfolding of the lesson. The number 20 on the horizontal line represents the times when the teacher moves in and out of Student Pod 2. The fluctuations on the vertical line indicate that the teacher positions himself there for a different amount of time. Clearly, during the 7th, 8th, 9th, 10th and 14th times, the teacher spends notably longer time positioning himself in Student Pod 2, compared with the other times at stake. It is also during these times that the fluctuations of occupation value become quite strong, as indicated by the peaks and troughs in the rhythmic wave. At other times, there are few fluctuations, which demonstrates a steady low occupation of that space.

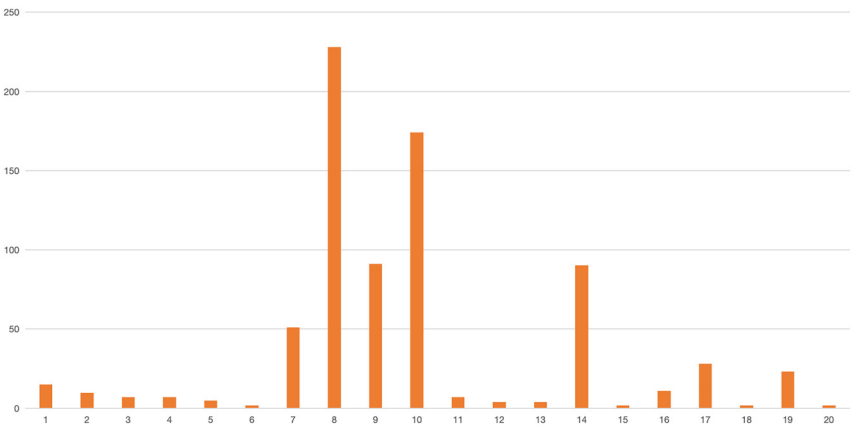


Figure 6: Rhythmic wave for Student Pod 2.

### 4.2.3 Information boundaries between lesson transitions

Table 9 presents movement structures between transitions of lesson activities at the rank of a whole lesson.

By tracking movement structures between transitions of lesson stages, task stages and subtask stages, it can be seen that the transitions between lesson activities are convergent with the transformation in the state of movement, and that this convergence occurs across different ranks of lesson activities. Movement is actively used by the teacher to create information boundaries and signal transitions between lesson activities. This indicates the ways in which classroom design facilitates the enactment of movement in the class, and how such movement potential is taken up by the teacher in their use of classroom space in pedagogic practices. This aligns with Levy and McNeill's (1992) finding that embodied movement tends to occur at points of topic shifts, but also extends this finding by mapping co-patterning of movement shifts and topic shifts at different levels of discourse organization.

In addition to movement, these transitions are also signalled by transitional discourse markers, but these speech markers are only used between the transitions of large stretches of discourse: the transitions between lesson stages, between tasks, and between subtasks. By contrast, in addition to signalling the transitions between large stretches of discourse, movement can also signal the transitions between smaller stretches of discourse: the transitions between task stages, between subtask stages, and between phases within a lesson stage. The fact that movement signals the transitions at these different ranks of lesson activities actually indicates the great potential that movement has for construing information boundaries in a lesson.

By tracking the positioning Space between the transitions of lesson activities, the analysis in this paper also reveals that the teacher often positions himself in the authoritative space – Lectern, Teacher Screen or Classroom Front (Amundrud 2022; Lim et al. 2012) – when he initiates a lesson stage or a lesson task. Through his positioning choices, the teacher makes it explicit to the students when particular points in the teaching becomes prominent, and in this way, he tunes the students in to the prominent activities and key knowledge at stake.

## 4.3 Aggregating knowledge on the context stratum

This section demonstrates, with reference to the same learning cycle discussed above in Section 4.2.1, how movement, gaze and speech work together to aggregate knowledge by building semantic convergence and divergence. Semantic convergence occurs when different semiotic modes make similar metafunctional meanings,

Table 9: Movement construing boundaries between transitions of lesson activities.

Rank	Lesson activity shift	Movement state shift	Positioning spaces	Speech markers
Lesson Stages	Prelesson to lesson initiation	Static to dynamic	Student Pod 5	TJ: Alright, let's get started.
	Lesson initiation to lesson negotiation	Static to dynamic	Student Pod 4	TJ: Before we go to the actual topic though, I just want to give you a few heads-up.
	Lesson negotiation to lesson closure	Static to dynamic	Student Pod Center	TJ: So hopefully that helps.
Task	Task 1 to Task 2	Dynamic to static	Box	TJ: So, let's have a look at the criteria for research and use of resources.
Subtask	Task 2 to Task 3	Static to dynamic	Student Pod 3	TJ: So for today's first exercise.
	Task 3 to Task 4	Dynamic to static	Box	TJ: Erm, what I like us to do now is a structure exercise.
	Task 2.1 to Task 2.2	Dynamic to static	Teacher screen	TJ: I am now going to do an example of a pass.
	Task 3.1 to Task 3.2	Static to dynamic	Student Pod 3	TJ: Alright, maybe we should have a discussion.
	Task 4.1 to Task 4.2	Dynamic to static	Student Pod 4	TJ: Let's go through the answers.
Task 1	Orientation to negotiation	Static to dynamic	Lectern	
Task 2	Orientation to negotiation	Dynamic to static	Box	
Task 3	Orientation to negotiation	Static to dynamic	Teacher screen	
Task 4	Orientation to negotiation	Static to dynamic	Teacher screen	
Subtask 2.1	Orientation to negotiation	Dynamic to static	Student Pod 4	
Subtask 2.2	Orientation to negotiation	Static to dynamic	Lectern	
Subtask 3.1	Orientation to negotiation	Dynamic to static	Student Pod 1	
Subtask 3.2	Orientation to negotiation	Dynamic to static	Box	
Subtask 4.1	Orientation to negotiation	Static to dynamic	Teacher screen	
Subtask 4.2	Orientation to negotiation	Dynamic to static	Classroom front	

and semantic divergence occurs when different modes make different meanings. The analysis cursorily demonstrates how movement, gaze and speech interact in each phase and then how the complexing of semiotic modes acts in synchronicity with the complexing of phases in order to aggregate knowledge.

In the Focus phase, the teacher first positions himself at Classroom Front. When he articulates a question – where to put a sentence that references the core argument – verbally demanding information from the students, he gradually moves towards the students at Classroom Back. At the end of his speech, he stops moving and positions himself in Student Pod Center. At the same time, he switches his gaze from the document to the whole class, and his bodily posture changes from oblique to frontal so that he is facing the students at Classroom Back. His gaze realizes a visual demand and his frontal posture indicates a direct involvement (Kress and Van Leeuwen 2006). In the Task phase, sustaining his positioning at Student Pod Center and fixing his gaze on the students, the teacher sustains his attention on the students as they are performing the task. In the Evaluate phase, the teacher remains positioned in Student Pod Center and switches his gaze from the whole class to the document. In the Elaborate phase, the teacher moves to Classroom Front when he verbally stresses the necessity to refer back to the argument and include it somewhere between the introduction and the conclusion.

In terms of phasal complexing, the Focus, the Task and the Evaluate phases enact a complete exchange (Martin and Rose 2007), whereby the information is demanded, provided and affirmed. The particular information being exchanged here is that a sentence referring to the core argument of an essay should be placed in the paragraph of the essay's main body. In the Elaborate phase, the teacher first elaborates that the students need to refer back to the argument in an essay, then clarifies that there is no need to refer to the argument in every single paragraph and finally specifies that this type of sentence could be placed between the introduction and the conclusion.

In terms of the complexing of semiotic modes, two significant patterns have been noted: multiple semiotic modes can converge with each other to reinforce and intensify the meaning at stake; and/or they can also diverge from each other in order to formulate functional complementarity and expand the meaning at stake. For instance, in the Focus phase (Table 4), the teacher's transition at the end of his speech from Classroom Front to Student Pod Center demands the students to participate. His movement is semantically convergent with his gaze and speech, realizing a parallel verbal demand and visual demand. The synchronicity of visual demand and verbal demand intensifies and gives further prominence to his demand for information. In the Elaborate phase (Tables 5–8), the teacher's transition to Classroom Front, that is, the authoritative space in the classroom (Amundrud 2022; Lim et al. 2012), realizes

interpersonal meaning and demonstrates his authoritative role. His speech functions interpersonally to give information to the students and at the same time ideationally to convey the information content, that is, the exact placement of an argument sentence in an essay. The division of semiotic labor between the teacher's movement and speech are somewhat different, resulting in a semantic divergence that complements each other. This functional complementarity enables a simultaneous unfolding of knowledge teaching and classroom management.

To sum up, movement plays different types of roles in supporting the enactment of knowledge as the phases unfold. At times, the teacher's transition of space in the classroom demands student participation and highlights key knowledge at stake; at times, the teacher's transition to the authoritative space demonstrates his authoritative role and tunes the students in to the key knowledge at stake; at times, the teacher's sustaining of his positioning space sustains and tracks the lesson topic; at times, the teacher's transition plays a role in aggregating knowledge by building semantic convergence with or divergence from the other semiotic modes at stake.

4.4 Summary

Figure 7 summarizes the stratified model of the teacher's movement, with ideational meaning left unexplored and marked by shading.

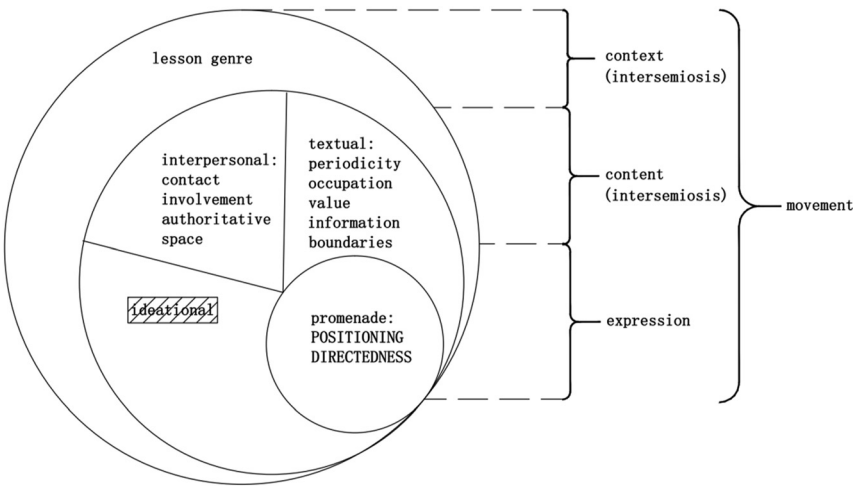


Figure 7: A stratified model of the teacher's movement.



As shown in Figure 7, the context stratum of the teacher's movement is modelled as a lesson genre whereby movement semantically converges and/or diverges with gaze and speech to aggregate curriculum knowledge. The content stratum of movement is modelled metafunctionally and intersemiotically, with a particular focus on textual meaning in terms of periodicity, occupation value and information boundaries. The interpersonal meaning is briefly discussed in terms of contact, involvement and authoritative space. The expression stratum of movement is modelled at the rank of promenade in terms of two systems: POSITIONING and DIRECTEDNESS.

## 5 Discussion and conclusion

The paper develops a social semiotic modelling of movement that is both structurally patterned and socio-culturally motivated, and thus can be systematically investigated in all its contextually embedded forms, and as such, can be taught and learnt. More specifically, the paper provides a stratified model of embodied movement to explicitly account for how one teacher's movement in the classroom creates meaning in relation to movement structure, which involves the coordination of gaze and speech. The concept of intersemiosis is used as the working mechanism to map out the meaning potential of movement on both the content stratum and the context stratum in relation to movement structure, resulting in an emergent rather than post hoc analysis. The meaning potential of movement is seen as systemic and operating in the context of the whole text, not in terms of isolated signs (McDonald 2013). As such, in addition to a systematic understanding of embodied movement as a stratified mode of communication, this paper also contributes to an understanding of how different semiotic modes work with each other to co-articulate meaning. Although the analysis in this paper is focused on a specific type of movement – one teacher's movement in the classroom – it exemplifies how body and space mean together in practice, thus shifting the analytical focus from structural elements of space to performative practices.

The theorization of movement as a semiotic mode also highlights the role of the body by grounding the meaning and the structure of movement in the signifying potential of the human body (Burrows 1990; Ruthrof 1997), which aligns with the so-called “corporeal turn” (Ruthrof 2000: vi) in multimodal studies. This turn incorporates the body into social meaning-making, whereby symbolic meaning is not simply inherent in movement but rather social agents harness the meaning-making possibilities of the body in service of their purposes (Thibault 2004: 77). Given that there is still a lack of detailed understanding of how the body itself can make meaning (McDonald 2013; see McMurtrie 2010 for an early

exception), the exploration of movement in this paper contributes to a preliminary search for a mechanism to account for how meanings articulated by the body are realized in embodied structures.

Given that the teacher's movement takes place in the pedagogic contexts, an in-depth investigation of this type of movement will contribute to an understanding not only of its meaning potential and means of expression, but also of how different patterns of movement function to enact specific kinds of pedagogy. The analysis indicates that pedagogy is a situated and embodied construction. In pedagogic contexts, theorizing movement as choice and making the movement choices available to teachers and students explicit and visible can help enhance the teaching and learning experience. Once these choices are transformed from the subconsciousness into the conscious, teachers and students can develop them into their lesson design and reduce unintended or sometimes even confusing meanings. More specifically, in pedagogic contexts, movement dynamics are anchored to the rhythm of teaching and learning of knowledge.

In this sense, the detailed movement analysis in this paper shows potential for informing pedagogy in two main ways: (1) embodied movement can construe rhythm to support smooth transitions between different lesson activities and signal shifts of topicality; and (2) embodied movement can foreground certain aspects of knowledge over others to manage learners' attention. A comprehensive understanding of the meaning potential of movement in the classroom is especially significant for novice teachers, who, based on observations in situ, are often quite reluctant to move around in the classroom or move too much because they may be anxious, resulting in potential confusions for the students. It might be useful to further track how movement patterns are distributed across different teachers at different levels of expertise and with different years of experience in order to explore the ways in which teachers can be trained in movement as a learnable communication skill.

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# Appendix

## List of transcription notations

<sup>2</sup> ★	stasis and the duration of stasis
<sup>3</sup> →	motion and the duration of motion
⇨	teacher gaze
⇨	student gaze
→	teacher motion
↪	teacher posture

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## Bionote

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