

Ghosting

The embodied, dialectic voicing
of gendered emblems

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Background

- Matched-guise experiment (Gordon & Labotka, 2010)
- *How does a non-hegemonic (non-HM) masculinity influence gesture performance in experiment?*
 - Setup:
 - Video camera and six infrared motion cameras
 - Reflective globes on arms, wrists and hands, shirt taped up
 - Talking to Lori (while she is writing on a clipboard)
 - Overhearer running the computer
 - Pre-task: Describe how to make spaghetti
 - Stimulus: One of two cooking videos (independent variable) (featuring BJG)
 - One rated significantly more HM, one more non-HM.
 - Experimental task: Describe the events from the video


P5 stands out

- **Change in Performance for P5** 
 - (see: Gordon & Labotka, 2010)
 - Other participants who watched the “non-HM” video decreased gesture in post-task. P5 increased.
 - Only P5 used first-person perspective.
 - Large increase in gesture volume and velocity.
 - Change in phonology, prosody, type of gestures, wrist angle.
 - What is he doing?

Road Map

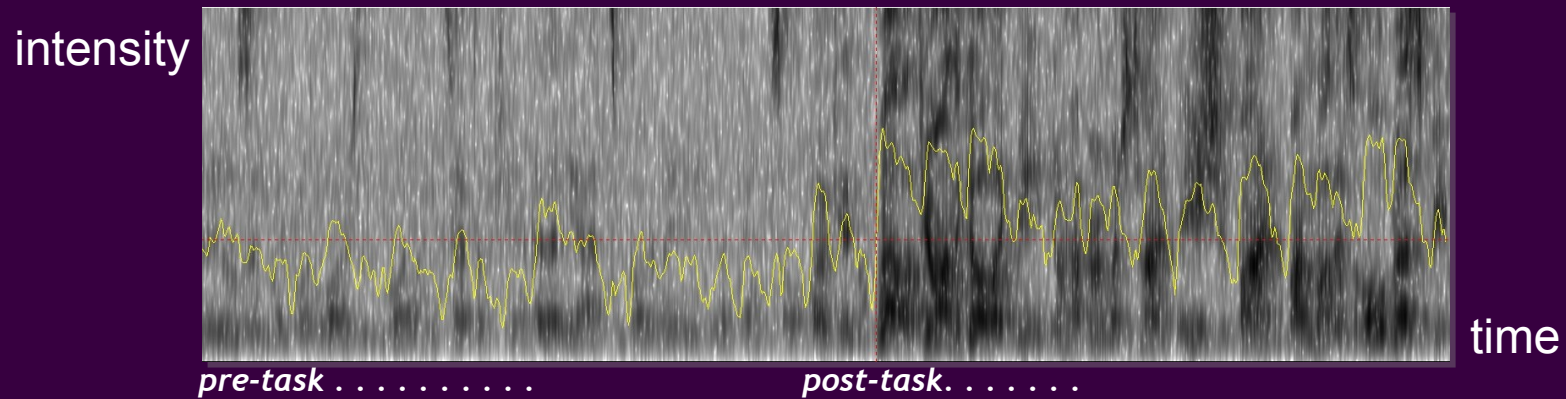
- P5 voices the gendered stimulus (Bakhtin, 1981, 1984).
 - The “voices” are linked to embodied mimetic performance features. They cross gestural/vocal and linguistic/non-linguistic lines seemingly at random.
 - Some “voices” do not involve the “voice” at all.
 - We move away from the logocentric, phonocentric connotations of “voicing” and speak of “*ghosting*” (thanks to Joon-Beom Chu!).
- P5 projects more than one ghost at a time.
 - Bakhtin's *double-voiced discourse*, involving character and author voices.
 - Ghosts and the forms that project them have fuzzy boundaries, and a single form may function in more than one ghost.
- One *character ghost* is a gay/“fag” ghost: P5 uses “author-ghost” commentary to mock this ghost.
- One primary *emblem* of this ghost is the limp wrist. P5 draws on its enregistered indexical history and re-enregisters it in context.

Announcer/Used-Car Salesman Ghost

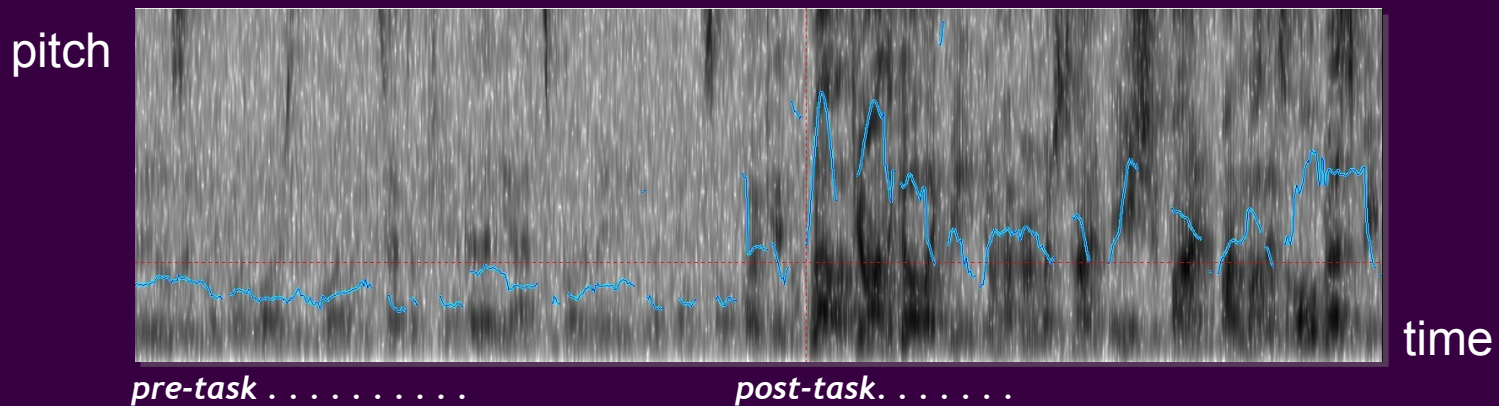
- Gestural Features:
 - Arms swinging sharply forward pointingly
 - Using fingers to point 
- Function:
 - Mocks the subject area of the video as well as the idea of performing in this experiment.
 - by being an unusual way of reporting content, and
 - by being indexically ridiculous.
 - By ghosting BJJ *in order to* ridicule him, P5 directs his audience into a mimetic interpretive frame, prepared to see his body as representing the ghosts of others.

Announcer/Used-Car Salesman Ghost

- High f_0 and loud intensity



- High pitch range



- Beginning of post-task (“OK”) louder and higher than pre-task, then suddenly much louder and higher - signals switch to A/UCS ghost.

Recipe Ghost

- **Linguistic Features:**
 - Register: describing cooking procedure.
 - Directed at “*you*”=audience of cooking video, same as BJG in stimulus video.
 - Using BJG’s words (from a cooking register).
- **Gestural Features:**
 - Iconic gestures: stirring, putting, taking, chopping.
- **Function:**
 - Fulfill experimental task (author, not character!).
 - Mimetically animating BJG
 - not “mocking” yet (because no overt ideological separation from author, cf. Chun, 2004, 2007), but recipe ghost provides the springboard from which “fag” ghost emerges for mocking.

“Author” Ghosts

- **Linguistic Features:**

- Misquotes BJG's name for sandwich, corrects self, then trivializes name of sandwich by “*whatever it's called*” and looks “cool” in the process.
- “*Check it out*” - recipe ghost orients audience to recipe, but author distances himself from character by using indexically “*dude*” discourse marker inconsistent with character persona.
 - Also, “dude” phonology, sometimes SW, never “gay”.
- “*deli*” instead of “*sandwich shop*”
- Prosodic separations, markers of irony/distance (cf. Hill, 1995)


- **Gestural Features:**

- Thinking/correction gestures
- Facial gestures commenting on performance (on a later slide)
- Eye gaze signifies level of engagement with LL, camera, self

- **Function:**

- Engagement in experimental context.
- Constant comment on animated ghosts, often a comment of ridicule or sarcasm - smirks, eyebrow-raising, grins, etc.
- Maintains separation between character ghosts and “self”.

Gay/“Fag” Ghost

- No recognizably gay/“fag” linguistic features.
 - (We use the word “fag” here to invoke the enregistered, derogatory ideological links P5 invokes in his performance; however, P5 never names his practice, and we are not making a claim about the meaning of the word “fag” for him.)
- Gestural Features:
 - Hip swishes
 - Limp wrists and wrist-flaps
 -  6 lines of transcript have wrist constantly limp
 - Highly salient emblem associated with Gay/“Fag” personae
 - These features are actively commented on by P5’s “author” ghosts.

Mocking

- Why read P5's performance as *mocking*?
 - Metapragmatics
 - “All I'm gonna do is make fun of this guy.” (and different comments to friend on phone during stimulus)
 - We are primed for multiple-ghosting because of the multiple-ghosting that has already happened.
 - P5 projects “fag” ghost *and* uses author-ghost to ridicule it *cotemporaneously*.
 - Note use of eyebrows and grin to comment on character ghost.



Transcript

Authors: side-look. . . . huge grin
scratches nose
. . Phonology vaguely “dude”, same style as pre-task . . .
. . Prosody vaguely “dude”, same style as pre-task . . .

Utterance 7: (.) garlic, tomato, (.) some cheese and the lettuce

Characters: . . RECIPE GHOST.
BEGIN FAG GHOST.
2 hip swishes flex wrist
“flightiness”
“effeminacy”
“not serious”

Author: Awkward wording Grins into camera
(Mark of double-voicing) “torso swish”
puffs chest out
eyebrow raise

. . Phonology vaguely “dude”, same style as pre-task.
. . Prosody vaguely “dude”, same style as pre-task.

Utterance 8: and you’re gonna (.) prepare this in a sandwich by grilling it (.)

Characters: . . RECIPE GHOST.
Awkward wording
(Same word as BJG, used in a different way)
Rotates both hands around each other (“food-making” motion)
FAG GHOST
Swishing Hips

Effects of Mocking

- *Mocking ideologically separates the author from the character, while denigrating the character voice (ghost) (Chun 2004, 2007).*
- **Dude ⇔ Fag: P5 does “dude” by ghosting “fag”**
 - Also ghosts “dude” mimetically via author-voice features.
- **Does he have to *intend* to “mock fag”? No.**
 - Performance simultaneously:
 - fulfills experimental task;
 - protests experimental task;
 - protests content of cooking video; and
 - denigrates BJG.
 - Any one of these could be his primary goal, and the “fag” part could just be dragged along for the ride by the indexical links!

Life of an Emblem

- Limp wrist is an *emblem*. Agha (2007):
 - [visual] percept of wrist angle
 - social persona "fag"
 - interpretants, who recognize the emblem as an iconic index of the persona
- Emblems are "iconic indices" - symbols that not only index a persona in interaction, but are ideologically represented as a context-free, natural part of that persona.

Life of an Emblem

- **Limp wrist is an *enregistered* emblem.**
 - Index of weak, false masculinity in Aristotle's *kinaidos*.
 - Courtly styles linked with limp wrist in 17th-/18th-century Europe:
 - *libertines, fops, beaux, actors, castrati*
 - later on, linked to pederasty/sodomy, along with public backlash
 - *weak/courtly/flamboyant* linked to wit and corruption, opposed to the “open and extended hand” (and speech) of the respectable liberal subject (Thomas King, 2008:16,300-4).
 - These performance histories and their contexts (along with their more contemporary descendants, visible e.g. on YouTube) comprise a *field of indexicality* (Eckert, 2008).
- **Limp wrist is *policed*.**
 - Limp wrist is monitored/policed such that its use cannot be backgrounded or construed as “meaningless”.
 - For Aristotle, the type *kinaidos* necessarily implied bodily emblems which the trained physiognomist could detect, and one slip-up was enough to reveal the *kinaidos*' nature.

Life of an Emblem

- **How is the emblem made available?**
 - Limp-wrist emblem is reproduced both by individuals who claim that persona and also (more often) by others, who comment on that persona. P5's performance reproduces it in the second way (cf. Inoue, 2004).
- **P5 is able to manipulate context to allow himself to perform an emblem and be read as making a comment on the persona it indexes.**
 - He has performative skill with the emblem.
 - His audience has interpretive skill with the emblem.
 - By refusing to orient to available contextual cues, P5 creates a context in which he is free to make cellular calls, interpellate LL as indebted to him, and mock the gender semiotics of the stimulus (both on video and on phone).

Conclusion

- P5 produced different, sometimes overlapping ghosts in his performance. Much of this was double-ghosting.
- One ghost in particular - the “fag” ghost - is mocked in order to simultaneously comment on the entire context and do identity work for P5.
- The limp wrist is drawn upon and reproduced as an enregistered emblem.

“Ghosting”?

- A *persona*, in Agha's sense, is the historical, ideological half of a ghost; *embodiment* or *mimesis* can be seen as the practice half.
- A *persona* in Goffman's sense is more of a conversational role, similar to *interpellation* in Althusser, and is related to the *formation* of ghosts on-the-ground.
- Ghosting is not a subtype of voicing; rather, we intend ghosting to be an umbrella that includes voicing.
- A *character*, in Bakhtin's sense, is opposed to an author. We take the position that this opposition is ideological. In a certain sense, then, ghosts could be seen as a mere extension of *character*. But characters are ideologically subject to an identity relation, where a “Bryan character” performed by P5 or by Lori or the authorial character of Bryan himself are all identified with each other. This does not capture the difference in practice between such performances.
- Voicing has logocentric and phonocentric connotations and is housed in linguistic and literary disciplines.
- *Mimesis*, in the sense of Plato or Aristotle, is a means of conveying information via embodied representation, and can therefore not have, e.g., quotative markers. Ghosting is not limited in this way.
- *Mimesis* in Irigaray or Taussig's sense, on the other hand, is a means of identity formation quite similar to what we mean by ghosting, but tends to be used in particular for separating one identity from another.