

# EMBODIED SPACE: ACTIONS WITHIN NAVIGATION PRACTICE IN THE KALAHARI ENVIRONMENT

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This paper explores the distinctive interplay between the structure of the Kalahari environment and the spatial cognition of the |Gui//Gana, two neighboring language groups of the San. Detailed analyses of their interactions demonstrated that the Gui//Gana were continually orientating themselves in relation to the landscape during hunting excursions. They did so by using the |*qāa* (dry valley) as a frame of reference in order to determine their relative location, as well as to decide their course of action. When the author asked about the route taken, they immediately collaborated to explain it. In the explanation, they used various kinds of semiotic resources in distinctive ways. Several theoretical implications were deduced from the interactions analyzed here. First, our examples are characterized by the repetitive occurrence of instruction. Through the activity of instruction, Gui//Gana folk knowledge, which usually constitutes the background knowledge that organizes their daily activity, became available. Moreover, a variety of actions were performed in order to achieve mutual understanding in the activity of instruction. Second, one of the key factors to achieving mutual understanding involved coordinating the attention of the recipient within a larger set of interacting systems. Utterances, gestures, and other signs (e.g., postural orientation, gaze) were used for this purpose in the following ways: (a) Speakers often re-started telling by re-formulating the contents. (b) Symbiotic relationships between talk and gesture were effectively formed. (c) Gestures, once expressed, were subsequently used for different actions. (d) The speaker's gaze was efficiently used to elicit the recipient's attention. Third, the environment of their living area constitutes a resource for (re)generating particular cultural meaning. In our example, the informant used the magnificent ecological setting, with his body at the center, as a resource for communication. The landscape overlapped with his life-world, a world into which the author was also drawn.

**Keywords:** San, Botswana, Spatial cognition, Interaction, Conversation analysis