Can the term “vyākaraṇa” be applied for describing the grammar of the language of hand gestures in Indian dancing?

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The proposed paper deals with the question about the grammar of the language of hand gestures in Indian dancing and whether the description “grammar” can be identified with the Sanskrit term “vyākaraṇa”.

For answering this question we first examine the use of the the word “grammar” in several investigations on Indian dancing and come to the conclusion that most of those investigations apply “grammar” in a metaphoric sense. As example for using “grammar” as a technical term we resume the study of Yshihiko Ikegami (Ikegami; 1973) which remains rather singular in the foreign language tradition on investigating the body language in Indian dancing.

In a second step the investigation focuses on certain collocations of derivations of the verbal root “vi-ā-kṛ” for explaining the reason why in the context of Sanskrit literature the grammar of body language in general and the language of hand gestures in Indian dancing in particular are never described as “vyākaraṇa”.

Based on examples from the grammar tradition of the Sanskrit language the investigation comes to the conclusion that the term “vyākaraṇa”, though never used before for describing the grammar of a nonverbal language and even in conflict with the holistic principles of the body language in Indian dancing, can be considered as appropriate for describing the grammar of the language of hand gestures in Indian dancing if we bare in mind the technical term “vyākaraṇa/grammar” and not a metaphoric use.