

School of Psychology – University of Plymouth Research Seminar Schedule 2007-08 – Term 2

All seminars to take place on Wednesdays 4-5pm in PSQ B106

Date	Speaker	Talk Title
9 January	Rob Holland University of Nijmegen	TBA
ABSTRACT	TBA	
16 January	Velitchko Manahilov Glasgow Caledonian University	Investigating global visual perception
ABSTRACT	<p>Early visual mechanisms have receptive fields which are small and selective for stimulus attributes such as spatial frequency, orientation and motion direction. Information about large objects and their movements can be extracted by integrating the local representations across the visual field. We know little about how the higher levels of the visual system integrate global information. In this talk, I will present a method for estimating the perceptive fields for processing global information. This method is based on the classification image approach, which reveals how the observer weights the information in the image to reach a decision. We found that normal observers use localised perceptive fields when integrating the global direction of moving dots embedded in motion noise. In contrast to normal observers, amblyopic observers have wider perceptive fields which results in higher efficiency (amblyopia is a condition where the two eyes are not aligned and one eye's output is suppressed). Similar results were obtained with individuals with dyslexia and persistent migraine aura. The disrupted perceptive fields in a global motion task may be related to impaired suppression in motion-sensitive neurones.</p>	
23 January	Brett Smith University of Exeter	Broken bodies and storied lives: The case of becoming disabled through sport
ABSTRACT	<p>Against the backdrop of the narrative turn within the human sciences, this talk explores the lives of a small group of men who, due to a spinal cord injury through playing rugby union, have made a transition from the world of the able-bodied into the world of disability where they remain to this day. Drawing on qualitative research, it focuses upon the types of stories these men tell and how people respond to them. It also reflects on how psychological change may be enabled and the role of stem cell surgery in this process.</p>	

30 January	Martin Edwards Birmingham University	Can Action Observation Or Imagination Facilitate Execution?
ABSTRACT	Recent research in the neurosciences has demonstrated that the observation or imagination of action activates the same areas of the brain as that used for execution. On the basis of shared equivalence between the neural processes underlying these behaviours, we hypothesised that congruent prior observation or imagination might facilitate or prime subsequent execution performance. In the school seminar, I will present some data from my research group that supports the hypothesis. In discussion of the studies, I would like to address whether the neural processes underlying action observation and imagination are the same, what the prime might actually consist of, and also discuss whether the effects are of any use to applied research such as in the sport, exercise or rehabilitation sciences.	
6 February	Kenny Coventry Northumbria University	Putting Language and Perception Together Again
ABSTRACT	Learning language occurs in situations where child and a caregiver are immersed in a spatial environment (e.g., playing with toys) working towards specific goals (e.g., fitting objects together in meaningful ways). In this talk I consider the consequences of this for both language understanding, and for perception. In one series of studies I show that language and gesture are tightly coupled in the case of spatial demonstratives ('this' and 'that'), and that extending near (perceptual) space directly impacts on language use. In a second series of studies, I show that both prior language and knowledge of the visual scene to be described mutually constrain spatial language choice to describe simple visual scenes. Finally, using fMRI, I show that motion processing for static images with implied motion is mediated by language task, and is driven by knowledge of how objects typically interact. Taken together, these results support a model of meaning driven by situations rather than individual objects, and a model is presented within the framework of dynamic systems theory which places situations at the heart of conceptual understanding.	
20 February	James Laird Clark University	Emotional Feelings as Embodied Cognitions
ABSTRACT	Contrary to common sense, emotional feelings are the results, not the causes of emotional behaviors. But not for all people. Some people feel happy if induced to smile, and loving if induced to gaze into another's eyes, but others are unaffected. These differences in response to "Personal Cues" are stable and general across many behavior/feeling relationships. Recently we have been exploring the implications of these differences for the role of autonomic activity in emotional experience. Autonomic activity is related to feelings for Personal cue people but not for others. Personal Cue responders are also more sensitive to pain stimuli, and show patterned autonomic responses to emotional stimuli. These results suggest ways to improve pain treatment, and the accuracy of "lie detection".	

27 February	Wokje Abrahamse University of Surrey	Household energy conservation: Examining the effectiveness of a tailor-made approach
ABSTRACT	<p>Households are large contributors to emissions of greenhouse gases, and they therefore constitute an important target group for energy conservation. If the aim is to effectively encourage households to reduce their energy consumption, it is important to examine possible ways to change consumption patterns and to target those behaviours with the highest impact on the environment (e.g., in terms of resource use and emission reductions).</p> <p>In this presentation, I will provide an overview of the effectiveness of various types of interventions aimed at encouraging behavioural change. It appears that tailored interventions in particular are effective in reducing energy consumption. I will then discuss the findings of a multidisciplinary field study, which was aimed at encouraging households to reduce their energy use via the Internet. Households were given tailored information about energy saving measures they could adopt. They were then asked to try and save 5% energy and the website indicated how much energy they could save with each measure in order to attain that goal. After five months, households received feedback about their actual energy savings. Households who had received the combination of interventions via the Internet saved 5% energy, while households in a control group used more energy. Also, households in the experimental group had adopted more energy-saving measures and they had more knowledge of energy conservation, compared to the control group.</p> <p>If the aim is to encourage households to adopt more sustainable lifestyles, it is important to provide them with more insight into which energy saving options are most effective for them to conserve energy. Taken together, these results suggest that a tailor-made approach via the Internet is an important step in that direction.</p>	
5 March	Roger Giner-Sorolla University of Kent	Disgust and Anger: Process and Content Implications for Moral Judgment
ABSTRACT	<p>While the role of emotions in moral judgment has begun to be recognized in recent years (Haidt, 2001), a number of questions remain open about the role of the specific emotions of anger and disgust in moral condemnation. I will review some of the literature on these emotions, paying special attention to the problem in the English language whereby the word “disgust” can be used to refer to the basic emotion of anger. I will then present research from my lab that answers questions about the content of these two moral emotions, namely what factors differentially elicit anger and disgust in moral contexts. This research also begins to answer process questions about the relative cognitive elaboration of these emotions. We find that anger tends to be more elaborated upon with post-hoc reasons than disgust, and is more influential on moral judgement than disgust under cognitions of high vs. low cognitive capacity.</p> <p>In conclusion, while moral anger and moral disgust often co-occur, the difference between them can be important in predicting the quite different behavioural consequences of these two emotions.</p>	

12 March	Carl Hughes University of Bangor	TBA
ABSTRACT	TBA	
19 March	Josiane Bertoncini CNRS Paris Descartes	Speech processing capacities in cochlear implanted children (3- to 6-years)
ABSTRACT	<p>Young deaf children with cochlear implants constitute a rapidly growing (but moving) population providing an interesting window on some limits of the plasticity involved in spoken language acquisition. The studies we will present rely on two lines of developmental research. On the one hand, old and recent studies on "infant speech perception" delineated several questions that are related to the universal and language-specific properties of the processes involved in spoken language acquisition. On the other hand, other psycholinguistic studies examined atypical trajectories of language development in order to infer the variations and the limits of the acquisition process. The interest of cochlear implanted (CI) children is that they now have access to the auditory input at a younger and younger age. However, they continue to present some of the characteristic difficulties found in infants with profound and severe hearing loss, together with some more specific difficulties in acquiring speech. In several ongoing studies, we investigated to what extent acoustic information known to be useful to the normally-hearing infant in organizing the speech input, is also used by the CI young child. Is prosodic information accessible to the CI child, as a function of age of implantation, duration of deafness, mode of communication? How does the CI child segment words in the continuous speech? How does the CI child use new words in categorization (object pairing) tasks? Still in progress, the results will be presented in order to provide a basis of discussion for further psycholinguistic research, applied to an atypical population with a new experience of deafness</p>	