Welcome to DCAL’s eNewsletter

New Eurovision Sign Project...
Will it help to make your mind up?

In this edition
- DCAL hosts ‘Digging into Signs’ Workshop
- Will the 60th Anniversary of the Eurovision Song Contest be the most accessible competition ever?
- Update on specialist neurology centre
- Lunch hour lecture is real appetiser for the brain
- CPD launch on anniversary was ‘icing on the cake’
- Involved in the education of Deaf children?
- UCL to host second summer school for Deaf students
- Welsh Patron pays a visit
From the Director’s Chair

The conference season is upon us and DCAL staff and students are busy presenting their research.

I’ve recently been to the COST SignGram Outreach seminar in Barcelona and will be speaking at the International Society for Bilingualism Studies in the States during May. I have also been asked to be a keynote speaker at the Cognitive Hearing Science conference in Linkoping, Sweden in June.

Gary Morgan will be one of the keynote speakers at the International Congress on the Education of the Deaf in Athens and several colleagues will be presenting at the International Sign Language Acquisition conference in Amsterdam, both in July. You can read more about the Digging into Signs Workshop, organised by Kearsy Cormier and held recently at UCL on Page 3 of this newsletter.

2015 is a very important milestone for the Deafness Cognition and Language Research Centre (DCAL) as we will be celebrating our 10th anniversary.

Over that time I believe that the team at the Centre have made a significant contribution to research in the fields of deaf cognition, sign linguistics, childhood development, psychology and neuroscience of language. When coupled together, they have provided a unique perspective on language and thought, based on Deaf people’s communication.

To mark 10 years of achievement, we are looking to hold a day of celebration on Friday 13th November, with a number of free events, talks and exhibits. We will be circulating more detailed information about the day in the coming weeks. Despite the superstitious nature of the date, I’m sure it will be a fun day, so please put the date in your diary now!

The end of 2015 will also bring major changes and developments in DCAL’s activities. With the completion of 10 years of funding from the ESRC, we will be developing new teaching and research activities. We’ll be sending out more information about our plans over the next few months.

Bencie

Prof Bencie Woll, Director
DCAL hosts ‘Digging into Signs’ Workshop

In March as part of the BSL Corpus Project, UCL hosted a Digging into Signs workshop, which drew representatives from 19 different sign languages from around the world.

The event was jointly organised by Dr Kearsy Cormier, DCAL Senior Researcher and Dr Onno Crasborn, from Radboud University Nijmegen, who are both principle investigators of the Digging into Signs Project. The project, funded under the Digging into Signs Data Challenge, aims to create clear standards to address two fundamental challenges that exist in the gathering of large sign datasets or corpora; these are:

1. Inconsistencies that arise when signs are annotated by means of spoken/written language.
2. The fact that many parts of signed interaction are not necessarily fully composed of lexical signs (equivalent of words), instead consisting of constructions that are less conventionalised.

As sign language corpus building progresses, the potential for some standards in annotation is beginning to emerge. However, there have been no attempts to standardise these practices across corpora, which is required to be able to compare data cross-linguistically. The Digging into Signs project aims to solve this problem by creating clear standards, so as to make cross-linguistic corpus research possible for sign languages. The project puts these standards into practice by creating publicly accessible annotations for two sign languages, along with protocols for creating such annotations. The Digging into Signs team are doing this for two recent open access sign language corpora that are among the very first in the field – i.e. Sign Language of the Netherlands (Corpus NGT) led by Dr Crasborn and the British Sign Language (BSL Corpus) led by Dr Cormier.

The two-day workshop held at the end of March, was an opportunity for the Digging into Signs team to share its joint annotation standards with other sign language corpus projects and to begin discussions about best practice in this field. The programme consisted of presentations and posters by researchers from all over the world who have sign language corpus projects underway and have begun annotation.

To find out more about the workshop and the presentations that were made over the two days, then please click here – Digging into Signs Workshop.
Will the 60th Anniversary of the Eurovision Song Contest be the most accessible competition ever?

Sandie Shaw, Lulu, Brotherhood of Man, Bucks Fizz, Katrina and the Waves - some might say that the UK’s best Eurovision years are far behind us and that the possibility of us winning another title, given the competition’s expansion across Central and Eastern Europe, is as likely as Lord Lucan winning the Derby on-board Shergar!

However, the Eurovision Song Contest is much more than a music competition; it’s had a political, social and cultural influence that has spanned six decades. As the Austrian capital, Vienna, prepares to stage this year’s grand final, 2015 could prove to be a watershed moment for the competition, as a new project looks to dramatically expand the accessibility of the event and with it, audience numbers right across the continent.

The Eurovision Sign Project was launched earlier this year by ORF - the Austrian host broadcaster - in close cooperation with the Austrian Deaf Association. With its aim of “Building Bridges”, ORF has said it is going to make the 60th Eurovision Song Contest, as an accessible and inclusive as possible for the event’s international audience. The whole competition will be completely subtitled in English for deaf and hard-of-hearing people (songs & stage presentation).

Moreover, both the semi-finals and the grand final will also be presented in International Sign. ORF has stated that it understands inclusion as being holistic and will, in close cooperation with the deaf community of Austria and with deaf performers, deaf interpreters and an own technical team, ensure that Deaf and hard-of-hearing people can participate in this paramount event – ‘without any restrictions’.

The Austrian broadcaster is offering the full package to all participating broadcasters through the European Broadcasting Union (EBU), which includes subtitles, livestream and/or live transmission of the signed Eurovision Song Contest. With support of the EBU, ORF has said it will ensure that all technical requirements for transmission are met.

The Eurovision Sign team consists of seven deaf international performers (from Nigeria, China, Austria and Denmark), two deaf interpreters and one team leader, the only hearing member of the performance team.

DCAL has played a key role in this project, as it has provided expert advice to ORF about best practice and feedback on translation and interpretation of the songs.
Commenting on its involvement, DCAL Director, Prof Bencie Woll, said: “This is a great initiative – not only in making the Eurovision Song Contest accessible to the deaf communities of Europe and the world but also in raising deaf awareness and appreciation of deaf culture among hearing people. I am very pleased that DCAL has had a part to play in expanding the reach of Europe’s largest music event.”

Alexander Wrabetz, the General Director of ORF, said the broadcaster was ‘eager’ to televise the 60th Eurovision Song Contest as “accessibly and inclusively” as possible. He said: “To us, the motto “Building Bridges” not only stands for connecting cultures and languages through music but also symbolises openness, tolerance and respect for all people, just as they are.”

Tasked with supervising the Eurovision Sign Project is Helene Jarmer, President of the Austrian Deaf Association. She said that the project represented a real milestone for sign language in Austria: “2015 marks the year in which we celebrate the tenth anniversary of the legal recognition of sign language in Austria. On the eve the XVII World Congress of the World Federation of the Deaf in Istanbul in July we, the Austrian Deaf Association, are very proud to be part of this challenging project.”

So whether you love it or loath it, there is no question that the Eurovision Song Contest has evolved over the last 60 years into an event which has embraced and celebrated diversity by showcasing minority communities through the espousal of the values of tolerance and acceptance. It looks like that mission will move to another level in 2015 by opening up the quirky festival of performance, colour and sound, to a brand new audience right across the world.

The Eurovision Song Contest Semi-Finals take place on 19 & 23 May and the Grand Final will be broadcast on Saturday 23rd May at 8pm on BBC ONE
http://www.eurovision.tv/

SAVE THE DATE
Friday 13th November 2015
DCAL – The First 10 Years – A Celebration!!
A day of talks, hands on exhibits and much more as we celebrate the first 10 years of DCAL. The event will be free and will run from approximately 11am -8pm and will be held on the main UCL campus.

Put the date in your diary now and look out for future updates!
Update on specialist neurology centre

DCAL’s tireless campaigning and policy activity has resulted in real progress on this issue over recent weeks. As was reported in the previous DCAL Newsletter (Edition 14), the Centre has been working with the National Hospital for Neurology and Neurosurgery to build a strong business case to present to Government and NHS commissioners, to show that a specialist centre will not only improve patient outcomes but that it will save the NHS a significant amount of money in the long-term as well.

We have recently been informed that the Department of Health is now going bring our proposals to the attention of the Prescribed Specialised Services Advisory Group (PSSAG), which provides independent advice to Ministers on what services should be prescribed for national commissioning by NHS England. The next meeting is this month and we have been working with Department of Health officials to understand how we feed in our proposals to make the very best case we can to achieve a positive outcome.

We will update readers regarding progress on this issue in future editions. However Prof Woll, Dr Joanna Atkinson and her team would like to thank all those politicians in the previous Parliament, who have positively engaged with DCAL on this agenda and have actively provided their help and support, particularly Sir Malcolm Bruce, Stephen Lloyd, Andrew Gwynne, Rosie Cooper, Dr Sarah Wollaston and Lords Ponsonby, Hunt and Bourne.

Lunch hour lecture is real appetiser for the brain

Dr Mairead MacSweeney, one of DCAL’s Deputy Directors, was one of the most recent contributors to UCL’s Lunch Hour Lecture series.

The very popular public lecture series has been running at UCL since 1942, allowing anyone the opportunity to sample the exceptional research work being undertaken at the university. Lectures are free, require no booking and take place from 1:15pm to 1:55pm on Tuesdays and Thursdays in UCL’s Darwin Lecture Theatre.

Dr MacSweeney’s lecture examined what we currently know about how the brain processes a signed language and how children who have a profound hearing impairment, learn to read a language that they cannot hear. It also examined how this research can be used as a scientific tool to drive forward evidence-based language and education interventions.

All the live lectures are recorded and can be replayed here at www.ucl.ac.uk/lhl/streamed.

However, Dr MacSweeney’s lecture (with subtitles) can now also be viewed on Youtube.
Recently the DCAL team celebrated the 12th anniversary of British Sign Language (BSL) being recognised as an official language in the UK by launching their new range of Continuous Professional Development (CPD) courses. To mark the occasion, we held a very competitive Bake Off and invited entries from within UCL and the general public, the theme being BSL and all funds raised were donated to the Frank Barnes School for Deaf Children.

Professor Andrew Eder, Pro-Vice-Provost for Lifel Learning and a judge at the event commented: “It has been fantastic to have the opportunity to support DCAL with the launch of their new CPD courses and we, in the Life Learning team, are very excited to be working with them to broaden their portfolio and reach. The standard of entries was extremely high with imaginative interpretations of the theme of BSL. It made judging very challenging, as the creativity and enthusiasm of the contestants was very impressive”.

Robert Adam, Director of Continuing Professional Development at DCAL added: “It is a very exciting time at DCAL with the launch of our CPD courses. We look forward to reaching out to a broad audience, and sharing widely our research knowledge with different professions working with Deaf people.”

This event was the culmination of much hard work by Robert Adam, Dr Manjula Patrick (DCAL Administrator), Katie Mason (DCAL PhD student) and Mischa Cooke (DCAL Deaf Community Liaison Officer).

**Winners**

Star Baker and biscuit category: **Lizzie Worster, UCL MSc student**

Celebration cakes: **Heather Payne, DCAL PhD student**

Cupcakes/muffins: **Hannah Phillips-Haynes, DCAL Centre secretary**

As part of CPD programme of events, there will be a Deafhood workshop running on 30 May, taught by Dr Paddy Ladd, internationally renowned pioneer in the field of Deaf studies. Please email [dcalcourses@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:dcalcourses@ucl.ac.uk) for further information.

More information on CPD courses can be found at [http://www.ucl.ac.uk/dcal/study/cpd](http://www.ucl.ac.uk/dcal/study/cpd)
Involved in the education of Deaf children?

World-leading researchers, teachers and policy makers will discuss the future of education for deaf children at UCL.

In June, the DCAL team will be holding a free, one day research dissemination event, aimed at teachers and educators of deaf children, which will focus on speechreading, language and cognitive underpinnings of deaf children’s learning.

This one day conference will enable members of the public to engage with DCAL in a dialogue, learn about its latest research and help shape the Centre’s future activity. Eminent international expert, Dr Connie Mayer, who has agreed to present her work as part of a trip to the UK, will be joining academics from Oxford, Roehampton and UCL, including Dr Robert Adam, Dr Mairéad MacSweeney and Dr Chloë Marshall, who will be presenting and discussing their projects in an easy to access and entertaining way.

Part of the event will be a ‘Question Time’ panel session, where the discussion will focus on the future direction in education for deaf children. This panel will be made up of teachers, parents and speech language therapists, working with deaf children in the UK, as well as representatives from the National Deaf Children’s Society, the British Association of Teachers of the Deaf and the Royal College of Speech Language Therapy.

Commenting on the conference’s key objectives, one of the principle organisers of the event, Professor Gary Morgan, said:

“The event is very much geared towards the educators of deaf children; these are teachers of the deaf and classroom support workers. We aim to highlight recent research findings directly relevant to the education of deaf children and we hope to do that in a lively and entertaining way. The types of research projects we will be presenting will be language studies, cognitive neuroscience and interventions aimed at improving deaf children’s education.”

He added:

“For those who cannot make the conference, we will be live streaming the whole day and we will be publicising those arrangements via social media as we move closer to the event.”

If you want to know more about the event, you can contact Prof. Morgan at G.Morgan@city.ac.uk.
UCL to host second summer school for Deaf students

In August, University College London will again be running its innovative three day residential summer school exclusively for D/deaf and hard of hearing students from across the UK.

The Discover UCL Summer School, is the only one of its kind run by any UK university and has been developed in partnership with UCL, the Deafness Cognition and Language Research Centre and the Deaf Education Advocacy Fellowship.

This award winning programme is exclusively for students in year 11 and year 12. The programme gives students the chance to find out more about UCL through active participation in fun, academic taster sessions at the university and by allowing them to stay in university halls of residences right in the heart of central London.

Also during the three days, there will be group sessions on student support, including; writing UCAS personal statements, student finance applications, as well as general support available, like BSL interpreters, note takers, etc. and, more importantly, how participants can access that support. Students will also have the opportunity to meet D/deaf and hard of hearing graduates, who will tell them what they need to know about university and what they are up to now.

Quick Facts Box

- The summer school is free of charge to attend
- UCL will cover the cost of your travel, accommodation, all meals and refreshments.
- It runs from Monday 10 to Wednesday 12 August, 2015
- There are 15 spaces available for year 11 and year 12 students
- You must have 100% attendance on the summer school

For more information on the Summer School, please click here to view the programme leaflet. Applications for the 2015 summer school are now open. Please use the online application form. Alternatively if you require a paper form or more information, then please contact:

Farhana Ghaffar: f.ghaffar@ucl.ac.uk 020 7679 2035

Deadline for submitting applications is Midnight Friday 22nd May 2015
The Patron of the Wales Council for Deaf People, Baroness Jenny Randerson, paid a recent visit to DCAL to learn more about the Centre’s work and research.

Lady Randerson, who also has a hearing impairment, has held ministerial positions in both the Welsh and UK Governments. Having previously been a teacher in the Further Education sector in Wales, she was very keen to know more about the research DCAL has done regarding the educational attainment of deaf pupils and students.

During the visit she met DCAL’s Director, Prof Bencie Woll, as well as Katy Judd from the Deaf Memory Clinic at the National Hospital for Neurology and Neurosurgery. Commenting on the visit, Prof Woll said:

“We were very pleased to welcome Baroness Randerson to DCAL. She was very knowledgeable about many of the fundamental issues facing Deaf people in Britain today. I’m sure she will take a keen interest in DCAL’s future work, particularly around the education of deaf children.”