

For the good work ahead, and with thanks

Dear friends,

Most DCAL newsletter readers know our work at the ESRC Deafness Cognition and Language Research Centre (DCAL) well – and a warm welcome to all new subscribers. Since DCAL was set up in 2005 you have been with us as colleagues and good friends - collaborating in research work, participating in projects, attending seminars and joining in events. The work of the Centre has gone from strength to strength and we could not have got here without you. Thank you from all of us at DCAL.

The good news is that DCAL's initial 5-year funding from the Economic and Social Research Fund (ESRC) Research Centre programme has now been extended and DCAL can continue its research and public relations work for another five years.

DCAL is acutely aware of the responsibility - and opportunity - given to it with the funding extension in the present climate of widespread funding cuts. It would have been a serious blow to research in this field if the Centre had not been able to continue.

The funding review's success is a recognition of DCAL's unique role in research, exploring language, cognition, society and the brain from a Deaf perspective, and the team's substantial achievements to date.

The landscape of research in this field has changed markedly in the five years since DCAL was launched, and clinical developments in relation to hearing intervention, especially cochlear implantation, are also changing the experience of deafness. So, our research is even more important now as the financial environment is looking more and more difficult across the board. DCAL celebrates its good fortune to be able to keep working. The financial constraints will only intensify our commitment and sharpen our focus.

I hope that the newsletter will give a good snapshot of some of the work DCAL has been engaged in over recent months and we look forward to keeping you up to date as this work and new work evolve. DCAL's e-newsletter will come to you twice a year, but you can also sign up to receive Briefing papers and press releases. Please contact us at dcal@ucl.ac.uk stating your interest. For more in-depth information on DCAL's work please go to the website www.dcal.ucl.ac.uk.

With all wishes for Christmas and the New Year from me and the team,



Professor Bencie Woll – Director of DCAL



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Healthy Deaf Minds in Europe

DCAL staff and associates had a strong presence this year at the European Congress on Mental Health and Deafness which was held from 2-5 November, 2010, at Cambridge University, UK and organised by the European Society for Mental Health and Deafness (ESMHD). The theme of the congress was "Healthy Deaf Minds in Europe", with the underlying themes of preventing mental health problems in the Deaf community and promoting Deaf mental wellbeing.

In particular the work of DCAL Research Fellow and Clinical Neuropsychologist Dr Jo Atkinson was highlighted, with her winning the award for best key note presentation for *The Perceptual Characteristics of Voice-Hallucinations in Deaf People*.

Dr Atkinson's collaborative work with Professor Jane Marshall of City University London and DCAL Director Professor Bencie Woll on *The impact of stroke on sign language* was also presented, as well as her work with DCAL researcher Tanya Denmark on *Cognitive Norms in Healthy Aging Deaf people and the development of a dementia screening tool for Deaf BSL users*.

The event attracted around 250 delegates from across Europe, as well as from further afield, providing a unique forum for information sharing, networking and collaboration between professionals working in

the field of mental health and deafness. Participants included Deaf and hearing researchers, psychiatrists, psychologists, psychotherapists, counsellors, therapists, nurses, social workers, interpreters, educationalists, carers and Deaf community members themselves.

Some 75 presentations were given over the three days and organised into six symposia - Deaf Adult and General Services, Deaf Children, Young People and Families, Deaf Elders, Forensic Services for Deaf People, Community and Primary Care Services for Deaf People, Developing Mental Health Services for Deaf People.

A huge variety of research was presented. Amongst the presentation titles were: *How does deafness impact upon assessment for autism? - Coping with the problem of death: understanding the Death Concept of Deaf people with additional disabilities. - The problematic "equivalence" and other linguistic challenges when translating a dementia assessment into Finnish Sign Language (FinSL)*.

The full programme of presentations can be read at: <http://www.bsmhd.org.uk/esmhdcongress2010/index.htm>

Video interviews from the congress can be watched at: <http://www.viewtalk.org/walls/W00V3qOPBik9/8th-european-congress-on-mental-health-and-deafness/>

RESEARCH IN BRIEF Voice hallucinations in deaf people with schizophrenia

Dr Jo Atkinson's research into voice-hallucinations sits within the Atypical Language research strand at DCAL. Researchers in this strand investigate how a range of linguistic and cognitive impairments impinge on the acquisition and breakdown of signing. This includes developmental disorders of sign language; autism and sign language; acquired impairments

in sign language, including the effects of brain lesions on sign language processing and dementia; sign language processing when sight fails (Usher's syndrome) and neuropsychiatric disturbances in sign language including schizophrenia.

The research project on voice-hallucinations explores how deaf people with schizophrenia

perceive their voice hallucinations. Studying voice-hallucinations in deaf individuals who use visual rather than auditory communication provides a rare insight into the relationship between sensory experience and how "voices" are perceived. Relatively little is known about the perceptual characteristics of voice-hallucinations in congenitally deaf people who use lip-reading or sign

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RESEARCH IN BRIEF Voice hallucinations in deaf people with schizophrenia

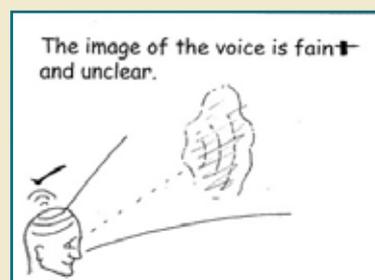
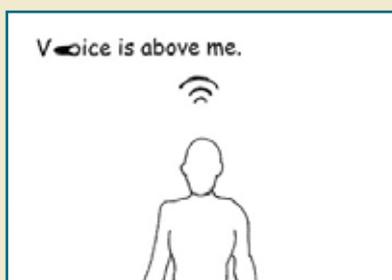
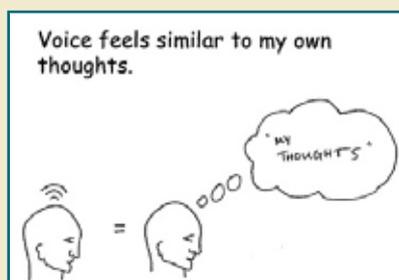
language as their preferred means of communication. This study explores whether the way they perceive the voice-hallucinations reflects their individual experience with language and sensory input.

The research involved asking people to choose cards describing perceptual characteristics of voice hallucinations that matched their experience. The cards had images and statements on them

such as "The voice feels similar to my own thoughts"; "The voice is above me"; "The image of the voice is faint and unclear". The study involved 27 deaf participants with schizophrenia and experience of voice-hallucinations, and a range of hearing loss and language backgrounds. It was found that the perceptual characteristics of voice-hallucinations fitted closely with the individual's auditory experience. People born

profoundly deaf highlighted non-auditory factors. Deaf people with experience of hearing speech, through residual hearing, hearing aids, or pre-deafness experience, reported auditory features or uncertainty about the mode of perception.

To read about this research in more detail go to: http://www.dcal.ucl.ac.uk/Research/Voice_Hallucinations_Project.html



Some of the pictorial cards developed as part of the research exploring the nature of voice hallucinations in d/Deaf people. The cards may be a useful resource for clinicians assessing or conducting therapy for d/Deaf people with experience of voice hallucinations and other hallucinatory phenomena. If you wish to use the cards for research purposes, please get in touch: joanna.atkinson@ucl.ac.uk.

IN THE NEWS - making a difference at the England Deaf Darby and Joan Club

Regular readers of DCAL's newsletter will remember the article in the Spring 2010 edition on DCAL's role in a unique joint project to improve early diagnosis and management of dementia among Deaf people who use British Sign Language (BSL). Supported by the Alzheimer's Society, the three-year Deaf with Dementia (DwD) project is being carried out by four partner organisations – DCAL, DCAL associates from City University London, The University of Manchester (Social Research with Deaf People and the

Dementia and Ageing research groups) and the Royal Association for Deaf People (RAD). Within the DwD project DCAL is primarily responsible for the Older Healthy Deaf Brain study. In the Spring newsletter the first stage of this project was mentioned, with plans for the DCAL team to ask healthy deaf older people to take part in their research at the England Deaf Darby and Joan (EDDJ) annual get together. The event was held from October 11-15, 2010, at Pontins Lowestoft, Suffolk.

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Thanks to the generosity and enthusiasm of so many of the older Deaf people taking time out of their holiday to participate in interviews, the project got off to a great start. The data collected on healthy Deaf signers (aged 50 to 93 years) from EDDJ will provide the project with norms for the Deaf community. The next step will be to collect data from signers with dementia to check the diagnostic validity of the assessments. Once this stage is completed DCAL hopes to be able to roll out a screening test so that clinicians will be able to screen Deaf people with suspected cognitive difficulties and then refer them for in-depth memory clinic assessments. This will mirror the service available to hearing people now.

The warm welcome DCAL and DwD colleagues received at the EDDJ and some background on the wider project was documented in an excellent and entertaining report by the television magazine programme for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (presented in sign language with open subtitles) BBC See Hear. The programme was broadcast on BBC1 and BBC2 in late November and early December but can be watched again via the internet on [http://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/b00w7f1j/See Hear Series 30 Episode 23/](http://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/b00w7f1j/See_Hear_Series_30_Episode_23/). The See Hear team wants to return to the story later on to keep their viewers up to date with the project's progress.

The television and other media coverage of the EDDJ research is important in that it helps raise greater awareness of the issue of dementia in the Deaf community. Very recently the government announced that new drugs will be available on the NHS to treat patients in the early stages of Alzheimer's disease (the most common form of dementia), but this will not benefit Deaf people unless doctors have a diagnostic test of the type DwD is aiming to develop. DCAL Director, Professor Bencie Woll, says: "Early identification of dementia brings many potential benefits, including access to medications, more time for people with dementia and their families to make decisions about care and support and the potential for



"The week was a great success; we recruited 174 older Deaf healthy people for our project. Their participation will be invaluable for future research for deaf people with dementia." Tanya Denmark DCAL

a better quality of life. For Deaf people, the current lack of information in BSL and poor awareness in the Deaf community about dementia, combined with limited awareness among clinicians about effects of dementia on BSL signers and the absence of diagnostic tools in BSL, means early identification is unlikely to happen. This research project aims to resolve these problems."

While DCAL continues its work developing cognitive assessments for Deaf people with dementia, research on the other components of the three-year project will start off. The University of Manchester team will be focusing on research exploring the experiences of Deaf people with dementia and their carers, including access to services. RAD will be collaborating on focus group research to explore the Deaf community's awareness of dementia and how to access services.

To find out more about the Deaf with Dementia project and for further contact details go to: <http://www.bsmhd.org.uk/docs/DWD%20leaflet.pdf>

DCAL staff and colleagues also presented on the project at the 8th European Congress on Mental Health and Deafness (see previous story). Please go to: <http://www.bsmhd.org.uk/esmhdcongress2010/index.htm>

DCAL staff recognised for their excellence in deaf-hearing communication

After an organisational nomination last year, DCAL is excited to announce that two staff members have been recognised individually for their outstanding contribution to communication between deaf and hearing people in this year's prestigious Signature Awards. The award ceremony took place on 12 November 2010 at The Russell Hotel, Russell Square, London.

Signature is a charity which promotes excellence in communication with deaf and deafblind people. It has a vision of a society in which deaf people have

full access. The awards were set up to celebrate the dedicated efforts made by numerous people to help this vision become a reality.

DCAL postgraduate researcher Robert Adam was one of four individuals nominated for the Joseph Maitland Robinson Award for Outstanding Achievement. DCAL post-doctoral researcher Dr

Christopher Stone was one of five nominated for Communication Professional of the Year.

As in previous years the nominees for the seven award categories represented great diversity, with nominations of individuals and of organisations, such as NHS Trusts, Police Forces and charities. The final winner of The Joseph Maitland

“Robert Adam’s and Christopher Stone’s nominations are testament to their commitment and tireless work to help improve life for Deaf people everywhere.” Professor Bencie Woll DCAL



ROBERT ADAM

Robert Adam is Deaf and comes from Australia where he gained a Master's degree in Applied Linguistics. He is currently studying towards his PhD in sign language linguistics at DCAL.

Robert came to the UK eight years ago. His first UK post was as Teacher Coordinator of Level 3 and 4 NVQ in BSL at City Lit in London. He also taught the

City and Guilds Teacher Training Courses for deaf people. Four years ago he was elected to the committee of the Association of British Sign Language Tutors and Assessors (ABSLTA). Robert is known in the wider Deaf community for the BSL linguistics workshops he runs, having done many of these for ABSLTA and for Signature. He has also been involved in many other ABSLTA training workshops for BSL teachers, including CPD (Continuing Professional Development) and Institute for Learning issues. Robert has also collaborated with the NDCS Family Sign Language Curriculum; he is also a member of the World Federation of the Deaf Expert Panel on Sign Languages and is working with the Deaf community of Kosovo to create a Kosovar Sign Language dictionary.

With DCAL, Robert's research focuses on sign language in the everyday lives of Deaf people, for example Deaf people who are bilingual in two sign languages and Deaf people who work as interpreters in the Deaf community. His research work helps us understand how people learn sign language and is contributing towards the development of resources and materials for teaching and language assessment.

Award was MP Jack Ashley. The final winner for the Communications Professional of the Year was Trudy Field, who has devoted 20 years to sign language interpreting and is involved in a 30-year project to translate the entire bible into British Sign Language (BSL).

DCAL Director, Professor Bencie Woll said: "Our congratulations to the final winners! Meanwhile it is a great privilege for DCAL to have two of its team included in the final shortlist. Robert Adam's and Christopher Stone's nominations are testament to their commitment and tireless work to help improve life for Deaf people everywhere. Their stories and achievements can be an inspiration to all of us."

To read more about the research work carried out by Robert Adam and Dr Christopher Stone and the wider DCAL team please visit www.dcal.ucl.ac.uk

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DR CHRISTOPHER STONE

Dr Christopher Stone trained as a BSL/English interpreter at the Centre for Deaf Studies, University of Bristol 1995-1997. He then worked as an interpreter and interpreter trainer primarily based in the UK with some work in

Uganda and Finland. He returned to Bristol to do his PhD looking at Deaf professionals working within the television news rendering English into British Sign Language. Christopher has been strongly involved in the Association of Sign Language Interpreters – he has just stepped down from his position as Chair of ASLI

- and has worked to raise standards and promote the profession to governmental and non-governmental organisations. At the heart of his work is a steadfast belief that deaf and deafblind people have a right to equality and access to services. Christopher believes that interpreters have a duty to actively ensure their ongoing training and development supports these aims. Within DCAL Christopher’s post-doctoral research is focused on sign language learning and sign language interpreter aptitude. Together with other academic colleagues he is also exploring issues around Deaf people working as translators and interpreters within the Deaf community and within institutions. In addition Christopher works as Interpreting Coordinator at DCAL.

On the road with DCAL – sharing research with the wider community

Thanks to a grant won through University College London’s (UCL) Beacon Funding, DCAL is putting together a Research Roadshow to travel around the UK in 2011. Visiting various cities across the country for afternoon workshops, the aim of the project is to improve interaction between the British Deaf community and DCAL and follows on from the innovative DCAL Deaf Open Day which was held in March 2010.



The £12,000 Beacon Funding grant will enable DCAL to reach out to more members of the Deaf community and share information on the most recent research coming out of the UCL-based centre. The British Deaf community is a minority language community which uses British Sign Language (BSL) as its first and preferred means of communication. Importantly the

roadshow sessions will be delivered primarily in BSL.

The UCL Public Engagement Unit is one of six in the United Kingdom to be funded by the Beacons for Public Engagement programme set up by HEFCE, Research Councils UK and the Wellcome Trust. The Unit works to support activities which

encourage a culture of two-way conversations between university staff and students, and people outside the university. Grants are highly competitive and are awarded for innovative projects that seek to engage with audiences the university does not traditionally talk to or listen to, or those who may be socially excluded.

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Although research into BSL has been conducted since the 1970s, it was not until the establishment of DCAL in 2005 that an in-depth scientific approach was taken to investigate BSL across a range of disciplines (e.g. language acquisition, sociolinguistics, linguistics, neurolinguistics, atypical language). In doing so, DCAL uses sign language to further our understanding of how language and communication work and to challenge current thinking.

The Research Roadshow will enable Deaf community members to engage with this research through a series of lectures, poster

sessions, and hands-on activities. DCAL researchers Dr Jordan Fenlon and Robert Adam will lead the project. Dr Fenlon said, "We hope the roadshow will help more members of the Deaf community have an increased knowledge of their own community language. Also that the workshops will inspire more young Deaf people to consider sign language research as a possible area of study, thereby widening opportunities in higher education for this group."

Details of the roadshow will be posted on DCAL's website in early 2011. Watch the Local Events link on <http://www.dcal.ucl.ac.uk/>

Engaging with the public

DCAL is proud to announce that their colleague Robert Adam has been recognised for a further award this year!

Robert has won the University College London (UCL) Provost's Award for Public Engager of the Year 2010 in the *researcher* category. The Provost's Awards are given each year to members of UCL in recognition of their particular contribution to the work of the university. The Public Engager of the Year Award has been running for two years and has categories for students, support staff, research staff and academic staff.

The panel selected Robert for the way in which he has developed his public engagement work building towards the upcoming DCAL Roadshows, how his work enables the Deaf community to have an impact on research taking place at DCAL, and the way in which his public work involving others within DCAL and beyond is an inspiration to UCL colleagues.

The new Roadshow is going to enable DCAL to go out and meet directly with members of the Deaf community and wider public even more, but please feel free to initiate contact with DCAL directly if you are interested in taking part in any of the research projects that the Centre is recruiting for. There is more information on the projects and on the criteria for participation on: <http://www.dcal.ucl.ac.uk/Research/researchparticipation.html>

The home-page of the DCAL website also has information about other ways to get involved through DCAL events, local Deaf activities, vacancies etc. Go to www.dcal.ucl.ac.uk

The Deaf community as a bilingual community

When people communicate in sign languages, they also use their mouths. But scientists have debated whether mouth actions resembling spoken words are part of the sign itself or are connected directly to English.

In a new study on British Sign Language (BSL), DCAL researchers found that signers made different mistakes in the manual sign and in the mouthing. This suggests that hand and mouth actions are triggered separately in producing sign language, and thus treated as two separate languages by signers. Recognition of this bilingual nature of communication in BSL could be useful in education of deaf children, focusing on

mouthing in teaching, reading and speaking skills.

The DCAL research team is made up of Dr David Vinson, Dr Robin Thompson, Neil Fox and Robert Skinner and led by Professor Gabriella Vigliocco. The team investigates how signers process language. In this study, they recruited both deaf and hearing adult signers, all of whom grew up signing with Deaf parents. Each person sat in front of a monitor with a video camera pointed at them. They were shown sets of pictures—for example, one set contained various fruits, another set contained modes of transportation—and were asked to sign the name of each item. In another session, they were shown

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those words in English and asked to translate them into British Sign Language. Pictures or words were presented quickly, in order to induce mistakes. These mistakes reveal how language is processed.

The researchers only planned to look at the manual signs, but the videos also captured the signers' mouths. "We noticed that there were quite a few cases where the hands and the mouth seemed to be doing something different," says Vinson. When people were looking at pictures, the hands and mouth would usually make the same mistakes—signing and mouthing "banana" when the picture was an apple, for example. But when they were translating English words into British Sign Language, the hands made the same kind of mistakes, but the mouth didn't. This suggests that the mouth action isn't part of the sign. "In essence, they're doing the same thing as reading an English word aloud without pronouncing it," says Vinson. "So they seem to be



Neil Fox, co-author of the hands and mouth research work, demonstrates how research participants need to produce each sign. In this case the sign is for DRILL. Neil lifts his hands from a rest position each time while the infra-red receiver behind is used to detect reaction times. Frame by frame analysis of video recordings was used to identify and classify errors on the hands and on the mouth.

processing two languages at the same time."

The research is important in terms of shedding new light on how multiple articulators are used by signers. In a spoken language people just use their mouths to articulate language,

whereas in sign languages, people use their mouth as well as both hands. It has been recognised that mouth actions in signing fall into two types: "mouth gestures" which don't resemble words of spoken language, and "mouthings" which are derived from the pronunciation of words in a spoken language. Mouthings often distinguish between ambiguous sign forms. For example, the BSL signs for BATTERY and UNCLE have the same manual form but they are distinguished by English-derived mouthings. However such mouthings are also commonly associated with non-ambiguous signs that occur in spontaneous conversation. Until now, researchers have debated whether mouthings are part of the signs themselves, or whether they are the product of bilingualism rather than part of sign vocabulary. This study provides strong evidence for the latter. Vinson speculates that mouthing English words may be a useful tool in helping deaf children develop English skills.

Looking forwards

Great news for DCAL: at the 10th Theoretical Issues in Sign Language Research Conference (TISLR 10) held in Purdue University, Indiana, USA from 30 September - 2 October, 2010, the members of the Sign Language Linguistics Society (SLLS) voted to hold the next TISLR conference at DCAL, University College London.

TISLR, held every three years, is the pre-eminent conference in the field. Hosting a conference targeted specifically at the linguistic study of signed languages is a great opportunity for the DCAL team

to showcase the Centre's research work into British Sign Language (BSL). Meanwhile the vote for the 2016 conference went to Melbourne, Australia, with a special opportunity for former DCAL Researcher Adam Schembri (now Director of the Australian National Institute for Deaf Studies and Sign Language at La Trobe University), to host the conference in his home country.

DCAL will keep readers up to date with the conference as preparations get under way. Meanwhile there is an interesting new web site that has been launched from SLLS that explains basic linguistic terminology to Deaf people in international sign and a variety of written languages. See www.signlinguistics.com.

Festive BSL

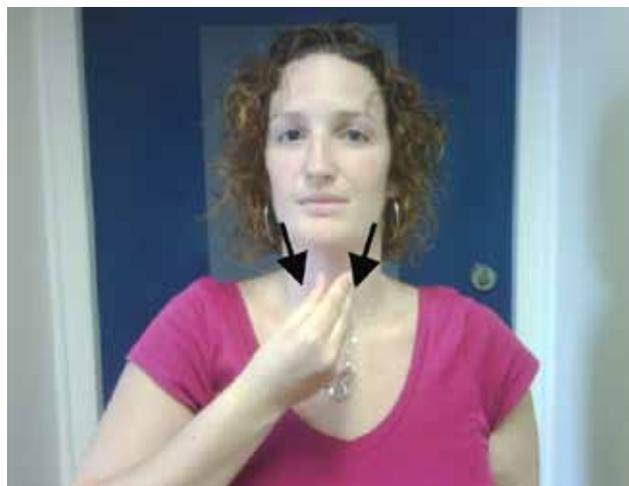
With this DCAL newsletter coming out at Christmas time, it seems a good opportunity to share in brief some of the insights from DCAL colleague Frances Elton's recently completed Master's dissertation: "Changing the way we sign: an analysis of the signing style used by translators in the Queen's Christmas Speech since the 1980s".

Frances is UCL's Coordinator of Sign Language and Deaf Studies. Alongside her full-time post at DCAL she has been studying for her Master's in Applied Linguistics at Birkbeck College, University of London.

Her study involved examining variation in British Sign Language (BSL), using a selection of clips of translations into BSL of the Queen's Christmas speeches from 1981 to 2009. What she discovered were significant changes from 1981 to 1986. Translation of the Queen's Speech began in 1981, at the same time as research into sign linguistics commenced in Britain. In the first years a hearing interpreter was used, producing signed English which replicated the exact words and grammar spoken by the Queen, rather than a translation into BSL. During 1985 and 1986, the interpreting changed, with a mix of British Sign Language and Sign Supported English used.

From 1987 onwards a variety of Deaf translators were employed and translation was into BSL. All but two were Scottish; Scottish varieties of BSL also influenced the two English translators. Gradually, a mix of both Scottish and South East England sign varieties were used.

The outcome of the study illuminates changes in attitudes to the use of BSL on television and the potential impact of Deaf and hearing translators on establishing "Received Pronunciation" of BSL.



South East England sign CHRISTMAS



Scottish sign CHRISTMAS



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