



Welcome to the CSLIR newsletter; providing a termly update of the Centre's activities and events.

If you would like to receive future copies of this newsletter and/or find out more about the Centre then please visit:

<http://www.ucl.ac.uk/csliir>

Forthcoming events

Seminar

To what extent do selective processing skills at 2-3 predict difficulties with language, social communication and literacy at 10 years? Evidence from a follow-up study of clinically referred children.

Dr Penny Roy & Prof. Shula Chiat (City University)

1st March 2012, 1.00-2.00pm

Room G10, Chandler House, UCL

Children who are slow to develop

language vary widely in their subsequent developmental trajectories: a notable proportion catch up with peers, but others have longer-term problems with language, social communication, literacy, or a combination of these. Our study was motivated by two hypotheses: that early phonological skills would be the best predictor of later morphosyntax, while early sociocognitive skills would be most predictive of later social engagement and communication. We have just completed follow-up assessment of our cohort at 10 years (n=116). In this talk, we will present findings on the predictiveness of early profiles of language and processing skills for difficulties with morphosyntax, social engagement and communication and literacy observed at 10 years..

Further details of future CSLIR events can be found at:

<http://www.ucl.ac.uk/silva/csliir/events>

Current project highlights

From communication disorders research to conversation-based interventions for adults with aphasia



Project team: Suzanne Beeke (UCL, Principal Investigator), Wendy Best, Jane Maxim (UCL, Co-Investigators), Susan Edwards (Reading University, Co-Investigator), Firlie Beckley (UCL, Research Associate/St Georges NHS Trust), Nicola Sirman (UCL, Research Assistant/Sussex Community NHS Trust).

AIMS: This new ESRC project, starting March 2012, will build an online therapy resource and learning tool for speech and language therapists (SLTs) who wish to deliver conversation-based interventions for aphasia. Materials come from a Stroke Association funded project (2008-2011) at UCL, carried out by the same team, called 'The evaluation of a novel conversation-focused therapy for agrammatism' (www.ucl.ac.uk/conversation-therapy). In addition, we will set up an online Conversation Therapy Network for peer support and expert advice. Our project partners are Connect and the Tavistock Trust for Aphasia.

Conversation partner training has become popular because studies have shown it to have a positive effect on conversational abilities and psychosocial wellbeing for the person with aphasia and their conversation partner. Few programmes involve working directly with the person with

aphasia on strategy use within conversation; the focus is on training the non-impaired partner. Our work differs in that it engages the person with aphasia as an equal partner, both in the therapy and also in reviewing the relevance of the resources. We are in the final stages of validating our novel intervention in a research setting, and findings indicate that it has the potential for significant practice and social benefits. Although our programme was initially developed to change the conversational language of people who have a particular type of aphasia, agrammatism, the methods, materials and techniques that underpin its success are applicable to a range of adult language disorders which interfere with the mechanisms that underpin natural communication within families and across society. Given the current clinical drive to use conversation-based interventions, and a recent systematic review highlighting their clinical utility (Simmons Mackie et al 2010), we believe that it is timely to make available our knowledge and

resources to SLTs, as a resource for learning about the core methods, and as a specialist programme for clinicians working with clients who have aphasia.

OBJECTIVES:

Our objectives are to:

1. develop an online archive of conversation-based intervention after adult acquired brain damage for SLT practitioners and students. This archive will consist of therapeutic activities based on video clips with written transcripts, and will be a resource for the delivery of this therapy.
2. develop study materials for each video clip, with relevant theoretical concepts and frameworks from Conversation Analysis, linguistics and communication disorders research to support analysis of conversation data, and to inform evidence-based intervention, as a resource for continuing professional development within and beyond speech and language therapy; no such database currently exists;
3. disseminate information

about these resources to the widest possible relevant audience. This work will include a series of Conversation Therapy Roadshows in 2013;

4. establish a sustainable online Conversation Therapy Network for SLTs and others, including adults with aphasia and their families;
5. lay the foundations for extending these activities beyond intervention for aphasia to, for example, communication disability in dementia, cognitive communication disorder (caused by traumatic head injury), and dysarthria (a motor speech disorder caused by progressive neurological conditions such as motor neurone disease).

We will be asking SLTs to volunteer to review the online resource during the development stage – if you want to know more about being involved, please email Suzanne at s.beeke@ucl.ac.uk

REFERENCE:

Simmons-Mackie, N., Raymer, A., Armstrong, E., Holland, A. and Cherney, LR. (2010) Communication Partner Training in Aphasia: A Systematic Review. *Arch Phys Med Rehabil* 91, 1814-1837.

Functional gaze control in young children with cerebral palsy

Project team: Michael Clarke (UCL, Principal Investigator), John Swettenham (UCL, Co-investigator) Jenefer Sargent (Great Ormond Street Hospital for Children, Co-investigator), Katie Price (Great Ormond Street Hospital for Children, Co-investigator), Simon Judge (Barnsley Hospital, Co-investigator)

AIM: It is extremely difficult to assess the extent to which young children with severe physical disability also experience impairments such as learning disability. One way of doing this is to monitor how they move their eyes during activities. However, in order for observation of children's eye movements during assessment to be informative, we first need to determine the extent to which children can use their eyes to fulfil basic functional actions such as fixing and shifting gaze. The aim of this project therefore is to establish effective procedures for assessing functional gaze control in this group of children who are often labelled as 'unassessable'.

METHOD: The aim will be addressed through the development of two assessment routines:

(i) Behavioural observation procedure: a set of simple and informative procedures for use in everyday clinical practice which centre on the observation of children's gaze behaviour in response to a series of standard tasks.

(ii) Objective measurement procedure: use of state-of-the-art eye-tracking technology for the assessment of functional gaze control. This technology has the potential to provide objective measures of

gaze control, including, for example, gaze movements that may be difficult to detect through behavioural observation alone.

We will carry-out our procedures with children aged 2;00 to 4;00 years with four-limb cerebral palsy, and typically developing children aged 12 months to 4 years. This will allow us to compare the performance of children with cerebral palsy with a developmentally aged matched control group. This will allow us to evaluate of the clinimetric properties of our procedures, that is their validity, reliability and clinical utility, (including of ease and time of administration, scoring and interpretation, and acceptability).

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SUMMARY: Surprisingly, credible assessments of functional gaze control to support intervention in children with severe and complex physical disorders are not available.

Reporting children's functional gaze control is of value in its own right as part of a profile of a child's strengths and needs. Importantly also, spontaneous eye gaze movements, and gaze movements in response to standard tasks, are the primary ways in which young children with severe physical disabilities can display their abilities, and by which clinicians can investigate the presence of one or more disorders co-occurring with cerebral palsy. Reliable evidence of functional gaze control is therefore essential for planning and delivering effective individualised intervention in the short and long term. For instance, establishing the range of children's functional gaze use will allow clinicians to provide the most appropriate support to parents in facilitating their child's early participation in home life, and hence their development.

It is intended that the behavioural observation routine will be accessible to practicing clinicians following only brief familiarisation with procedures. To support this we will provide an online video tutorial guiding clinicians through the simple stages of assessment, scoring, and interpretation.

Contact us: For further information please contact Michael Clarke (m.clarke@ucl.ac.uk)

Conference News

13th International Science of Aphasia Conference : Sep 07 - Sep 12, 2012 , Groningen, The Netherlands

The 2012 **program focus** is on: **The Neuropsychology of Word Production**

DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSIONS : March 31, 2012 4