

The NordForsk Research Training Course

Feedback, Communicative Gesturing, and Gazing

23-28 May 2011
Helsinki, Finland

First Announcement

Organised by the University of Helsinki and the NOMCO project
in collaboration with
the CICERO Learning Network

Aims

This training course focuses on multimodal and multilingual human-human and human-machine interactions. Active research is being conducted, in the Nordic countries and worldwide, concerning different modalities and their various functions in natural conversations, and the activities are supported by recent progress in interaction technology. New tools and methods, such as high-quality video recordings, novel recognition devices, semi-automatic data analysis, and visualisation techniques, enable us to study communicative activity and investigate how the interlocutors give feedback, maintain social bonds, and build a shared context. The aim of the school is to provide an opportunity for research students to discuss methodological challenges related to multimodal research and data collection, and to study a number of multimodal interaction phenomena related especially to gesturing and gazing. The approach in the course is multidisciplinary, and the issues will be addressed both from a theoretical and from a practical point of view, including hands-on exercises on data analysis. The participants will also have an opportunity to present their own work. The school is thus a unique opportunity to work with some of the leading experts of the field, to exchange ideas and comments with peers, and to get concrete guidance on one's own work.

Who should participate?

The course is intended first of all for Nordic postgraduate students and young researchers, but students and researchers from outside the region are also welcome to attend. Preference will be given to those working on multimodality or related topics for their thesis, but the organisers will also consider applicants who are in the final phase of their graduate studies. The course will focus on the Nordic languages, but there will also be material concerning English, Estonian, and Japanese conversations.

Topics

The focus of the research training course is on multimodal feedback and the various verbal and non-verbal expressions that are used to give and elicit feedback in social communication. Issues that will be addressed concern the function and combinations of different modalities, such as hand gestures, body posture, head movement, eye-gaze, and facial expressions, as communicative means in conversational interactions. The course can also provide material for the comparison of communicative behaviour and for the categorisation of multimodal strategies in different languages.

Lectures and contributions will address these issues from various view-points, and some specific questions that will be discussed deal with e.g.:

1) Feedback content

- How do speakers indicate, display and signal to each other that they can perceive, understand, or accept what their interlocutor is communicating?
- How do speakers provide feedback on negative aspects of the communicative situation, i.e. how do they signal disagreement, uncertainty, hesitation, misunderstanding, or non-understanding?
- What kind of relation exists between the auditory (vocalization and short words like *mhm*, *yeah*, *no*) and visual (head nods, head shakes, eye-gaze, posture shifts, etc.) modalities?
- What kind of similarities and dissimilarities can be found across modalities in different cultures?
- How can multimodal feedback behaviour be automatically modelled and visualised, and can the models be incorporated into automatic interactive applications?

2) Methodology

- Can we provide standards or recommendations for describing multimodal feedback behaviour?
- Are comparable data sets on multimodal behaviour possible to build?
- What are the minimal units that are used to signal feedback?
- How are communicatively important signals identified and interpreted?

Programme and social events

The training course will take place on 23-28 May at the University of Helsinki, and it includes the Nordic Symposium on Multimodal Interaction, which will take place on May 27-28 on the same location, so that the participants can easily attend both events.

The course will consist of lectures, demonstrations, student presentations, and hands-on exercises covering the course topics. There will be time for the students to discuss their work with appointed tutors and with each other. The students' own activity is encouraged by requesting the participants to give a short presentation of their project, and to give comments on the other students' projects, so as to get maximal benefit from the interactive situations.

The social programme will feature a welcoming reception on Monday, an excursion on Wednesday afternoon, and a joint dinner with the symposium on Friday. On Saturday evening there will also be a social gathering and the possibility to experience a typical Finnish sauna.

The teachers are experts in their field of study. Besides the organisers of the NOMCO project, the course will feature internationally acknowledged researchers as invited lecturers:

Roman Bednarik, Eye-gaze, University of Eastern Finland, Finland
Nick Campbell, Data collection and analysis, Trinity College Dublin, Ireland
Marianne Gullberg, Gesturing, University of Lund, Sweden
Dirk Heylen, Multimodal communication, University of Twente, The Netherlands
Aulikki Hyrskykari, Eye-tracking applications, University of Tampere, Finland
Isabella Poggi, Gaze and Gesture, University of Rome, Italy
Matthias Rehm, Communicative activity, University of Aalborg, Denmark

Tentative course schedule

	Monday 23/5	Tuesday 24/5	Wednesday	Thursday 26/5	Friday 27/5
09-12	Lectures : Introduction to multimodal communication	Lectures: Gesture analysis	Lectures: Gaze and gesturing	Lectures: Eye-gaze and eye tracking	Lectures: Body posture & communicative activity
12-13	Lunch				
13-15	Student presentations/ Lab exercises	Student Presentations/ Lab exercises	Student Presentations/ Lab exercises	Student Presentations/ Lab exercises	Paper presentations
15-16	Coffee				
16-18	Lecture	Lecture	Excursion	Lecture	Paper presentations
19-	Welcome reception				Dinner

Participation requirements

The course is funded by the NordForsk programme “Research Training Course of the Nordic Academy for Advanced Study” and by the NorFA collaborative research project NOMCO. The course is supported by the University of Helsinki and the CICERO Learning Network. Lunch and refreshments will be provided, and the participating students’ travel and lodging will be refunded for students coming from the Nordic countries (Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden). Students from other countries have to pay all the cost themselves. A maximum of 40 participants will be accepted.

To apply for participation, send a completed application form and a short abstract (max. 1 page) describing your research work or PhD project to nordforsk-course@helsinki.fi

You can send any questions to Kristiina Jokinen: kristiina.jokinen@helsinki.fi. The subject line should contain “NordForsk Training Course”.

Credits

The course can be taken for credit. Participating students should agree with their supervisor in advance on the exact number of credits, depending on the planned level of participation and the study system the student is registered for. Considering the course activities – full-time attendance for a week including lab exercises, reading of relevant literature, preparation of a short abstract, and discussion of another participant’s abstract – the recommendation is 3 ECTS (European Credit Transfer System) points, where 1 ECTS point equals about 3 x 27 hours of work). The students will be given a certificate of attendance.

Important dates

Application deadline: 15 March 2011

Registration confirmation: 30 March 2011

Reading material announced: 15 April 2011

Research training course: 23-28 May 2011

Organizing Committee

Kristiina Jokinen, University of Helsinki (chair)

Elisabeth Ahlsén, University of Gothenburg

Jens Allwood, University of Gothenburg

Costanza Navarretta, University of Copenhagen

Patrizia Paggio, University of Copenhagen

Useful links

Course website: <http://www.ling.helsinki.fi/kjokinen/nordforskCourse>

NOMCO project: <http://sskkii.gu.se/nomco>

MUMIN network: <http://www.cst.dk/mumin>

CICERO Learning network: <http://www.cicero.fi/sivut2/>

APPLICATION FORM

The Nordic Graduate Course and Symposium Feedback, Communicative Gesturing, and Gazing Helsinki, 23-28 May 2011

Name:

Degree:

Affiliation (University and department):

Position:

If graduate student, start of graduate education:

If graduate student, name of the supervisor/referee:

Research interests:

Address:

Email:

Phone:

Fax:

I'd like to attend the graduate course (yes/no):

I'd like to present my PhD/research project (yes/no):

If yes, title of the project:

I'd like to contribute by commenting on another participant's project (yes/no):

I'd like to attend the symposium (yes/no):

I'd like to give a presentation at the symposium (yes/no):

If yes, title of presentation: