University of Roehampton

Research Student Conference 2012

**COMMUNICATION IN CONTEXT**

Tuesday 19 June 2012, Grove House, Froebel College



Photograph by Brian Lyon

Welcome to *Communication in Context*, a student-led interdisciplinary conference for research students at the University of Roehampton. In this so called ‘communication age’ we are interested to see how communication is viewed across disciplines. By bringing together research from arts and humanities as well as life sciences and social sciences we want to investigate the links and allow common themes to emerge.

To tweet your comments and questions during the presentations, use

#communicationincontext.

This conference is organised with the support of the Graduate School.

**Organising Committee**

Vicky Haji-Ghassemi (Business School)

Nilou Hawthorne (Department of Media, Culture and Language)

Claudio Nazareno (Department of Media, Culture and Language)

James Rackie (Department of Psychology)

Tuuli Tahko (Department of Dance)

Katja Vaghi (Department of Dance)

**Programme**

9.30 – 10.00 **Registration & Coffee**

10.00 – 10.15 **Opening & Welcome**

 Vice-Chancellor, Professor Paul O’Prey

10.15 – 12.00 **Panel I:** **Communication & Strategy** Chair: Dr John Rae (Department of Psychology)

*The Importance of Communication for the Maintenance of Mental Toughness: Perceptions of Elite Gymnasts*Jade Salim (Department of Life Sciences)

*Taking Strategic Investment Decisions: The Technical, Methodological and Political Implications of Management Accounting in Egypt*
Moataz Elmassri (Business School)

*Families Under Fire: Criminalizing Single Mothers Through the Power of Legislation and Language*Jessica Gagnon (Department of Education)

*Broken Portuguese – on Communication and the Portuguese Revolution of
April 1974*Joana Craveiro (Department of Drama, Theatre and Performance)

12.00 – 13.00 **Lunch**

13.00 – 14.45 **Panel II: Constructing Meanings** Chair: Dr Peter Jaeger (Department of English and Creative Writing)

*The Comic Element in Dance: The Example of Jiří Kylián*Katja Vaghi (Department of Dance)

*Tino Sehgal’s "Ann Lee": The (Re)Maker as Producer*Katerina Paramana (Department of Drama, Theatre and Performance)

*A Cyclic Model of Hallucination and Delusion in Schizophrenia*Sharon Charabi (Department of Psychology)

*How Communication Can Be Viewed… Within Creative Writing Research*Tamar Levi (Department of English and Creative Writing)

14.45 – 15.15 **Coffee**

15.15 – 16.45 **Panel III:** **Collaboration in Context** Chair: Professor Andrée Grau (Department of Dance)

*Quantifying Fission-Fusion Dynamics: A Case Study of Olive Baboons*Nienke Alberts (Department of Life Sciences)

*Breaking the Silence by Performing the Word*Mary Witts (Department of Humanities)

*Dance, an African Traditional Media: Body, Music, Collaboration*Sylvanus Kwashie Kuwor (Department of Dance)

16.45 **Closing Ceremony**

Deputy Provost, Professor Ann MacLarnon

**Dr John Rae** is a Reader in the Department of Psychology. His research interests include language, interaction and communication: talk and body movement in social interaction; multimodal interaction; interactions involving persons with a challenged capacity (e.g. people with aphasia or with an autistic spectrum disorder); tele-mediated interaction; computer-mediated communication; conversation analysis, discourse analysis and philosophy of the social sciences. His recent research projects include “Interactional competencies in children with an autistic spectrum disorder” and “Eye Catching: Supporting tele-communicational eye-gaze in Collaborative Virtual Environments.”

**Dr Peter Jaeger** is a Reader in the Department of English and Creative Writing. His published work includes the books Power Lawn (Coach House Books 1999), ABC of Reading TRG: Steve McCaffery, bpNichol, and the Toronto Research Group (Talonbooks 2000), Rapid Eye Movement (Reality Street 2009), and The Persons (Information as Material 2011). He recently collaborated with the video and installation artist Kaz to produce the film “Nozomi,” which was exhibited at the Bury Text Festival in 2011, and he has shown text-based art in several group exhibitions, including The Perverse Library (Shandy Hall, York 2011), Verbal Inter Visual (Lethaby Galleries, London 2001), and Book Ends West (Artspeak Gallery, Vancouver 1994). Currently he is writing a book on John Cage, which is set to be published by Continuum Press next year.

**Dr Andrée Grau** is a Professor of the Anthropology of Dance. She trained in dance in her native Switzerland and in London. She graduated from the Benesh Institute in 1976 and was awarded an MA in Social-Anthropology (Ethnomusicology/Ethnochoreology) and PhD in Social-Anthropology from The Queen's University of Belfast, respectively in 1979 and 1983.She has carried out fieldwork in Southern Africa, among the Venda; Aboriginal Australia, among the Tiwi of Melville and Bathurst Islands; India (Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka,Gujarat) and London, looking at performance from cross-cultural and interdisciplinary perspectives.

**Abstracts**

***The Importance of Communication for the Maintenance of Mental Toughness:
Perceptions of Elite Gymnasts***Jade Salim (Department of Life Sciences)

Mental toughness has been associated with sporting excellent and has been highlighting as an important psychological contributor to winning Olympic titles (e.g., Gould et al., 2002). However, although many researchers have explored the development of mental toughness (e.g. Connaughton et al., 2008, 2010; Gucciardi et al., 2009; Thelwell et al., 2010), few have examined whether this construct requires maintenance. This study, therefore, aimed to investigate whether mental toughness needs to be maintained once developed and, if so, the perceived mechanisms responsible. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with a purposeful sample of eight British, national level female artistic gymnasts (M age = 14, SD = 1.82 years). The transcripts were content analysed deductively according to the twelve mental toughness attributes identified by Jones et al. (2002). Throughout this process, member checking was used to confirm the authors’ interpretations were an accurate representation of the participants’ perceptions. One of the key findings to emerge from the data was the importance of communication, in particular different types of communication (i.e., functions of social support) such as the who (i.e., coaches and parents), the what (i.e., informational and esteem support), and the where (i.e., within both training and competitions). Communication with a strong support network was required, from coaches, parents, and friends to maintain confidence, motivation, and focus. The participants also suggested that possessing, effectively using, and continually working on a range of basic and advanced psychological skills facilitated the maintenance of mental toughness including self-talk, imagery, relaxation, goal setting, simulation training, and pre-performance routines. These findings have important implications for coaches and practitioners in terms of helping athletes to deliver sustainable performance in pressured environments (e.g., Olympic Games, World Championships, and Commonwealth Games) by maintaining their levels of mental toughness.

**Jade Salim** is an ex- national and international gymnast who competed for Great Britain at junior level and went on to be British Veterans gymnastics champion in 2010. She has taken part in various stunt doubling roles including Harry Potter 7 and BBC’s MI High, and has also appeared on BBC’s television series Total Wipeout for series 4 and 5. She completed a BSc in Sport Psychology and won the Adidas Bsc Dissertation Award 2010-2011. She is now studying a PhD in Sport Psychology focusing on sporting injury.

***Taking Strategic Investment Decisions: The Technical, Methodological and Political Implications of Management Accounting in Egypt***Moataz Elmassri (Business School)

This study aims to investigate how strategic investment decisions (SIDs) are made in an Egyptian context. SIDs are decisions that have long-term implications for the organisation and help to set its future course of action. Investigating how SIDs are made can be approached by addressing two main research questions: How do internal aspects influence SIDs and how do external aspects influence SIDs? These two questions entail many dimensions, apparent from prior literature. One stream of empirical studies views SIDs as economic decisions and assumes that managers should depend only on quantitative methods in taking these decisions. Another stream of research asserts the importance of qualitative considerations within SIDs. The main argument of this study is that SIDs are not solely objective decisions but are to some extent judgemental decisions. Thus, due to this subjectivity, some researchers recommend qualitative methodologies to interrogate and understand SIDs. Instead of focusing on the "technical" methods to be employed within SID, a qualitative focus is on understanding "how" these decisions are reached. Focusing on the "technical" method ignores the complexity of the SID process, as many dimensions influence SID decision-making and its associated processes.

Due to the qualitative nature of this current study and in order to achieve the research aim and objectives, an ethnographic approach will be employed. An ethnographic approach is appropriate when there is a strong emphasis on exploring the nature of particular social phenomena. Thus it might enable the researcher to explore how SIDs are made according to managers' perspectives and how they view SIDs. Discourse analysis will be employed to analyse the current study data. It has the ability to analyse meanings beyond words, and context rather than text alone. Arguably, discourse analysis has the ability to explore how SIDs' meaning are constructed. This current study has more than one contribution; firstly, there is a paucity of studies that explore investment appraisal risk and market behaviour in SIDs. Secondly, this study aims to explore the relationships between the aforementioned dimensions and their effect on SID behaviour. Thirdly, an Egyptian context might have different features than other contexts due to the different culture. Thus, managerial and behavioural dimensions might be different, especially after Egypt's revolution.

**Moataz El-Massri** is a PhD student at Roehampton Business School. He gained his M.Sc. in Accounting and Finance from De Montfort University, Leicester. His principal research interests lie in the fields of Cost and Managerial Accounting. His recent interests involve the topics of Operating Budgets, Strategic Investment Appraisal, Risk Management, Project Risks and Managerial Decision Making.

***Families Under Fire:
Criminalizing Single Mothers Through the Power of Legislation and Language***Jessica Gagnon (Department of Education)

State Senator Glenn Grothman proposed Wisconsin senate bill 507 in February 2012, which seeks to define single parenthood as “a contributing factor to child abuse and neglect.” Using Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis, this paper will explore the public and political discourse used to socially construct single mother families following the introduction of the bill. The perpetuation of inequality based on family status will be examined through the language of the bill, the transcripts of political statements, the print, online, television and radio media coverage, and public blog posts. Additionally, the inclusion or absence of the voices of single mothers within the debate and coverage of this topic will be highlighted. This paper will provide a critical view of the power of legislation and language to negatively construct, vilify, silence, and criminalize single mothers in the United States.

**Jessica Gagnon** is a first year MPhil/PhD student in the Department of Education. Her doctoral research is focused on the university experience of the daughters of single mothers in the US and the UK. Jessica is a first generation student from Massachusetts. She earned her Bachelor’s degree from Framingham State University and her Master’s degree from Santa Clara University, where her research was focused on the vocational discernment and persistence of first-generation premedical students.

***Broken Portuguese – on Communication and the Portuguese Revolution of April 1974***Joana Craveiro (Department of Drama, Theatre and Performance)

This performance-lecture aims at describing communication within the context of two historical moments of Portuguese history: Dictatorship under Salazar and Marcello Caetano, on the one hand, and the revolutionary period between April 25th 1974, and November 28th 1975, on the other.

Within the context of the dictatorship, I will look into some of the uses of metaphor under censorship, particularly in song lyrics and theatre. This is what I describe as ‘broken Portuguese.’ I will also quote from the recent performance piece by Tiago Rodrigues called “Three fingers below the knees,” which departing point is a series of reports from the National Service of Information of the Dictatorship – PIDE-DGS – concerning censored words and activities.

The April 1974 revolution’s signal was given over a radio transmission and two songs were used to unleash the coup. One of the songs had been awarded the best prize for the national song contest, and would draw no suspicion. The other song had long been censored by PIDE-DGS and would be an obvious sign that the revolution was on its way.

In the aftermath of the revolution – a period that would be called PREC[1] and that lasted until November 1975, communication through radio, television, printed manifestos and printed revolutionary newspapers and graffiti would play a crucial role, which this performance-lecture will also aim to describe and analyse.

**Joana Craveiro** is a director, writer and performer. She is the artistic director of Teatro do Vestido in Portugal, for which she has written, directed and devised over 16 pieces. She has a BA in Acting, a BA in Anthropology, and a Master of Drama in Directing by the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama. She has further studied with Alexander Kelly and Goat Island. She is a PhD candidate at the Department of Drama, Theatre and Performance Studies, where she is currently researching on performance and transmission of memory politics in dictatorial and post-dictatorial Portugal.

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[1] ‘Ongoing Revolutionary Process’ – this period was marked by nationalizations, land and property occupations, general strikes of several state and private enterprises, and an unstable political situation. This would last until another coup took place, on the 28th of November 1975, under the premises of ‘restoring the good social order of the country.’

***The Comic Element in Dance: The Example of Jiří Kylián***Katja Vaghi (Department of Dance)

Dance talks to us, it makes us feel and think and some times it narrates stories. It is the channel chosen by choreographer to communicate with us. There are choreographies dealing with tragic elements such as sadness, hatred and frustration but there are also others about happy and comical events. Interestingly, the comical element is often dismissed in dance as if the value of a piece of work would lay in its seriousness

Is a comical work less serious than a ‘serious’ one? Are dancers and choreographers wary of the comical element, and why is it so? And finally how does the comical element work in dance?

Taking as a point of departure theories of comedy in language, I will explore how the comical element works in dance highlighting differences and similarities. I will also address the question of when is it possible in an art form to use humour as just another mode of narration as tragedy is. Three dances by the Czech choreographer Jiri Kylian are used to examine different types of humour and the evolution of comedy in his production. Particular attention is laid on the use of the body in comedy.

**Katja Vaghi** has a background in Literature and Linguistic (MA English Studies, Zurich University) and a formation as a modern dancer (Ballet Arts, NYC). She is currently interested in the relation between theories developed for language and dance. She is working as a freelance dancer and choreographer and is in the second year of her MPhil/PhD study at the University of Roehampton.

***Tino Sehgal’s "Ann Lee": The (Re)Maker as Producer***Katerina Paramana (Department of Drama, Theatre and Performance)

‘Would you rather be too busy or not busy enough?’ asked ‘Ann Lee’, the blue-eyed girl of no more than twelve years of age. This question becomes the crux of Tino Sehgal’s work by the same name, presented at the Manchester Art Gallery as part of the Manchester International Festival’s 11 Rooms, in July 2011. What is Sehgal pointing us towards with this question? What is he trying to communicate to his audience? Are these the only two choices we have in contemporary capitalism? Are we to choose between constant production / continuous labour and precarious labour? What are the further implications of this question when posed by a young girl to an audience of adults, by this live performer working in a museum, by this artist in the current socioeconomic landscape / today’s market economy?

Choreographer Tino Sehgal is concerned with making performance work for museums that, although it resists material commodification – unlike other museum works, his work is ephemeral and refuses to leave any material objects behind – it nevertheless enters the market economy. The work is sold and purchased by museums and collectors, but, as no documentation of any kind is allowed, its traces are only found in the memories of its spectators. Aiming at a critique of contemporary modes of production, Sehgal produces immaterial work and enters it in the traditionally material world of the museum. With Sehgal’s ‘Ann Lee’ as its vehicle, this article will discuss how meaning is constructed and communicated to the spectators and the questions raised by the work, bringing them in dialogue with contemporary views on immaterial production, precarious labour and the current conditions of artistic production.

**Katerina Paramana** is a London-based performance artist and choreographer and PhD Candidate at University of Roehampton (Theatre and Dance Depts). Using her own practice, as well as the works of Tino Sehgal and Jérôme Bel as the vehicles of her discussion, she examines the construction, circulation and reproduction of ideas and values in postmodern performance and choreographic practices through the making and circulation of – material and immaterial – objects of performance. (www.katerinaparamana.com)

***A Cyclic Model of Hallucination and Delusion in Schizophrenia***Sharon Charabi (Department of Psychology)

For some time various aspects of cognitive function have surrounded the investigation of positive symptomatology in schizophrenia, with a particular interest in unusual experiences such as delusions and hallucinations. Theoretical insight as to how such a vast body of work is connected, has clear benefits in for future research and the potential treatment of such debilitating symptoms. The present paper aims to addresses these concerns, and presents a connectionist-inspired cognitive model of hallucinations and delusions in schizophrenia. Analysis of key research in the field of hallucinations and delusions was considered, including leading theory related to the over involvement of semantics in perception and retrospection (Spitzer et al., 1993; Mohr et al., 2001), perceptual bias (Tsakanikos and Reed, 2005) and externality bias (Garety et al., 2011). Additional research relevant to the model includes the impact of drug use in the development of hallucinations and delusions, as well as research that has addressed a number of recurrent themes in delusional ideology. The present model aims to help future research to become more directional, whilst also attempting to explain why various explanations of unusual experiences may all be of benefit in different patient scenarios. The cyclic model offers a detailed explanation of how hallucinations and delusions may become more idiosyncratic and detailed over time.

**Sharon Charabi** is currently studying for her PhD in Psychology. Her research programme is focussed on assessing cognitive and perceptual bias in schizophrenia and those deemed at risk. As hallucinations are a common symptom in schizophrenia, the present talk discusses the role of communication in a new cognitive model of hallucinations.

***How Communication Can Be Viewed… Within Creative Writing Research***Tamar Levi (Department of English and Creative Writing)

Bleak ecoapocalyptic comedies, socialist satires, cyberpunk technocrat thrillers… Individual authors as well as non-profit groups aim to raise the profile and empower the narrative voice behind human rights issues.

My research investigates the role of literature in communicating human rights.

This paper looks in particular at the way we communicate issues such as surveillance, totalitarianism and feminism by using the language and concepts proposed by canonical dystopian novels. The novel I am writing for my doctorate follows in the tradition of ‘1984’ (Orwell), ‘We’ (Zamyatin) and ‘The Handmaid’s Tale’ (Atwood). It engages with a global dialogue on controversial true life situations such as China’s One Child Policy, India’s ongoing population control measures and recently, non-consensual sterilisation enforced by the Uzbek government. Set in a very possible near-future my novel deals with biopolitics, free will and reproductive rights. I’ve called it ‘The Contraceptive Wars’.

In this paper, I argue that the form of dystopian novels provide a forum for dialogue on these issues and drive home the experience of human rights violations in a way that other forms of communication and campaign cannot.

Presented in a dialogic format, I share questions that have arisen from my initial research. I wonder whether a dystopian novelist can be called an ‘activist author’. If so self-aware, does a meta-political agenda undermine the creative process? Aesthetically forgo ‘pure art’? And pragmatically, is communicating this way most effective? Can fiction really affect society? What evidence is there for positive change?

**Tamar Levi** focused on communication and reading comprehension when studying for her MPhil in Psychology and Education at the University of Cambridge. Now, while writing, editing and illustrating picture books, Tamar currently researches a PhD in English and Creative Writing at Roehampton. Her research here focuses on the production of a contemporary dystopian novel and, for this conference, questions how literature can be used to promote dialogue.

***Quantifying Fission-Fusion Dynamics: A Case Study of Olive Baboons***Nienke Alberts (Department of Life Sciences)

Primate social groups have traditionally been described according to their social cohesion, with species being classified as having either a cohesive or a fluid social system. As grouping patterns influence the social partners that are available for interactions, the degree of flexibility in social systems may have far reaching consequences for patterns of communication. In a cohesive social system, all individuals are found within a single group, whereas in a fluid system, a group may temporarily split into smaller ‘parties’. Increasingly, it has become clear that primate social systems do not readily fall into these two categories, and it has been suggested that instead they should be characterised according to their relative degree of ‘fission-fusion dynamics’. Fission-fusion dynamics refers to the variation in spatial cohesion and individual membership of a group over time. Here, a method for the quantification of fission-fusion dynamics is suggested, using olive baboons as a case study. Over a 12-month period, data were collected on party size, party composition, and spatial cohesion in two troops (Gamgam & Kwano) of wild olive baboons in Gashaka-Gumti National Park, Nigeria. We found a big between-troop difference in the degree of fission-fusion dynamics; the Gamgam troop rarely fragmented and parties were frequently large. The Kwano troop, by contrast, was found to break up frequently into small parties that were relatively stable. These results indicate that fission-fusion dynamics can differ between-troops within a single population of primates. The implications of these findings for baboon communication will be discussed.

**Nienke Alberts** is a fourth year PhD student at the Centre for Research in Evolutionary and Environmental Anthropology. With research interests focusing around group dynamics, social relationships and the factors that influence these, Nienke has research experience with baboons, langur monkeys, chimpanzees, and humans. Nienke won the Charles A. Lockwood prize and medal of the Primate Society of Great Britain two years running and her research is funded by the University of Roehampton and the L.S.B. Leakey Trust.

***Breaking the Silence by Performing the Word***Mary Witts (Department of Humanities)

For Christians the Bible is an authoratative text. Pronounced and revered as the revealed word of God, it may be seen as often remaining un-revealed within the silence of the printed word. Even when the words are read or heard they may still remain 'silent' within a meaningless code. There is a need for interpretation. The word remains un-revealed until it is received with understanding.

Despite the textual nature of the Bible the developing field of biblical performance criticism points to an original orality of the text's life of transmission and reception. Though much of this research is aimed at an historical understanding of the text it can be seen as also having implications for the present reception of the text by the 'ordinary reader'.

Focusing on the Anglican churches of Gambella (Africa), where Bibles are scarce and literacy is low, this paper seeks to explore how the performative method of biblical drama may provide a fresh way of 'reading' that will break the silence of the textual word.

**Mary Witts** is researching the potential of drama for dialogical, open and creative engagement with Scripture, particularly focusing on rural, orally focused church communities. This research has grown out of work with the Anglican Church in Ethiopia (2006-09) where she wrote and taught a scheme of theological education for its leaders (of Nilotic, ‘Sudanese’ tribes). She also teaches one module on Roehampton’s Theology and Ministry Foundation degree.

***Dance, an African Traditional Media: Body, Music, Collaboration***Sylvanus Kwashie Kuwor (Department of Dance)

In West African societies, dance as an art form has proven to be the most impressive tool for effective communication for many generations and this observation goes beyond the sub region and may extend to cover the whole continent as documented by scholars including Ajayi (1996);Amegago (2011); Chernoff (1979); Nketia (1974); Opoku (1966) and Welsh Asante (1996). These scholars in their divergent views have discussed the various ways in which dance becomes an important tool for communication in Africa. To understand how this tool works effectively it is important to locate the position of the ‘body’ in the definition of dance and perhaps more important to discover the collaborative role the body plays in what Africans call dance.

Looking at dance as a vehicle of conveying message in West African societies captures the view offered by Doris Green, the African American music and dance scholar who has spent a significant amount of time researching into the music and dance traditions of Africa. Green views African dance as “a source of communication through which it is possible to demonstrate emotion, sentiment, beliefs and other reactions through movement” (Green, 1998). Although, in general terms, effective communication demands different media suitable for transferring information to various communities all over the world, considering this view in contrast to those offered by other scholars including Kariamu Asante (1996) and Ajayi (1998) suggests that it is not only the message to be communicated that is important, but also the right choice of the medium for communicating it at the appropriate time to the audience that one has in mind.

This paper discusses the artistic collaboration between the body and music in a holistic form called dance as a cultural heritage of West Africans. The paper employs both lecture and workshop modes focusing on the significant role this system plays in the life of the African and the emergence and performance of this art form in the United Kingdom as a tool in cross-cultural education.

**Sylvanus Kwashie Kuwor** is a Ghanaian master drummer, dancer and general practitioner of a range of dance forms from the West African sub-region. He has delivered African music and dance workshops in over 200 schools and communities in the UK in the last seven years. His research focuses on the dance tradition of the Anlo- Ewe people in Ghana, its emergence in the United Kingdom as an art form in cross-cultural education as well as its dynamics or processes of change within the indigenous and international settings.