

# UCL Communication Clinic Newsletter January 2018

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## Review of Research Projects conducted at Chandler House 2016-17

Caroline Newton and I would like to thank individuals who took part in the five projects we supervised in 2016-2017. Two projects investigated whether a computer app 'SWAN' could help people who had problems with numbers. Two projects examined the effect of background noise on speech output. One project explored whether changing what and how a speaker spoke helped the listener.

### Can playing with numbers improve numeracy skills?

**What people did:** Ten individuals played the game every day for 15 minutes for two weeks.

**What we found:** On retesting, responses for the group were faster and more accurate on the sequencing tasks (e.g. 'Name the three numbers that come after 5'). Some individuals improved on nonsymbolic number comparison (e.g. 'Which picture has the most dots?') and on math's skills they use in daily life.

**What this means:** This type of therapy could be helpful for other people with aphasia. However, we need to make some changes to the game for it to be more beneficial.



### Do people with aphasia adapt what and how they speak in noisy conditions?

**What people did:** Forty people took part in this study, 20 people with and 20 people without aphasia. Participants had to tell the Cinderella story and describe a picture with and without background noise.



**What we found:** People with aphasia found speaking and organizing their thoughts in background noise more difficult than people without aphasia.

Despite this, people with aphasia showed changes in their speech similar to those produced by people without aphasia. Both groups increased their loudness and pitch in noise. However, only people with aphasia increased their speed of speaking. People with aphasia kept the same content, vocabulary and grammar in their speech in noise. However, their sentences were shorter with more pauses than people without aphasia.

**What this means:** The results show that people with aphasia make changes to their speech in noise, but this is usually tiring and effortful. They may benefit from gradual introduction of noise when speaking.

### **Is it easier to understand a non-native speaker when they say predictable sentences and speak slower?**

**What people did:** Twenty individuals without and 20 individuals with aphasia took part in the study. They listened to sentences spoken by a non-native speaker and pointed to a picture that represented the last word in the sentence. Some sentences were predictable (e.g. 'For his birthday, John had a chocolate CAKE') and others were not (e.g. 'For his lunch, John had chocolate CAKE'). Some sentences were presented at a normal pace and others more slowly.



**What we found:** Scores were high for both groups of participants for all conditions. Everyone was more accurate and faster when the sentences were predictable. Slowing the speech down only helped a few people with aphasia.

**What this means:** More research is needed to know how we can help the listener understand an unfamiliar speaker, but making the topic clear at the start is helpful.

Carolyn Bruce, Director of UCL Communication Clinic

### Students win prestigious national prize

Two students, who collected data from people attending UCL Communication Clinic, shared the Tavistock Prize for “excellent work related to aphasia”. The Tavistock Trust for Aphasia is a national organisation aiming to raise the profile of aphasia amongst speech and language therapists of the future.



*Luisa Zenobi-Bird holding the Tavistock Award certificate with her project supervisors Carolyn Bruce and Caroline Newton.*

Luisa Zenobi-Bird wrote her project on the impact of background noise on speech output. Tom Shortland wrote his project on the influence of prosodic cues on grammaticality judgements. If you took part in these projects, you may have helped to shape the future of speech and language therapy. Thank you for your help.

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## Making travelling on public transport easier

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### Please offer me a seat

The free 'Please offer me a seat' badge allows you to alert other passengers to your need to sit down and avoids the awkwardness of asking them to stand up.



You can order a badge and card by filling out the form found on <https://tfl.gov.uk/transport-accessibility/please-offer-me-a-seat> or calling TfL Customer Services on **0343 222 1234**

### The travel support card

The travel support card gets you help when in London. There is a space on the card to write down anything that could help staff to give you the support you need. You can also add your name and an emergency contact number.



Here are some of the things that staff can do to help you.

- Tell you which platform or bus stop you need to go to for your journey.
- Show you the way to the right platform or bus stop.
- Help you to plan a new journey if there are delays.
- Make sure you have time to sit down on the bus before it moves off

## Taking a comfort break

A Radar *key* is a large *key* that opens more than 9,000 accessible *toilets* in the UK. The loos have *disability* symbols on the door and are found in public areas, office blocks, pubs or restaurants.



You might be able to get a free key from your local authority. If not, you can buy a key from Disability Rights UK [www.disabilityrightsuk.org](http://www.disabilityrightsuk.org) (around £5 including postage and package), or you may be able to buy one from your local social services department (it is usually best to contact the Adult Services team).

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## Clinic Christmas

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**Thank you** to all those who joined us and contributed.

It was a great way to kick off Christmas!



Despite the snow and cold weather, there was lots of festive cheer at the Clinic Christmas parties in December.



*Two students from the UCL MSc Speech and Language Sciences Course came along to sing their versions of some old favourites.*

A highlight was the Christmas quiz!

Members got together in teams and tried to guess the songs, smells and films.

On Monday, three different musical acts performed a medley of Christmas songs. Everyone enjoyed singing along and doing his or her best Elvis impressions.

Another highlight was a performance from the UCL Magic Society. They wowed us with their card tricks and had us guessing how they did them.

## A Trip Down Memory Lane

"On going into an Irish bar in Germany last week I saw up a wall a postcard that I took about 20 years ago. I took the photo in Brandon.

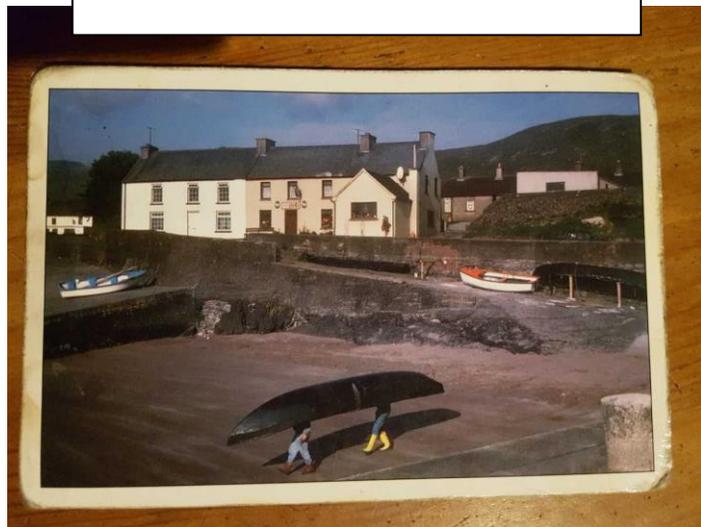
Can you spot it?

It was an Arsenal bar and we watched Arsenal beat BATE Borisov 6-0, Millwall would have beaten by at least 10-1."

*Terry Cooney*



Did you spot Terry's picture?



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## Nick's Allotment

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*Nick has been working on constructing sentences based around the key words that he finds easiest to produce. He enjoys spending time on his allotment, and has written about what he can do there this winter:*

I am Nick.

I went to the allotment to take the leaves off. Then afterwards put them in a pile. I will burn the leaves but it was too wet.

Very soon I will put up a greenhouse.



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## Adam's Drawing Group

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I have been attending a drawing group at the National Portrait Gallery for nine years. The classes are held once a month, on the last Monday of each month, at 1pm. They are free of charge. Paper, pencils and charcoal are all provided. There are about 6 different tutors who run the classes. Every month, we have a different tutor. They are all very nice! About 10-15 people attend the classes. Everyone who comes has had a brain injury. Every class, we have a talk at the start. Then, we each do a drawing. Finally, the tutors show our drawings to the rest of the class and we talk about them. Over the years, I have really improved at drawing. Before I was awful! But now...



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## Claim to Fame

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Marc is friends with Jamaal, the lead singer of Rak-Su. Rak-Su are the winners of X Factor 2017.

They met 1 year ago in Costa Coffee. Jamaal has since been to Marc's house for tea.



Marc is very excited to see what happens next for his celebrity friend.

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## In Search of Quietude

*By Chris Millichamp*

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Chris Millichamp, one of our Monday group members, has written a book of poems called "In Search of Quietude". The poems are about the area of Kensington, and so Chris has decided that all profits from the sale of the book will go to charities supporting victims of Grenfell Tower fire.

The cost of the book is £7.



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## Hospital Passion Play

*by Jawad Mohammed*

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Jawad Mohammed and Terry Cooney performed in the Hospital Passion Play at the Victoria and Albert Museum. The play was an arts and health collaboration between artists, medical professionals, vocal groups and people with acquired communication difficulties. Terry was a member of one of the choirs, who provided vocal support for the play.



The play was about people's experience of living with an acquired health condition (stroke and throat cancer) that made it difficult for them to communicate easily in daily life. In all cases, the loss of language and/or speech resulted in marked changes in the people's lives, changes in their roles in society and their hopes for the future.

Jawad's experiences provided one of the story lines. He acted and danced on stage, whilst an opera singer sang about his life in Iraq, the attack on his life, being a political refugee in England and the impact of having a stroke. Jawad has had to face many struggles in his life, but what came across most strongly was his strength and resilience. This was helpful, as the message the audience was left with at the end, was that in order to recover people need to have the 'the strength of a lion.'

Jawad enjoyed being in the play and performing in front of an audience. He had danced before his stroke and the play provided him with the opportunity to use his skills and be heard.