Newsletter

european society for cognitive psychology

Number 2, August 1986

Haren, August 18, 1986.

Dear Colleagues,

Thank you for completing so many membership proposal forms. Our membership now exceeds the one hundred mark and we would like to take this opportunity of welcoming all the new members to what we hope will become a very successful European Society.

Obviously, however, there are still many glaring gaps in our coverage of both geographical and topic areas. To at least partially overcome these omissions, we are planning to ask the Advisory Council to propose some further names. In this way we hope to achieve a membership of at least 150 before the next Bi-annual Conference in 1987. What happens thereafter is up to the membership itself. At the general business meeting we will have to make decisions about our future. To set us thinking we have included two discussion papers, one by Alan Baddeley and the other by John Michon. If you have any views to add, please feel free to do so.

Plans for future events are progressing smoothly. Further information about our first Summer School and our second Conference will be found elsewhere in this Newsletter.

Please continue to send us any information you think would be of interest to our members.

Janet L. Jackson

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(on behalf of the Committee)

Networks within Networks?

Alan Baddeley

MRC Applied Psychology Unit, Cambridge, England

At the recent meeting of the Committee, the topic cropped up as to what should be the functions of the Advisory Council. We all agreed that we would expect the Council to comment on specific issues raised, and to come up with ideas of their own on possible new developments including proposals for further workshops on summer schools. There was rather less agreement on the question of the extent to which we would hope that they would facilitate further sub-networks of contacts within European cognitive psychology, and it occurred to us that it might be sensible to air this discussion in the Newsletter in the hope of obtaining views from members of the Society. I agreed to present a clear case for encouraging the development of relatively independent sub-networks, while John Michon agreed that he would present the dangers of such a course.

My view is that the prime purpose of the Society is to increase communication among European cognitive psychologists. I believe that basically, this depends on individuals meeting, talking and writing to each other. Given that the Committee members are all relatively busy, the possibility that we could facilitate sufficiently frequent individual contact between members is relatively small, hence I believe we should encourage members of the Society to act on their own behalf to set up professional links that we hope will be fostered by the Society, but which will grow and flourish in parallel with its regular meetings.

One way to foster such links is to encourage groups in neighbouring regions to establish contact with a view to having local meetings more frequently than the biennial European meeting. We would hope that such meetings would not be limited to members of the Society, but would be open to a wider range of participants. They might be based on geographical regions such as Scandinavia or the Iberian peninsula; they might be based on a particular language such as German, French or Italian, or they might be based on a particular subdiscipline or topic of investigation such as bilingualism or working memory.

My own view is that such groupings should be organized on a loose and informal basis. Within Britain, a working memory discussion group has functioned very effectively on the simple basis of attaching our meetings to existing national meetings in which accommodation was provided, and then circulating a group of potentially interested participants. This has led to a series of informal discussion meetings that have proved both useful and very enjoyable.

Clearly a larger meeting involving cognitive psychologists from a number of different countries would involve more organization, but provided numbers are not too large, things can still be run relatively cheaply and informally. In general, I would favour this form of organization rather than either a formal organization within the Society, or the involvement of existing national psychological societies, since this would inevitably bring with it more bureaucracy together with problems

of the formal status of such groups, and the danger of possible demarcation disputes.

To conclude, I would like to suggest that one major aim of the Society should be to encourage European cognitive psychologists to help themselves by organizing informal networks and meetings. Such self-help should be stimulated by the Society, advertised through its Newsletter, with the Advisory Council perhaps playing a leading role, but should not be directly organized by the Society, nor should it be limited to Society members.

Networks Int'l Inc.?

John A. Michon

University of Groningen, The Netherlands

With this note I am running the risk of being remembered as the guy who picked on that tiny detail in Alan Baddeley's broad perspective of activities within and without the Society! The point for bringing it up anyway is simply that it is the only detail on which Alan and I seem to disagree, plus the fact that it is not tiny. The crucial sentence is contained in the last but one paragraph of Alan's note. It says "In general, I would favour this form of organization rather than ..... the involvement of existing national psychological societies, since this would inevitably bring with it more bureaucracy together with problems of the formal status of such groups, and the danger of possible demarcation disputes." Given that I agree so totally with Alan on everything else he wrote, why do I find this sentence so offensive to my concerns?

If ESCoPs is to achieve its aims of providing support, encouragement and coordination of activities of its membership - or various subset of the membership - then it would seem peculiar if the Society would act on the assumption that it is dealing with a large (how large?) collection of disaggregated individuals and "encourage members of the Society to act on their own behalf to set up professional links ..." (par. 2).

This attitude, in my view, overlooks the fact that in some countries or regions of Europe, there are - and have been for quite some time - societies that incorporate explicit sections for cognitive psychology. Such sections tend to be networks of the kind that Alan appears to be hinting to anyway. In the first place they consist of just those people who would be eligible for membership of ESCoPs if they just managed to get hold of one of the membership application forms. In the second place some of these national or regional groups are already quite active in organizing just the kind of thing ESCoPs should foster. Of course countries and regions differ tremendously in this respect. Of course ESCoPs should concentrate on stimulating cognitive psychologists in those parts of Europe that have not already become organized to a considerable extent. On the other hand, ESCoPs should also seriously consider the possibility of extending its membership by allowing cognitive psychologists who belong to existing national and regional associations to become members <u>through</u> those organisations. The possibility

of an associated membership for societies, for all or part of their members is not excluded in the constitution and a discussion with the Netherlands Psychonomics Society has convinced me that (a) ESCoPs might profit from the ideas and acting power of some potential corporate members; (b) no extra bureaucracy would have to be involved; (c) no unsurmountable problems of formal status or demarcation disputes would be likely to arise.

An advantage for the treasurer would be that dues could easily be collected from members from associated societies as part of their regular dues.

To conclude, I agree with Alan Baddeley that one of the aims of ESCoPs is to stimulate self-help and "to encourage European cognitive psychologists to help themselves by organising informal networks and meetings". My point is just that some of them are already pretty good at that, and so, why shouldn't we use that to our advantage by some form of association that would get ESCoPs involved on a more permanent basis?

The study of Cognitive Psychology in Europe

Since our educational backgrounds are all somewhat different it seemed a good opportunity to use the Newsletter as a vehicle for finding out more about our colleagues in other countries. Our first report comes from Israel.

Cognitive Psychology in Israel

Asher Koriat and Joel Norman

Psychology, both academic and applied, has attained a high status in Israel with the universities playing a central role in this development. BA programs are offered at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Bar-Ilan University, Tel-Aviv University, and the University of Haifa. Ben-Gurion University provides a BA in Behavioral Sciences. All BA candidates are required to take a nation-wide university entrance examination and only about 10-15% of the applicants are accepted, about 100 in each of the five BA programs. The three-year BA programs at all the universities are highly similar in structure, with a large proportion of compulsory courses emphasizing basic and theoretical psychology.

Because students attend university only after military service, BA students in Israel are usually older than in other countries. Consequently most psychology applicants seek a professional career in psychology. However, to qualify as a psychologist in Israel one must have an MA degree. MA studies in psychology are offered by all five universities as well as through a program in Industrial Psychology at the Israel Institute of Technology (Technion). The universities offer a variety of specialized MA programs, including clinical, educational, school, social, industrial and vocational, and experimental psychology. Admission is selective and about 180 students are admitted to all these programs each year. The MA programs last about two years (the MA

thesis usually lengthening this period), but to qualify as an independent licensed psychologist, two additional years of in-service training are generally required. Ph.D. programs are also offered by most of the universities, and are generally geared toward the academic aspects of psychology.

Cognitive psychology is taught in all the BA programs, in the form of courses in cognitive psychology, perception, attention and performance, memory, thinking, reading processes, judgment and decision making, psycholinguistics, and cognitive development. MA students can specialize in different aspects of cognitive psychology at all the universities, usually in the framework of the Experimental Psychology program.

Experimental research in cognitive psychology is carried out mainly at the universities, although related work is carried out at some research institutes. There are cognitive psychologists at each of the universities, but the largest concentrations are at the University of Haifa and at Ben-Gurion University in Be'er Sheva. Much of the cognitive research at the University of Haifa is carried out at The Institute of Information Processing and Decision Making, which includes six experimental psychologists in different areas of cognitive psychology, human factors, and decision making. Experimental work in the areas of human factors and cognitive psychology is carried out both at Ben-Gurion University and at the Technion. At the Hebrew University several people are working in psycholinguistics and decision making. Other activities related to general cognitive psychology (e.g. social cognition, cognitive development, cognitive aspects of education, etc.) are also carried out at Tel-Aviv and Bar-Ilan Universities.

Recently, a review of psychology in Israel appeared in the Annual Review of Psychology, and the reader can obtain more information than we have been able to compile in this brief and biased report. (Ben-Ari, R. and Amir, Y. (1986), Psychology in a developing society: The case of Israel. Annual Review of Psychology, 37, 17-41).

Advance information about the First Summer School of the Society

The topic of our first Summer School will be Cognitive Approaches to Memory. It will be held in Starnberg, close to Munich, from 22 June to 4 July, 1987.

The Summer School is intended for postgraduate students or immediate post-doctorals rather than for established researchers. The programme will include lectures, seminars, study periods and discussion groups.

While we are at present pursuing various funding sources and are fairly confident that our efforts will be successful, it is anticipated that each participant will be required to pay a modest fee.

Several well known psychologists active in the field of memory research have been approached to act as lecturers and tutors and we have been delighted with their positive response to our request. It promises to be a very stimulating fortnight.

Unfortunately as always, there is a negative aspect! Numbers have had to be limited to 40 students and therefore some form of selection may

have to take place if demand is too high. Applicants will have to be recommended by a more senior researcher who knows something about their work and interests. Care will also be taken to try to achieve a fair geographical balance.

More detailed information and application forms will be available later this year.

2nd Conference of the Society

This will take place in Madrid from 7 - 11 September 1987. The Conference Centre which belongs to one of the Universities is situated just outside the City limits. Cheap transportation to and from the City centre will be provided at suitable times.

Unfortunately it will not be possible to offer participants financial support. However, the accommodation will be very reasonably priced. (A number of partners and children can also be catered for). We will also try to ensure that all members of the Society who wish to attend will have the opportunity of presenting either a paper or a poster.

Calls for papers will be made later this Autumn.

Workshop on Aspects of Consciousness and Awareness

To be held in Bielefeld, 1 - 3 December 1986. Co-organisers: Philip Smith (Reading) and Peter Bieri (Bielefeld).

Financial assistance is being provided by the Centre for Interdisciplinary Research at Bielefeld, and this extends only to nominated speakers, most of whom have already been invited. There will be room for some younger participants (postgraduates, post-doctorals and junior faculty) but, alas, no financial assistance. Members of ESCP are invited to suggest young psychologists or philosophers who may be interested in attending. Send your suggestions to Philip Smith, Department of Psychology, Earley Gate, Whiteknights, Reading RG6 2AL, England.

Quarterly Journal of Experimental Psychology, Section A Special Issue on "Psychological Principles Underlying Human-Computer Interaction"

A special issue on this topic is scheduled for November 1987, and submissions are invited. Papers may be concerned with any aspect of human-computer interaction. For example, designing user-friendly systems that fully exploit what is known about human information-processing capabilities as well as recognizing and catering for their limitations; ensuring the legitibility and intelligibility of material displayed on computer terminals; preparing informative computer manuals for users at different levels of sophistication; designing artificial intelligence systems that interact with human operators; any aspect of training human operators, etc. Priority will be given to papers that are able to relate issues in this area to current theories and models in experimental psychology.

Submissions should be sent to the Editor, Philip Smith, University of Reading, Department of Psychology, Earley Gate, Whiteknights, Reading RG6 2AL, England, by 1 november 1986.

Workshop on Movement Imitation

A small and informal Workshop on Movement Imitation will be arranged from December 8 - 10, 1986 at the Center of Interdisciplinary Studies at Bielefeld/W. Germany, organised by W. Prinz (Bielefeld) and H.T.A. Whiting (Amsterdam). If interested, write to Wolfgang Prinz, Department of Psychology, University of Bielefeld, P.O. Box 8640, 4800 Bielefeld, FRG.

Experimental Psychology in tradition and at present

To mark the 100th anniversary of the death of Gustav Theodor Fechner (1801-1887) an International Symposium will be held at Leipzig, Karl Marx University, from 6 - 10 July, 1987. The Symposium will include three main sections:

- An opening session on Fechner's life-work in historical and current perspectives.
- Special sessions dealing with Fechner's life-work, such as his contributions to philosophy and natural sciences; his influence in the history of culture; his regional scientific significance in Leipzig and Saxony.
- Special sessions on current issues in experimental psychology and psychophysiology.

Any further information can be requested from: "Fechner Symposium", Department of Psychology, Karl Marx University, Tieckstrasse 2, Leipzig, DDR 7030.

JJ/AvR