

**GAZE PROCESSING IN HUMAN INFANTS: ADAPTATION FOR COMMUNICATIVE LEARNING?**

A. Senju

*Birkbeck, University of London, London, UK*

*Presenter's Email: [a.senju@bbk.ac.uk](mailto:a.senju@bbk.ac.uk)*

One of the most impressive signs of human infants' developing understanding of the social world is the ability to follow another person's eye gaze (i.e. gaze following). However, there is no clear consensus about the functional specialization as well as the neurodevelopmental basis of gaze following behaviour in human infancy. Here I present our recent studies that strongly suggest that gaze following in young human infants are optimized for learning from communicative adults. In these studies, we employed video-presentation of human or non-human agents, which turn towards one of two peripheral objects, and recorded infants' gaze following behaviour with eye-tracking technique. We found that infants only follow an agent's "gaze" only when it was preceded by a communicative signal, such as eye contact, infant-directed speech or turn-taking contingency. Such a link between the presence of communicative signals and gaze following suggests that this behaviour serves a functional role in assisting infants to effectively respond to referential communication directed to them.

Keywords: gaze processing, eye tracking, human infants, communication