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Eye Follow You: Effects of Gaze Cues on Learning

In this keynote I will present the findings from a five-year research project about the effects of gaze cues on learning (funded by a NWO Vidi grant –what’s in a name). Other people’s faces, and especially their eyes, are real attention magnets. Eyes quickly and automatically capture our attention, and this mechanism presumably evolved because eye gaze provides us with very powerful social cues that help us understand the intentions of others. In this project, we investigate whether we can use gaze cues to improve learning from video modeling examples, in which a model (instructor) demonstrates and explains how to perform a task. I will discuss research on the effects of both direct gaze cues (i.e., the model’s eyes/head turn towards the task) and indirect gaze cues on attention and learning. Indirect gaze cues are created by recording the model’s eye movements and displaying them as, for instance, circles or dots overlaid on the video. Both types of gaze cues are expected to help synchronize the students’ with the model’s attention, which should help students follow the model’s explanation. Therefore, this ‘joint attention’ is expected to enhance students’ learning from video modeling examples –at least under conditions in which the explanation would otherwise remain unclear. Last but not least, I will present studies on how gaze displays are interpreted.

We may be naturally attuned to direct gaze, but can we correctly infer the intentions and thoughts of others from a moving circle or dot? Come and see for yourself!

- Prof. Dr. Tamara van Gog, EARLI2017 Keynote Speaker, May 2016.

