

## *The roots of communication*

Press release

### **The Phylo- and Ontogenesis of Understanding and Communication Thematic Workshop, ZiF: Research Group *Embodied Communication in Humans and Machines***

January 11 – 14, 2006

Organizers: Ipke Wachsmuth (Bielefeld) and Günther Knoblich (Newark, NJ)

All humans are masters in making sense of the utterances of others, interpreting their behavior, and understanding their intentions. What are the origins of these abilities and how do they develop, which are the mechanisms underlying them, what is the role of bodily signals, and what can we learn from the comparison with non-human primates? These are the central questions for the Workshop *The Phylo- and Ontogenesis of Communication and Understanding*, which will take place in the Center for Interdisciplinary Research (Zentrum für interdisziplinäre Forschung, ZiF) in Bielefeld, Germany, January 11–14, 2006.

The workshop is part of a larger endeavor setting out to develop an integrated perspective of embodiment in communication, which has been taken up by the international research group 'Embodied Communication in Humans and Machines' in the ZiF since October, 2005. The phylo- and ontogenesis of understanding and communication are assumed to be central building blocks in this integrated perspective. Comparative studies of the use of gestures in monkeys and children are as important to this endeavor as new discoveries in the brain sciences and machine studies on the development of communication structures, as carried out in computational neuroscience and artificial intelligence.

Renowned researchers were invited to discuss and share their work with the resident fellows of the ZiF research group. Among them are the primatologists Kim Bard (University of Portsmouth), Josep Call (Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology, Leipzig), and Julia Fischer (German Primate Center, Göttingen). Leonardo Fogassi (University of Parma), and Christian Keysers (University of Groningen) will report on the neuronal basis of communication, and developmental psychologists Manfred Holodynski (Bielefeld) and Sabina Pauen (Heidelberg) will focus on the development of communicative abilities in children. With further contributions of the language researchers Roland Posner (Berlin), Jens Allwood (Göteborg), and Susan Goldin-Meadow (Chicago), this interdisciplinary workshop promises a multifaceted picture of the evolution and development of communication and language.

For further information and the program see:

<http://www.uni-bielefeld.de/ZiF/FG/2005Communication/>

<http://www.uni-bielefeld.de/ZiF/AG/2006/01-11-Wachsmuth.html>