

Friday lecture on 11 June 2010 by Ethan Weed



“What’s left to learn about right hemisphere damage and pragmatic impairment?”

After two decades of research on pragmatic impairment following right hemisphere damage (RHD), we are left with more questions than answers. There is general agreement that damage to right hemisphere areas can result in impairment of pragmatic function, but there is as yet no consensus about how or why. This may be in part

because earlier approaches to the question of pragmatic impairment have been either relatively atheoretic, or have been eclectic in their theoretic approach.

In this talk I approach the problem of pragmatic impairment in RHD from an emergentist perspective. I suggest that viewing pragmatic function as an emergent phenomenon opens up possibilities for new approaches to the problem of pragmatic impairment in RHD.

I will first sketch out what the emergentist approach entails, and then outline three new directions in the area of pragmatic impairment in RHD which I feel are well-suited to an emergentist approach. Finally, I will show data from my most recent experiment, in which I have used EEG techniques to try to approach the question of pragmatics from the point of view of "low-level" perception. I would particularly welcome comments and questions about the theoretical aspects of the presentation.

When: From 13-15

Where: Building 1412, room 229