Workshop on analysis of eye movement data in Matlab

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Image classification task

This task was a free-viewing task, in which participants observed some images, each presented for 3 seconds, and then made a decision about whether they were real photo or AI-generated. In this workshop we aim to characterize the scan path by identifying saccades and fixations.

You can find the analysis script in the folder analysis in the Gihub repository (https://github.com/matte lisi/NeuroMethods/tree/master/eyetracking_tasks/image-classification/analysis).

We aim to obtain detailed information about the saccades (direction amplitude, speed, etc.) as well as the fixations (position and duration). One of the outcomes is creating scan-paths visualizations like the one below, where I ahve superimposed the gaze path (blue lines) onto the image, as well as added circle to mark individual fixations; note that the size of the circle is proportional to the fixation duration (larger circles indicate participant dwell on that for longer).

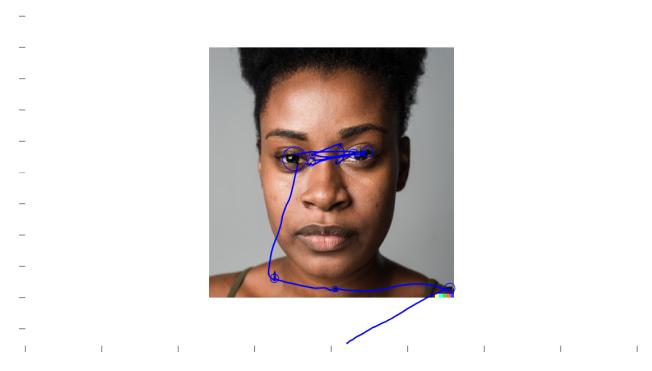


Figure 1: Scanpath of an observer looking at a face. We can see that most fixations tend to be around the eyes, known to be an informative part of the face for inferring other people's emotional and cognitive states

Getting started

We begin by clearing the workspace and loading some useful custom functions (these are contained in the folders functions and analysis_functions). We add these to Matlab path using the function addpath so that we can call the functions included in these folders as if they were built-in functions.

```
clear all
addpath('../functions');
addpath('./analysis_functions');
```

For our analysis we will need to use some information about the experimental setup - It's good practice to save them somewhere along with the eye movement recordings. We need in particular the screen size (width), the viewing distance and the screen resolution. These allow converting measures of length/size of eye movements and stimuli on screen from pixels to degrees of visual angle.

In particular the value ppd indicate how many pixels on the screen correspond to 1 degres of visual angle.

It is computed from the function va2pix - if you open this (type open va2pix in the command window), you can see it is computed as

$$ppd = \tan\left(\frac{\pi}{180}\right) \frac{xres}{width}$$

The formula follows from trigonometry (see slides of math lectures), and indicates how many pixels corresponds to a rotation of the eye by one degree (starting from a central fixation and moving the gaze outward).

Practice tasks:

 \square Open the va2pix function and verify that it correspond to the above equation.

Import gaze-recording file

Next we import the data file. Here .edf stands for 'eyelink data file'. You can change the file name .../data/S1.edf to import data from a different participant.

```
raw_data = '../data/S2301.edf';
% load eye movement file
ds = edfmex(raw_data);
```

Note that to import the edf file directly in Matlab you need to have installed the Eyelink API (you can find this link after registering to SR research forum).

If you don't have the Eyelink API installed, you can load directly the converted file (after downloading these from the Github repository) as follow:

```
load('S2301_edfstruct.mat')
```

Either way, you should have as a result a matlab structure loaded in your workspace:

Practice tasks:

☐ Type ds in the command window and examine what type of information you have loaded in memory. What kind of datatype is it? What do you think the difference fields contain?

FSAMPLE

The actual gaze recordings, that is the X (horizontal) and y (vertical) coordinates of gaze on screen are in the FSAMPLE field, among other things.

Practice tasks:

 \square Type ds.FSAMPLE' in the command window. What do you see? What type of information do you think we need to retrieve for the analysis?

This table, from the documentation of edfmex, provide information about what data is contained in each field (taken from https://www.sr-research.com/support/thread-28.html and also provided in the Github folder at this https://github.com/mattelisi/NeuroMethods/blob/master/workshops/eye_movement_analy sis/EDF_Data_Structure.pdf)

FSAMPLE: The FSAMPLE structure holds information for each sample in the EDF file. Depending on the recording options, some of the fields may be empty.										
time	time stamp of sample (in milliseconds)									
рх	left eye raw pupil x coordinates	right eye raw pupil x coordinates	Raw pupil-center position (or pupil minus CR if running in pupil-CR mode)							
ру	left eye raw pupil y coordinates	right eye raw pupil y coordinates	See above							
hx	left eye head-referenced eye position x	right eye head-referenced eye position x	HREF data is related to the tangent of the rotation angle of the eye relative to the head.							
hy	left eye head-referenced eye position y	right eye head-referenced eye position y	See above							
pa	left eye pupil size data	right eye pupil size data	This value is uncalibrated and based on diameter or area (depending on which was chosen during data collection)							
gx	X Gaze position for Left Eye	X Gaze position for Right Eye	Gaze in screen pixel co-ordinates							
gy	Y Gaze position for Left Eye	Y Gaze position for Right Eye	See above							
rx	left eye PPDx	right eye PPDx	Pixels per degree							
ry	left eye PPDy	right eye PPDy	Pixels per degree							
gxvel	left eye gaze velocity x	right eye gaze velocity x	Value in degrees of visual angle per second							
gyvel	left eye gaze velocity y	right eye gaze velocity y	Value in degrees of visual angle per second							
hxvel	left eye head-referenced eye velocity x	right eye head-referenced eye velocity x	See hx above							
hyvel	left eye head-referenced eye velocity y	right eye head-referenced eye velocity y	See hy above							
rxvel	left eye raw x velocity	righ eye raw x velocity	In degs per second							
ryvel	left eye raw y velocity	right eye raw y velocity	In degs per second							
fgxvel	left eye fast gaze x velocity	right eye fast gaze x velocity	fast = uses fast velocity model							
fgyvel	left eye fast gaze y velocity	right eye fast gaze y velocity	See above							
fhxvel	left eye fast head-referenced velocity x	right eye fast head-referenced velocity x	See above							
fhyvel	left eye fast head-referenced velocity y	right eye fast head-referenced velocity y	See above							
frxvel	left eye fast head-referenced ppdx	right eye fast head-referenced ppdx	See above							
fryvel	left eye fast head-referenced ppdy	right eye fast head-referenced ppdy	See above							
hdata	head-tracker data									
flags	flags to indicate contents									
input	extra (input word)		Unused							
buttons	button state and changes		From button box attached to Host PC							
htype	head tracker data type									
errors	process error flags									

The most important of these are the time, which provides the time at which each sample of gaze position was recorded, and gx which are the coordinates of gaze on the screen (these are in screen coordinates, i.e. pixels measured from the top-left corner of the screen).

FEVENT

Similarly the, FEVENT field contains information about 'events' - these are timestamped *events* of the experiment, such as the onset time of the visual stimulus, or the response time. These are necessary because for most analysis we want to align in time the gaze recording with task events. The fields here are the following (see the documentation for full description of these)

Practice tasks:

 $\hfill\Box$ Type ds.FEVENT' and examine the field names. Out of these fields, in particular, the message field contains events that we set our code to record. For exmaple, if you look at the code for this experiments, you will find at some point the line:

```
Eyelink('message', 'TRIAL_START %d', t);
```

This command was executed during the experiment at the beginning of each trial to indicate that trial number t was starting. The Eyelink system can record with msec precision the time at which the command was executed, and make a note ("timestamp") in the gaze recordings.

If we look at the messages in the data file, we can see for example that for this specific data file the 70-th message¹ correspond to the start of the first trial

```
>> ds.FEVENT(70).message
ans =
   'TRIAL_START 1'
```

We can find out the precise time of when that trial started (the "timestamp") by looking at the sttime field of the 70-th event.

```
>> ds.FEVENT(70).sttime
ans =
  uint32
  404996
```

Practice tasks:

ans =

□ Try seeing what other types of messages are included, by printing a range of messages instead of single one. One simple way to do it is by using e.g. ds.FEVENT(100:200).message for retrieving messages all the messages between the 100-th and the 200-th.

 \square Try and retrieve the time of some other event.

The number we get is the timestamp (time in milliseconds since the computer was switched on)².

The events allows us to get useful information, for example how many trials did this participant complete. Top do so, I just count how many times a certain message occur (for example here I do this with the message EVENT_FixationDot which in the code of the experiment is what signalled the appearance of the image on screen).

Here I use the function find and strcmp to get the indexes of all messages indicating that an image appeared on screen:

```
>> find(strcmp({ds.FEVENT.message}, 'EVENT_FixationDot')==1)
```

¹It may be a different message if you have a different file, or perhaps an empty string

²The unit32 indicator simply tells us that this number is encoded by matlab as a 32-bit unsigned integer. This allows matlab to save some memory as a unit32 occupies only 4 bytes of memory, as opposed to the 8 bytes of a double type. See https://uk.mathworks.com/help/matlab/matlab_prog/strategies-for-efficient-use-of-memory.html for more information on memory usage and data types in Matlab.

```
72 145 222 309 370
```

We have 5 numbers, indicating that this participant completed 5 trials.

Data preparation

Here we put the data in a format more suitable for further data analysis.

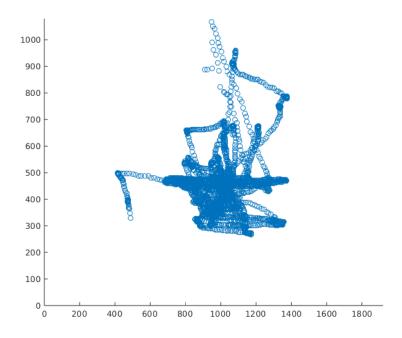
First, we set information about which eye was tracked:

```
% which eye was tracked?
% O=left 1=right (add 1 for indexing below)
eye_tracked = 1 + mode([ds.FEVENT.eye]);
```

This is required because the gx field contain a 2-column vector, although only one column contain useful data. The reason for this is that the eyelink could also be used to track binocular eye movements, using a slightly more involved setup. In this case we recorded data monocularly, and therefore one column is empty.

In case you are in doubt, you can plot the raw data and see what comes out. Here the data is in the second column, indicating that the right eye was tracked.

```
scatter(ds.FSAMPLE.gx(2,:),ds.FSAMPLE.gy(2,:))
xlim([0 scr.xres])
ylim([0 scr.yres])
```



Note that I have restricted the range of the plot to the screen coordinates: this is because when there are missing data point, (e.g. blinks) the edfmex program that imported the data automatically enter a very large value (100000000), and plotting these large values would make the figure unreadable.

Practice tasks:

- \square Try reproducing the plot above without the axis limits.
- ☐ Try to load and plot data from another participant.

Next, we need to write some code that loop over all trials and retrieve all information useful for the analysis, and put it in a format that is easier to work with. There are no hard and fast rules about how to do this, I personally find it useful to split the data according to trials, where for each trial I can easily find the gaze recording and other trials information (in this case, for example, the image presented, whether it was an AI-generated one, the response of the participant, and so on).

More specifically, in this case we will end up with the following structure:

```
>> ds2.trial
ans =

1×5 struct array with fields:
    trial_n
    t_start
    t_end
    img_onset
    img_name
    fake_image
    accuracy
    imgRect
    timestamp
    eye_x
    eye_y
```

In order to create this structure, we will perform the following operations:

- 1. loop through all recorded events (i.e. the elements of ds.FEVENT);
- 2. identify the start of each trial and timing of key events for that trial; that is the TRIAL_START message, and others like the EVENT_FixationDot which indicates the time at which the image appeared on screen^[Note that there I didn't put message for the offset of the image, but we know it was 3 seconds later):
- 3. extract x and y coordinates of gaze (from FSAMPLE.gx and FSAMPLE.gy) for the current trial, by selecting gaze positions recorded after the start and before the end of the current trial;
- 4. remove missing values (e.g. replace the 100000000 introduced for missing values with NaN so as we don't risk erroneously consider them "true" recorded gaze positions).
- 5. store any other relevant information for the analysis of the current trial such as the screen coordinates at which the image was presented, so that we can then spatially align gaze positions with the image.

Here is the code that run these operations:

```
% initialize & prea-allocate empty values for all trial information
trial_n = NaN;
trial_n_2 = NaN;
trial_n_3 = NaN;
t_start = NaN;
t_end = NaN;
img_onset = NaN;
img_offset = NaN;
img_name = NaN;
fake_image = NaN;
accuracy = NaN;
imgRect = [];
timestamp = [];
```

```
eye_x = [];
eye_y = [];
ds2 = {};
trial_count = 0;
for i = 1:length(ds.FEVENT) % loop over all events
    % go through the list of events and extract relevant informations
    if ~isempty(ds.FEVENT(i).message)
        % parse string in different "words"
        sa = strread(ds.FEVENT(i).message, '%s');
        % message indicating the onset of trial
        if strcmp(sa(1), 'TRIAL_START')
            trial_n = str2double(sa(2));
            t_start = ds.FEVENT(i).sttime;
        end
        % message indicating when the image appeared
        if strcmp(sa(1), 'EVENT_FixationDot')
           img onset = int32(ds.FEVENT(i).sttime);
           img_offset = img_onset + 3000; % image disappeared 3sec later
        end
        % message indicating the end of eye movement recoding
        if strcmp(sa(1),'TRIAL_END')
           trial_n_2 = str2double(sa(2));
           t_end = ds.FEVENT(i).sttime;
        end
        % extract all data info from the 'TrialData' message
        if strcmp(sa(1), 'TrialData')
           img_name = sa(5);
           trial_n_3 = str2double(sa(2));
           fake image = str2double(sa(4));
           accuracy = str2double(sa(7));
           imgRect = [str2double(sa(8:11))]';
        end
    end
    % if we have everything, then extract gaze position samples
    if ~isnan(trial_n) && ~isnan(trial_n_2) && ~isnan(trial_n_3)
        trial_count = trial_count+1;
        % find onset-offset of relevant recording
        index_start = find(ds.FSAMPLE.time==t_start);
        index_end = find(ds.FSAMPLE.time==img_offset + 400);
        % timestamp - note that we subtract img onset such that time counting
        % will start when the image appeaared on the screen
        timestamp = int32(ds.FSAMPLE.time(index start:index end)) - img onset;
```

```
eye_x = ds.FSAMPLE.gx(eye_tracked, index_start:index_end);
eye y = ds.FSAMPLE.gy(eye tracked, index start:index end);
% remove missing values
eye_x(eye_x==100000000 | eye_y==100000000) = NaN;
% remove gaze coordinates outside of screen (these could be blinks)
eye_x(eye_x<0 | eye_x>scr.xres | eye_y<0 | eye_y>scr.yres ) = NaN;
eye_y(eye_y<0 | eye_y>scr.yres | eye_x<0 | eye_x>scr.xres ) = NaN;
% save everything into a single structure
ds2.trial(trial_count).trial_n = trial_n;
ds2.trial(trial_count).t_start = t_start;
ds2.trial(trial_count).t_end = t_end;
ds2.trial(trial_count).img_onset = img_onset;
ds2.trial(trial count).img name = img name;
ds2.trial(trial_count).fake_image = fake_image;
ds2.trial(trial count).accuracy = accuracy;
ds2.trial(trial_count).imgRect = imgRect;
ds2.trial(trial count).timestamp = timestamp ;
ds2.trial(trial_count).eye_x = eye_x;
ds2.trial(trial count).eye y = eye y;
% re-initialize
trial_n = NaN;
trial_n_2 = NaN;
trial_n_3 = NaN;
t start = NaN;
t_end = NaN;
img_onset = NaN;
img_offset = NaN;
img_name = NaN;
fake_image = NaN;
accuracy = NaN;
imgRect = [];
timestamp = [];
eye_x = [];
eye_y = [];
```

end

end

Looking at the code above, you may have noticed that I retrieve the trial number 3 times, from 3 distinct messages (TRIAL_START, TRIAL_END, and TrialData). This type of redundancies are not strictly necessary, but are often helpful to catch programming errors. In this case it allows me to be sure I have everything before proceeding with the analysis of a trial.

TrialData

Another thing to notice is that I use the message TrialData to store a lot of information about the trial (this is a message that was included in the eye movement recording at the end of each trial).

Here is an example:

If you check the code of the experiment, this message was sent using the following commands

```
% collect trial & response information
data = sprintf('%i\t%s\t%i\t%i\t%i\t%i\t%i\t', is_fake, char(img_i), response, correct, imgRect);
dataStr = sprintf('%i\t%s%s\n',t,info_str,data); % print data to string

% write data to edfFile
Eyelink('message', 'TrialData %s', dataStr);
```

Practice tasks:

 \square Try and print in the command window the TrialData from a different trial.

Visualizations (1)

Having reformatted the data as described in the previous section is useful, for example it makes it much easier to create visualizations.

Here are some things we can do. First, select a trial

```
% select a trial number - here I just take the first one
t = 1;
```

You can visualize the image presented in that trial using:

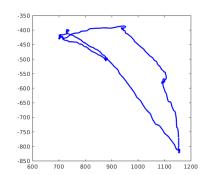
```
% retrieve path to image file
if ds2.trial(t).fake_image ==1 % was it AI generated?
    imgpath = ['../img/fake/', char(ds2.trial(t).img_name)];
else
    imgpath = ['../img/real/', char(ds2.trial(t).img_name)];
end
% open a figure and add the image in a subpanel
figure;
subplot(1,3,1);
imshow(imgpath);
```

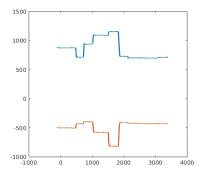
We can add a plot of gaze positions (x and y coordinates expressed in pixels) in another subpanel

```
subplot(1,3,2);
XY = [ds2.trial(t).eye_x; -ds2.trial(t).eye_y]';
plot(XY(:,1), XY(:,2), 'b', 'LineWidth', 2);
Now add a plot of position (both x and y) as a function of time
subplot(1,3,2);
XY = [ds2.trial(t).eye_x; -ds2.trial(t).eye_y]';
plot(XY(:,1), XY(:,2), 'b', 'LineWidth', 2);
```

Result:







Practice tasks:

- \square Make a similar plot but for at least another trial.
- \square Try and think about ways in which you could improve the informativeness of the plot.

Saccade & fixation analysis

In order to identify saccades onsets and offsets, we use an algorithm developed by Ralf Engbert and Konstantin Mergenthaler³. We won't be examining the algorithm in detail, for our purposes it is sufficient to say that it detects onsets and offsets based on gaze velocity (e.g. saccade onsets are detected when the speed of gaze movement exceed a certain threshold), but has some advantages compared to other algorithms (included the ones built-in in commercial software) that makes it more accurate and able to detect also small micro-saccades with amplitudes less than 1 degree of visual angle.

This algorithm requires setting some parameters that are defined in the following bit of the code:

```
% select trial to be analysed
t = 5;
% saccade algorithm parameters
SAMPRATE = 1000;  % Eyetracker sampling rate
                       % lambda for microsaccade detectionc
         = 5;
velSD
                       % threshold duration for microsaccades (ms)
minDur
         = 8;
                      % velocity type for saccade detection
VELTYPE = 2;
maxMSAmp = 1;
                       % maximum microsaccade amplitude
                       % merge interval for subsequent saccadic events
mergeInt = 10;
```

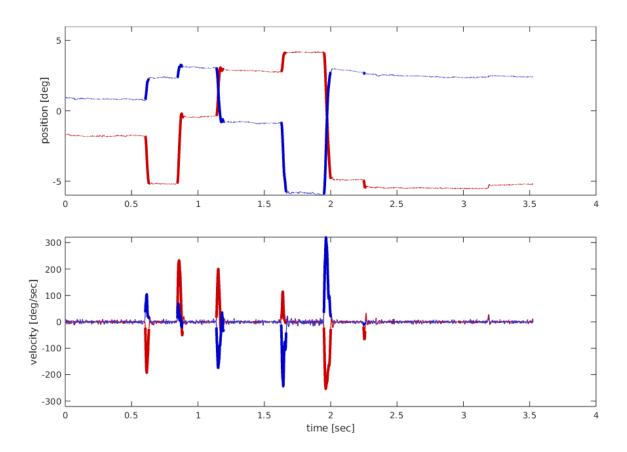
Now extract the gaze positions for the desired trials, filter them and differentiate them to obtain velocity.

```
xrs = [];
xrsf = [];
vrs = [];
vrsf= [];
% gaze position samples
XY = [ds2.trial(t).eye x; ds2.trial(t).eye y]';
% invert Y coordinates and transform in degrees relative to screen center
xrsf = double((1/ppd) * [XY(:,1)-scr.xCenter, (scr.yCenter-XY(:,2))]);
% filter gaze position data (mostly for plotting)
xrs(:,1) = movmean(xrsf(:,1),6);
xrs(:,2) = movmean(xrsf(:,2),6);
% compute velocities
vrs = vecvel(xrs, SAMPRATE, VELTYPE);
                                   % velocities
vrsf= vecvel(xrsf, SAMPRATE, VELTYPE);
                                    % velocities
Finally, use the algorithm to compute saccade onsets and offsets.
% compute saccade parameters
mrs = saccpar(mrs);
```

Now that we have parsed the saccades, we can annotate plots, for example by highlighting the part of gaze recordings correspondign to saccadic eye movements (shown with a thicker line in the next figure)

 $^{^3}$ Engbert, R., & Mergenthaler, K. (2006). Microsaccades are triggered by low retinal image slip. Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, 103(18), 7192–7197. https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.0509557103

```
% PLOT TRACES
% prepare figure and axes
close all;
cbac = [1.0 \ 1.0 \ 1.0];
h1 = figure;
set(gcf,'color',cbac);
ax(1) = axes('pos', [0.1 \ 0.6 \ 0.85 \ 0.4]); % left bottom width height
ax(2) = axes('pos', [0.1 0.1 0.85 0.4]);
% format timers
timers = double(ds2.trial(t).timestamp);
timeIndex = (timers - timers(1) +1)/1000;
axes(ax(1));
% plot horizontal position
plot(timeIndex,xrs(:,1),'-','color',[0.8 0 0],'linewidth',1);
hold on
for i = 1:size(mrs, 1)
    plot(timeIndex((mrs(i,1):mrs(i,2))), xrs(mrs(i,1):mrs(i,2),1),'-','color',[0.8 0 0],'linewidth',4);
end
% plot vertical position
plot(timeIndex,xrs(:,2),'-','color',[0.2 0.2 0.8],'linewidth',1);
for i = 1:size(mrs.1)
    plot(timeIndex((mrs(i,1):mrs(i,2))), xrs(mrs(i,1):mrs(i,2),2),'-','color',[0 0 0.8],'linewidth',4);
ylim([-max(abs(xrs(:))),max(abs(xrs(:)))])
ylabel('position [deg]');
axes(ax(2));
% plot horizontal position
plot(timeIndex,vrs(:,1),'-','color',[0.8 0 0],'linewidth',1);
for i = 1:size(mrs, 1)
    plot(timeIndex((mrs(i,1):mrs(i,2))), vrs(mrs(i,1):mrs(i,2),1),'-','color',[0.8 0 0],'linewidth',4);
end
% plot vertical position
plot(timeIndex, vrs(:,2), '-', 'color', [0.2 0.2 0.8], 'linewidth',1);
for i = 1:size(mrs, 1)
    plot(timeIndex((mrs(i,1):mrs(i,2))), vrs(mrs(i,1):mrs(i,2),2),'-','color',[0 0 0.8],'linewidth',4);
ylim([-max(abs(vrs(:))),max(abs(vrs(:)))])
xlabel('time [sec]');
ylabel('velocity [deg/sec]');
```



Practice tasks:

- \Box Try reproducing the plot above using data from another trial.
- □ Examine the object mrs that has been created as part of this analysis. What does it contain? Hint: check the comments in the files of the function microsaccMerge and saccpar (e.g. by typing: open microsaccMerge). What do these two functions do?

Visualization (2)

```
h2 = figure;
figure(h2);
cbac = [1.0 \ 1.0 \ 1.0, \ 0];
set(gcf, 'color', cbac);
if ds2.trial(t).fake_image ==1
    imgpath = ['../img/fake/', char(ds2.trial(t).img_name)];
else
    imgpath = ['../img/real/', char(ds2.trial(t).img_name)];
end
C = imread(imgpath);
img_c = ds2.trial(t).imgRect ./ [scr.xres,scr.yres,scr.xres,scr.yres];
img_c = [img_c(1), img_c(2), img_c(3)-img_c(1), img_c(4)-img_c(2)];
ax_img = axes('pos',img_c);
%C = C(end : -1: 1, :, :);
image(ax_img , C)
axis off
ax_gaze = axes('pos',[0 0 1 1],'Color','none'); % left bottom width height
axes(ax_gaze);
hold on
display_x = [-(scr.xres/2)/ppd, (scr.xres/2)/ppd];
display_y = [-(scr.yres/2)/ppd, (scr.yres/2)/ppd];
plot(ax_gaze , xrs(:,1),xrs(:,2),'k-');
xlim(display_x);
ylim(display_y);
for i = 1:size(mrs, 1)
   plot(xrs(mrs(i,1):mrs(i,2),1),xrs(mrs(i,1):mrs(i,2),2),'b-','linewidth',2);
end
if ~isempty(mrs)
   plot([xrs(mrs(:,1),1) xrs(mrs(:,2),1)]',[xrs(mrs(:,1),2) xrs(mrs(:,2),2)]','b.');
end
% make a table of fixations
n_fix = size(mrs, 1) + 1;
fixtab = zeros(n_fix, 5);
for i = 1:n_fix
   fix start = NaN;
   fix end = NaN;
   fix_dur = NaN;
   fix_coord = NaN;
   if i==1
       fix_start = 1; %ds2.trial(t).timestamp(1);
    else
```

```
fix_start = mrs(i-1,2)+1;
end

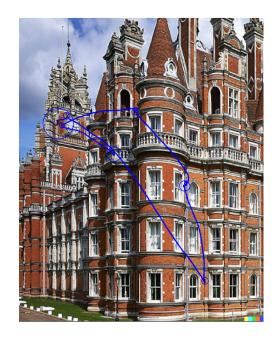
if i==n_fix
    fix_end = length(ds2.trial(t).timestamp); %(end);
else
    fix_end = mrs(i,1)-1;
end

fix_dur = fix_end - fix_start;

fix_coord = [nanmean(xrs(fix_start:fix_end,1)), nanmean(xrs(fix_start:fix_end,2))];

fixtab(i,:) = [fix_start,fix_end,fix_dur,fix_coord];
end

for i = 1:n_fix
    plot(fixtab(i,4), fixtab(i,5),'o','color',[0 0 1],'markersize',fixtab(i,3)/25,'linewidth',1);
end
```



Practice tasks:

 \square Examine the code to produce the last plot, step by step. Think whether you understand the logic of the code.

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Ш	Reproduce	and save	this	plot :	tor at	least	another	trial.