Inf1-CG Assignment 2 general feedback and advice

Choice of review materials

Most people did not have a problem with this, and chose relevant papers. Many of you even used additional references to provide more information about prosopagnosia, face inversion, expert object recognition, etc. This is great! A few people tried to use textbooks or review papers-- these are not original sources and thus not an appropriate choice. Look this up if you need clarification about what is and is not an original source. However, sources like textbooks or encyclopedia articles are great for providing background information, such as "what is visual agnosia?" and you should feel free to use them in that way.

Content and organisation (in rough order of importance)

1. Putting the 'review' in research review

- A literature review is not a summary, it is a *discussion of work*. It will summarise work from a particular paper (or area of inquiry, in a large review) but this is essentially evidence for a discussion of how this research goes about answering some question, and whether it succeeds, conclusions that can/cannot be drawn, comparisons to other methods... Without this discussion and assessment, it is just a summary, not a review!
- Here is a verbatim excerpt from the assignment 2 instructions: *"The purpose of a literature review is to* assess*the published work pertaining to a particular topic....Writing a literature review is not simply a matter of listing papers and opinions, nor of summarizing papers one after another. The reviewer's job is to try to evaluate and to make sense of what is out there—how do these papers relate to one another, more specifically than being generally about the same research area?"* [emphasis added]
- Some students did a great job of assessing the papers in their review and making connections between them, or even to additional material. Keep up the good work! Another group of students seem to have given analysis a try, but what they included was too short, superficial/in not enough detail, or appeared as a few sentences at the very end rather than being integrated into the papers. This is far better than nothing, but lots of room for improvement. The last group...seem not to have read the directions which are reproduced above.
- Saying "more research is needed" is like politicians saying "change is needed": obvious and basically meaningless.
    - *Why* do you think that more research is needed?
    - Which *specific* questions remain unanswered, or which current findings are not accounted for by current views and theories?
    - And for the ambitious...how might you suggest answering those questions?
- Saying the equivalent of "this is not a convincing explanation" is like the previous point. Why not? What is unexplained, or who else's theory is explaining it better?

2. When you get to a key point or piece of information, such as a hypothesis or critical finding, some of you tend to quote the authors directly rather than re-stating these points in your own words with a subsequent citation (paraphrasing).

- This says two things: either you do not quite understand these points, or you are not confident of your ability to correctly explain them in your own words.
- Quoting can't be a substitute for understanding! If you think you can hide your confusion...you can't. The more complex the material, the more apparent this is.
- **It is almost always better to try to re-state key points in your own words than to quote!** Other disciplines may encourage quoting... this is not one of them. Many research reviews at the professional level may not have have quotes at all, or very, very few (5 or less) in a large paper.
- The general rule in scientific writing is to avoid using quotes except when the original authors' words are so concise, insightful, wise, or even witty that you could not possibly improve upon them. You may also quote if you are essentially using those words as evidence to support a claim, or challenging the authors' conclusions, and the *exact* wording is important.

3. What actually happened in the experiment?

- The assignment clearly asks you to discuss how the authors investigated their hypothesis, and what participant group(s) and method(s) they used to do so.
- It is an insufficient level of detail to say that participants were trained to become experts or that someone built a computational model. For instance, if you discussed Gauthier and Tarr (1997), you should definitely have discussed their method of training Greeble experts versus novices! If you discussed a paper with a model, it would have been good to say something about how the model was trained as well.
- A few papers said something like “The authors used the same methodology/stimuli/type of training as in paper X.” This is fine...but only if you also discuss paper X as a part of your review, or elaborate on the methodology in some way.

4. Overall flow of your paper

- You, as the reviewer, can do a lot to make your reader's life easier. A main part of your job is to organise the material in the most logical way (see assignment 2 website re: narrative). This is possibly the hardest part of the whole review!
- *Try to integrate topics and ideas as much as possible,* rather than pages and pages on one thing before switching back to the other thing. This was especially important for this paper, which was really intended to be about the *intersection* of Greeble research with some other topic of your choice.
- Do not use technical terms or jargon without defining them.
    - What counts as technical may vary with your audience, but for this assignment you definitely needed to define Greebles, neurological conditions like visual agnosia, prosopagnosia, and autism, brain areas (FFA, etc.), expert recognition.....there is a long list.
    - Define your terms in-text, rather than like a list. Your paper is not a dictionary!
- **Throughout your paper, make connections back to your overall research question or theme,** if you can. If you can't...ask yourself if your material or commentary has strayed too far from what it it supposed to be about! Do *not* assume that the connection will be obvious to your readers. It probably is not.

5. Introductions

- Your intro is not a table of contents! Tell us about the key concepts we will encounter in the rest of your paper, and how they relate to one another. Do *not* list paper titles.
- Try to mention the main concepts that your paper will discuss and how they relate together. This way, readers have a roadmap for what is coming. Look at the introductions of research papers for

help with this-- there is almost always a short, very general intro paragraph before they get into the background literature.

6. Conclusions

- A conclusion is just that, a conclusion. It should be summing everything up! This is not a place to introduce new information or squash in your analysis. All of that should have been done already, in the body of your paper.
- What you *should* include (copied directly from assignment 2 website!): Re-state your review's theme and any general, key points; Re-state your review's "findings"
- Make sure to connect back to the topic of your review, or its research question/hypothesis!

7. Transitions

- Most people were missing transitions entirely, and simply abruptly stopped talking about one area, skipped a line, and started another.
- For those of you who tried to transition...Rather than saying something along the lines of "here is another paper" please help your readers more by telling us the relationship between the two sources or studies. Does the new paper or study extend the findings of the first one? Contradict the findings? Is this next part of the paper something different entirely, such as your conclusion?

Writing style and mechanics (in rough order of importance)

1. Reference and comparison words

- When using comparison words like more/less greater/fewer better/worse, you must be clear about exactly what comparison you are making. More *what* than what other thing? Better than what, in what way?
- Especially when using terms like *better,* it is important to specify what your assessment criteria is. Especially without the original paper to hand, it is bewildering to read something like "participants did better in condition 2."
- Also beware of articles like *this, that* and *it*. Make sure that the object of your reference is always clear especially if you are introducing a new topic or new material, and ask yourself whether it might be better to spell the word out in full. Your readers are just average readers, not mind readers. Words like these work better when you are already in the middle of a discussion or explanation, and the object is clear from context.
- This was a very noticeable problem for *most students*. Everyone does it once in a while, but for some of you this made your papers very difficult to read.

2. Pronoun use and abuse:

- This is formal, academic writing. This is not your blog. Do not use "I" or "we," or write that "In my opinion..." Don't rely on opinion-- show us your evidence from the original research as to why a claim is convincing or not convincing, methodology is bad, or findings are incomplete.

3. Defining key terms:

- Do a check-- have you used technical terms, concepts, or jargon that your audience will not be

familiar with? Remember here that our audience has some basic knowledge about vision and memory, but NO specific knowledge of Greebles or the other focus topics. This was clearly stated on the assignment 2 page. Thus, all of these topics and any other specialist terms needed to be defined in your paper. See the Goldstein and Baddeley textbooks for good examples of defining terms in-text.

4. Use of the word "proved" in relation to a hypothesis or theory

- Hypotheses are not proved. Theories are not proved; it is logically impossible. They can be confirmed or supported, or conversely they may be refuted, unsupported, undermined, or contradicted, or proven false according to the rules of logic, but they are *never* proved. See a research methods textbook for more information about this.
- Furthermore, theories are rarely called seriously into question on the basis of only a few sets of results such as the tiny sample examined in your reviews-- they must consistently fail to be supported.

5. Titles are a necessity, not a formality.

- They are important for telling readers what will be in your paper! Try to strike a balance between informative and concise. Think of "keywords" which describe your paper, and try to use those to create your title.

6. Terminology related to participant groups

- "Persons with autism" *not* "autistic", and also "persons with prosopagnosia" (or dyslexia, agnosia, whatever). You may have read papers that say autistic or prosopagnostic, but the current accepted terminology is to *always* emphasise the person, not the condition they have.
- "Participants" is preferable to "subjects," unless the experiment uses animals rather than people

7. General style notes

- Either indent paragraphs, or leave a blank line between them, but not both<./li>
- Number your pages.
- Try to use italics, single- and double-quotes consistently. Avoid ALL-CAPS, instead use italics for emphasis, sparingly.
- Cut the fat! There were lots of filler phrases, wordiness, and waffling. This suggests either that you are unsure of what you are saying, or have not taken the time/effort to edit.
- Beware of run-on sentences! A run-on sentence is the grammatical disaster that occurs when two complete ideas which should be separate sentences are joined by a comma, or simply mashed together with no punctuation at all.
- Comprehensibility check: If you read one of your sentences aloud and have no idea what it means, or you run out of breath in the middle, how do you think anyone else will possibly understand it?

References

- **Every source which is quoted, paraphrased or cited in your paper for any reason must appear in the References section.** This is true for any academic paper in any discipline.
- Reference section must contain adequate information to uniquely identify sources! Need year of

publication, journal, publisher (for books), etc. *See the course web page for assignment 2 for links to sources about correct referencing*.

- **Please *do not* include the title of the papers in your paragraph text, or the journals in which they were published**. That's what the reference section is for. Use authors and year only-- again, see an official source for the reference style of your choice.