

The role of intentionality in the reflexive attentional shift phenomenon (Abstract only)

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The role of intentionality in the reflexive attentional shift phenomenon.

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Attention allows individuals to allocate cognitive resources on a specific location. A Reflexive Attentional Shift is generated by cues in the environment, such as a person. This phenomenon can be measured experimentally employing the Dot Perspective Paradigm (DPP) consisting of a virtual room with targets into the side walls. The Other is represented by an avatar placed in the centre of the room. Participants have to judge as quick as possible how many targets they see. Typically, this task shows an interference pattern: slower RTs and more errors when the avatar is facing away from the targets. Pesimena & Soranzo (submitted) found that avatars with contrasting directional features don't generate interference in RTs. A residual interference however is registered in the error rate. To investigate why an Other with contrasting directional features generates a residual interference in the error rates, we consider the role of intention attribution to the Other; that is, the Other intentionality to indicate a direction. We used as avatar a human figure looking opposite to where the arm/finger are pointing, making its intentionality ambiguous. Results show that when the intention is ambiguous, also the residual interference disappears. We conclude that the attribution of intention to the Other plays a role in the reflexive attentional shift.