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Host Researcher: Dr Norimichi Kitagawa, Perception and Emotion Research Group, Human and Information Science Laboratory, NTT Communication Science Laboratories

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I was privileged that JSPS gave me the opportunity to spend a summer in Japan doing research. This was of particular strategic importance for me as it allowed me to engage in active and exciting joint research, with the consequent continuous interchange of research ideas and methods. The research project was jointly developed with the host researcher, with whom I share many research interests and with whom I had already enjoyed another fruitful collaboration in the past. In this project we proposed to bring together, for the first time, two research areas of common interest: body representation and auditory perception. Our project involved a series of psychophysical experiments with human participants in which we investigated how the mental representation of our body is not fixed, but is continuously updated by the processing of multisensory signals. In particular, our experiments showed, for the first time, that it is possible to alter the perceived extension of one's arm by manipulating the sounds deriving from one's actions. As a result of this work, we are preparing a research article for publication in a high-quality international journal, and we expect to communicate the outcomes of the project in international scientific meetings.

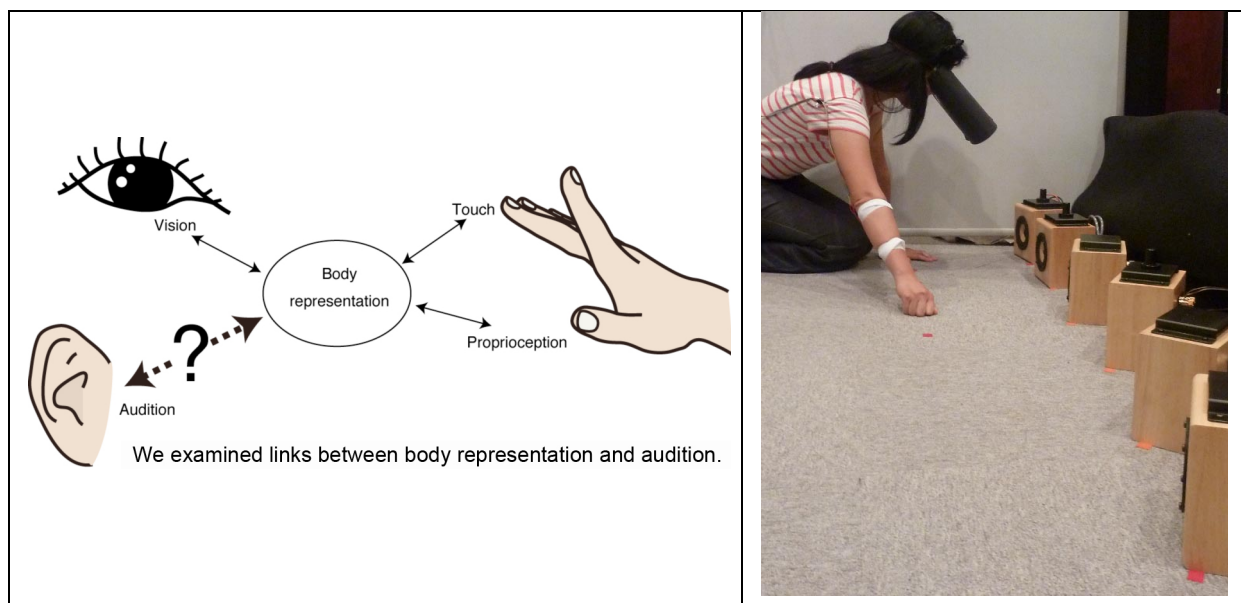


Figure 1 Experimental hypothesis and setup

Thanks to this collaboration, we acquired new research methods and skills, developed our specialized research expertise and importantly, consolidated a lasting research network. During the research period, I had the opportunity to interact, exchange ideas and work together with other members and visitor researchers at the host institution. I also attended two major international conferences, which provided an excellent opportunity to interact with many researchers in my field from Japan and other parts of the world: the meeting of the *Association for the Scientific Study of Consciousness*, in which I had an oral presentation, and the meeting of the *International Society for Research on Emotion*.

Coming to Japan for the first time might seem a bit challenging to many, due to the language barrier and the big cultural differences. However, during my stay in Japan I received a great support from my colleagues at the host institution, and everybody I met was so kind to me and so willing to help, that my everyday life was easy and very enjoyable. The host institution arranged for me accommodation and office space, and made sure I had everything I needed. During my stay I met plenty of nice people with whom I spent a great time inside and outside work. At the host institution I joined a group that introduced some Japanese traditions to foreign researchers: Japanese drums, flower arrangement, dressing kimono, Japanese cuisine, etc. The host institution was in Atsugi, Kanagawa, a beautiful region and a great location to explore Japan: close to Tokyo (about 40 min), but also to the other three previous capitals in Japan (Kamakura, Kyoto and Nara); a visit to them gives a good overview of the traditional Japan. It is also close to the sea and to the impressive Fuji-san, to which everybody should climb at least once in life.

I would like to thank to JSPS for this exceptional opportunity, and the people at the host institution, specially my collaborator Dr. Norimichi Kitagawa, for their kindness, great discussions and invaluable help. This has been an enriching work and personal experience, which has set the basis for a lasting research collaboration and friendship.



Figure 2 With my colleagues (and a guest) in Japan