



Liverpool Language Lab

How do children learn language? Find out with us!

Happy New Year and welcome to the fourth edition of the Liverpool Language Lab newsletter! We'd like to say a big thank you to everyone who has taken part in our studies over the last year. 2022 was an exciting year for us and we wanted to give our Liverpool Language Lab families an update on what we've been getting up to.

Recruiting now!

Have your details changed since you signed up? If so, please email us on childlng@liverpool.ac.uk so that we can update them!

We're always looking for local families to sign up to our database so that we can contact you when a study comes up that is suitable for your child's age. If you or anyone you know has a child aged 0-5 and would be interested in being contacted about our studies, you can sign up online, by phone or by emailing us:



<http://www.language05.co.uk/take-part.html>



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Spotlight on... EEG



Our research has been back in full swing this summer - especially now that we have our new EEG experiment to give us more exciting insights on how your babies learn language! EEG is an easy and safe technique used to detect and measure electrical brain activity. It is used widely with both adults and children, but our research is focusing on whether prediction, the ability to guess what's coming next, plays a role in your child's language learning process. The EEG cap is soaked in a warm solution and then popped on your baby's head whilst they watch some familiar faces like Pingu and Mickey Mouse! Whilst watching these videos your child will listen to made-up words and complex sounds, with the EEG system recording how they respond to these. This data will help our researchers see how your child reacts to different stimuli – whether this be learned words or brand new ones. We're currently recruiting for an EEG study too – see below!

Studies for Recruitment!



6-9m



Can babies guess what they will hear next when others are talking?

Adults are normally quite good at predicting what their conversation partners are going to say for example if we hear 'roast pota...' we can usually guess that 'to' is coming next, but can babies do the same? This study will be looking at whether babies can guess the ending of newly learned words. It will involve wearing an EEG cap while watching some fun cartoons and listening to new and familiar words.

Studies take 90 mins max!

6-9m

Is that a word? Finding words in Italian.

This study looks at how infants use patterns they hear in fluent speech to help them find individual words. Your child will come into the lab and listen to some fluent Italian speech and using our eye-tracker we will be able to see which words from the speech your child likes to listen to the most and see which patterns help children to find words.



Travelling by car? We have parking!

18-24m



Where's the dog? Studying how quickly children look at a picture after hearing it's name.

Children are really good at learning words and matching pictures with the words they hear and we have found that children show a preference for looking at pictures of words they are familiar with. In this study we will have children come into the lab and show them 2 pictures on a screen and using an eye-tracker we will be monitoring how quickly they switch to look at the word they hear. We are interested in seeing whether children will switch their attention more quickly when they hear a word made up of sounds that are more commonly heard than words that are made up of sounds that don't often go together.

You will receive a love2shop voucher for your time!



Language Lab On Tour



Anna Brown



We wave a bittersweet goodbye to Anna this year, who has been with the Liverpool Language Lab for 7 years, since the second year of her undergraduate, through her Masters and PhD. She has worked on the Language 0-5 project amongst lots of other studies, as well as providing countless hours of valuable support for everyone in the lab. Even those of us who have only been here for a short time are grateful for her. While we are sad to see her go, we congratulate her on finishing her PhD here and wish her the best as she goes to study language development in at the University of York. She will be joining a project funded by the Nuffield foundation that aims to investigate early life language experiences and its relationship with family background and various outcomes in the lives of children. She would like to thank all the families and baby scientists that have visited to take part in her research.

Liam Blything

Our researcher Liam Blything will be kicking off his first 2 months of 2023 as a visiting scholar to The Department of Linguistics of The University of Texas at Austin, USA! The overarching aim of the visit is to develop computer models that simulate aspects of children's learning and use of pronouns. More specifically, Liam will aim to train with cutting edge language learning models. The goal will be to eventually model the results of the adult and child experiments that Liam has been running. Anyone who has spoken to Liam recently will tell you he is extremely excited about the learning on offer, networking, and the experiences that await. He will be writing a blog about his work so far and his time in the US, but if you cannot wait, here's a blog he wrote in 2021 about some of the (different) work he did with pronouns prior to joining.

LuCiD:<http://www.lucid.ac.uk/news-events-blog/blogs/howchildren-and-adults-understand-pronouns/>



TEXAS

The University of Texas at Austin

Hannah Sawyer

Our PhD student Hannah has just spent the last 6 months in America collecting data for the final study of her PhD. She went to Purdue University in Indiana where she collaborated with the Child Language Lab to run a study looking at why children sometimes use verbs incorrectly in their speech. The study involved running a sentence repetition task where children were required to listen to sentences and repeat them back to the best of their ability. She had a great time gaining experience in a new lab (and enjoyed the sunshine) but is happy to be back and is looking forward to getting the data analysed soon!



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Marilia Costa

Marilia is a Professor at the Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro, based in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. She is here under a Junior Visiting Professor overseas grant of the Institutional Internationalization Program from the Coordination of Improvement of Higher Education Personnel (CAPES), foundation of the Brazilian Ministry of Education (MEC), a Brazilian funding agency. Marilia is the head of the SOPA-Lab, a research group on Sign and Oral languages in Psycholinguistics and Acquisition. The group has a page on Instagram – @sopa_lab – where one may find videos on Brazilian Sign Language (Libras) to encourage families of deaf children to learn Libras to better communicate with their children. She is currently working on the morphology of Brazilian Sign Language and researching the impact of the pandemic on deaf and hearing Brazilian children learning Brazilian Portuguese. She will be here with us until the end of March working with Dr. Brusini on an analysis of an EEG study on two-year-olds' knowledge of verbs.

If you'd like to find out more about our Liverpool Language Lab team, head to our website!

Language Lab Out & About

School Visits

In the lead-up to Christmas, we have been lucky enough to have had visits from two local sixth form English Language classes. Members from Calderstones School and Archbishop Blanch School, looking to further their understanding about child development, spent an afternoon in the Language Lab. The team walked them through the stages of child language development, from simple sounds to complex grammar, and how we test this. Then the class was introduced to the eye-tracker, as well as a range of standardised tests used in the lab. Overall, it was a great experience helping students grasp in practice what they had only read about in their textbooks and classrooms.



Recruitment

As we have tried to rebuild our database following COVID, our researchers have been out and about, meeting all of you and your little scientists! It has been such a privilege to interact with all the families in the community, speaking about how COVID has affected everyone differently, but with hope that it is all slowly getting better. Anna, Heather, Jess, and Audred have re-learned the alphabet in Teeny Tiny Theatre sessions at Big You Little You, found toy treasure at West Kirby URC and Beautiful New Beginnings playgroups, made superhero masks at crafts sessions in the Liverpool Cathedral, and more. We not only recommend going to these sessions, but we're also looking forward to seeing you there again!



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Liverpool Language Lab



@liverpoollanguagelab

