

Liverpool Language Lab

Welcome to the first edition of the Liverpool Language Lab newsletter! We are really grateful to everyone who has already helped with our studies and look forward to meeting more of you soon.

Read on for more information about the studies we have been running and the new ones that are coming up!

The Liverpool Language Lab and Peppa Pig visit Liverpool city centre

Earlier this year, you may have spotted members of the Liverpool Language Lab team in Liverpool city centre with a very special guest. We were very lucky to have Peppa Pig come along to help us; she loved splashing in the muddy puddles and having her photograph taken with lots of interesting people throughout the day—check out our Facebook page for pictures of Peppa with some of the people she met! We had a great response and lots of new families signed up to help us out with our studies.

The work that we do here in the Liverpool Language Lab is only possible with your help, and as children are always growing up, we are always on the look-



out for new families to sign up.

We are interested in finding out more about how children learn to talk and have lots of studies that you could take part in. Many of our studies with babies, toddlers and pre-schoolers take place here at the

University, but there are things you can do at home. Your children may also take part in one of our studies at school or at your local Children's Centre.

We know that keeping children entertained can be tricky, so we design our studies to be fun and engaging. Often, they involve looking at pictures on a TV screen or playing games with one of our researchers. If you know anyone who would be interested in taking part in our studies, they can find out more on our [website](#), email us at, childlng@liverpool.ac.uk, or look us up on Facebook.

Reading Together Project



We know that reading with children helps them learn to talk. We also know that it helps them to do well in school. What we don't know though, is why! This is the aim of the Reading Together Project.

The Reading Together project has been running for a year, and so far, we have worked with 165 families, visiting them at home, in

nurseries, and at Children's Centres all over Merseyside.

We'll use the findings to give parents and nurseries tips on how to help support children's language development through reading.

We still need more families to take part so if you, or someone you know, has a child aged 2 ½ to 3 years old, please get in touch.

Our email address is, reading@liverpool.ac.uk

We'd like to say a massive thank you to all the families who have taken part in the Reading Together Project already. We really appreciate all your help and we're looking forward to sharing the findings with you next year... watch this space!

Story Starters needs you!

In April, we launched 'Story Starters' - a collaborative project with our partners [Beanstalk](#) and [Dolly Parton's Imagination Library](#). The project aims to give children the positive support they need to start school ready to learn to read.

Sadly, far too many young children are starting primary school without the basic language and literacy skills to succeed. Story Starters hopes to change this and ensure young children have the skills, support, and confidence to enjoy the perfect first chapter in their lives.

**Falling in love
with reading
unlocks the
door to a
better future**



Story Starters

Beanstalk
Merseyside Community Foundation



LuCiD
Liverpool University



Could you be a Story Starters volunteer?

Beanstalk are looking for Story Starters volunteers to deliver fun and inspiring one-to-one sessions in preschools all over Merseyside.

How does it work?

You'll support three children aged 3-5 years old on a one-to-one basis, using play and stories to develop and enrich their use of language.

You'll receive professional training

and support to ensure that you are best able to support young children.

How can I find out more?

Find out more information by visiting the [Story Starters Website](#) or by contacting Alexia on 0845 450 0301.

Many Babies - a global study looking at infants' speech preferences.

The Liverpool Language Lab is really excited to be involved in the Many Babies Project.

This project is a global study finding out more about children's preference for some types of speech over others.

There are around 60 different universities from around the world taking part in this project, and we're all trying to answer some big questions: Are there differences between children in different countries?

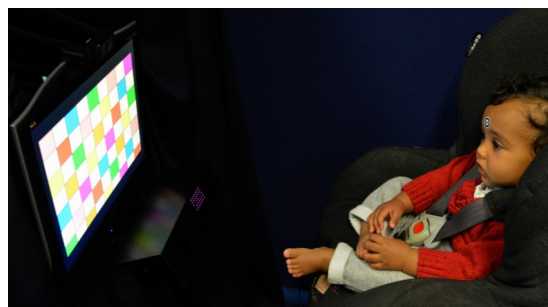
Do monolingual and bilingual children behave differently? And do we find the same results using different techniques in different labs?

Claire Noble and Samantha Durrant were awarded funding for Anna Brown to work on this project. The children will sit in a chair in front of a computer screen and we will record how long they look at a colourful checkerboard pattern on the screen while listening to two

different types of speech.

Anna will be contacting parents of children aged from 6 to 9 months and 12 to 15 months over the summer to take part, so you may well hear from her soon.

If you would like to find out more or take part in this study email childling@liv.ac.uk or visit our website www.language05.co.uk



Reading for Pleasure



The Reader



CONNECT
REALISE
CHANGE

The Reader is an organisation that runs a number of shared reading groups in the community encouraging and promoting reading for pleasure in both adults and children.

Jamie Lingwood and The Reader have been working in nursery schools across Liver-

pool on a project which aims to learn more about how to encourage parents and children to read together.

In this project, parents and their three- and four-year old children came along to a series of eight weekly reading groups at their child's nursery

where they took part in book reading, nursery rhymes, and craft activities together.

The groups were well attended and at the end of the eight weeks, parents told us that they and their children had enjoyed the sessions.

How babies communicate before they start talking

We've been working with our colleagues in Manchester to find out why (and how) babies use gestures to let us know what they want before they can say many words.

Previous studies have found that babies start pointing at around 12 months. In this study we looked at some of the extra gestures babies use like holding out objects and

giving them to people as well as pointing gestures.

The study showed that babies aged 10 months were already trying to engage with their parents by holding out objects to them. It was also the case that the babies whose parents responded to these holdout and give gestures by talking about the object the baby was interested in, pointed more

frequently around their first birthday.

These findings highlight that how we communicate with babies before they are talking can influence how their language develops.

Read more <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2016-11-babies-gestures-key-theyll.html>.



Learning different languages

When learning language, children tend to make mistakes with some verbs more than others. If we want to understand why, it is important to look at children learning different languages, since the same structure can appear in many different ways.

For instance, while only a handful of different endings are possible for a verb in Eng-

lish (e.g., *plays, played, playing*), other languages are much more complex, with as many as fifty different possible endings, depending on things like the particular verb being used or the person being referred to!

To understand the role of different languages in how children learn verb endings, Sonia Granlund and Dr. Ben Am-

bridge from the Liverpool Language Lab have been working together with Felix Engelmann and Joanna Kolak from Manchester to examine Finnish, Estonian and Polish children's learning errors.

Highlighting the importance of looking at learners all over the world, they found that the factors influencing children's learning (like how often they

hear the specific structure and how many similar sounding structures there are in the language) work differently in the three different languages.



