

# Liverpool Language Lab

Welcome to the fourth edition of the Liverpool Language Lab newsletter!

We want to say a big thank you to all of the families who came to visit us before lockdown and for everyone's continued support of the lab.

Whilst we haven't been able to work inside the Language Lab for a while, we've been really busy behind the scenes working on some new exciting projects ready for when it is safe to reopen.

Read on for more information about what we've been up to over the past year and to find out what to expect when we're able to invite families back to the lab again.

## Take part in our studies!



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've had a recent addition to the family or know anyone with a child aged 0-5, you can sign up to hear about our studies online or by emailing us:

- <http://www.language05.co.uk/take-part.html>
- [childlng@liverpool.ac.uk](mailto:childlng@liverpool.ac.uk)

Have your details changed since you signed up? If so please email us on [childlng@liverpool.ac.uk](mailto:childlng@liverpool.ac.uk) so that we can update them!

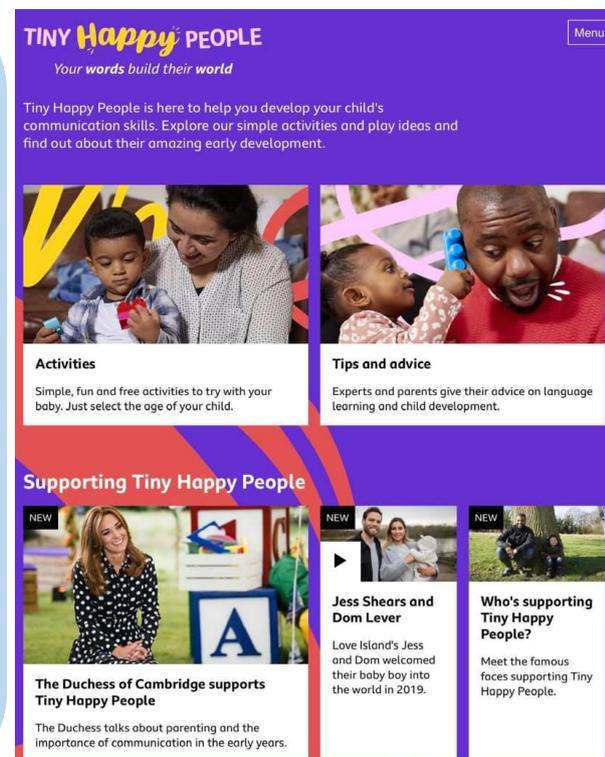
## BBC Tiny Happy People

We were really excited when BBC Tiny Happy People launched their website back in July. Their aim is to help parents develop their child's language and communication skills through a range of activities, tips and advice which support early language development.

Dr. Michelle Peter who worked with us on the Language 0-5 Project presents the best of Tiny Happy People's home activities which range from getting your baby moving to creative fun with your little ones. You can watch one of Michelle's videos here—<https://www.bbc.co.uk/tiny-happy-people/babies-discover-peekaboo/z7kxgwx>

All of the resources on the website are based on expert advice and evidence from studies like the ones we run here at the Language Lab. You can explore lots of different questions about how children learn language under the 'Science and Facts' page.

Want to find out more about Tiny Happy People? Head to their website - <https://www.bbc.co.uk/tiny-happy-people>



**TINY Happy PEOPLE**  
Your words build their world

Tiny Happy People is here to help you develop your child's communication skills. Explore our simple activities and play ideas and find out about their amazing early development.

**Activities**  
Simple, fun and free activities to try with your baby. Just select the age of your child.

**Tips and advice**  
Experts and parents give their advice on language learning and child development.

**Supporting Tiny Happy People**

**NEW** **The Duchess of Cambridge supports Tiny Happy People**  
The Duchess talks about parenting and the importance of communication in the early years.

**NEW** **Jess Shears and Dom Lever**  
Love Island's Jess and Dom welcomed their baby boy into the world in 2019.

**NEW** **Who's supporting Tiny Happy People?**  
Meet the famous faces supporting Tiny Happy People.

# Studies at the Language Lab this year

## Language 0-6

We mentioned in our last newsletter that the Language 0-5 project will become Language 0-6. We are excited to announce this project is now up and running! In the Language 0-5 project, we followed over 80 children from when they were 6 months old up to 4 years and 6 months. We learned lots about the many factors that were involved in their language development. Now we are investigating how all of these early language development skills relate to learning to read.

Originally, we had planned to run our sessions with children in school. We are now running our sessions online where we meet over video call to read stories and play games together. These stories and games are very similar to school activities and so far, we have found everyone has been enjoying the sessions.



Since we have had a bit of a delay starting off, parents who took part in the Language 0-5 project can still sign up to continue! If you want to get involved again, send us an email at [lang05@liverpool.ac.uk](mailto:lang05@liverpool.ac.uk). You can also join our Facebook group where we regularly have Q&As as well as posts about language and literacy development— <https://www.facebook.com/groups/176319777028546>.

## Words and Object Learning study



In the last newsletter, Anna introduced her PhD looking at how babies learn about objects and their labels. She designed a study that used our eye tracker to measure whether babies would remember objects hidden behind a screen, when these objects were shown with different noises. This year, Anna was able to welcome a few baby scientists into the lab and would like to thank those families who took part.

This study has been put on pause until the lab reopens but Anna has still had a busy lockdown creating an online study looking at adult's object recognition. She is also planning some new and exciting infant studies for when we return!

## Learning Through Imitation study

In the last newsletter, Hannah also introduced her PhD investigating how children learn to use different verb forms correctly. The initial plan was to run a variety of language games in the lab but, like many other studies, this has now been postponed.

Instead, Hannah is now conducting a corpus analysis into this question. This involves going through lots of data of children's speech and seeing whether the errors they make can be predicted by adult's speech. Hopefully Hannah will be able to run some studies soon for children aged 3 to 5 so keep your eyes peeled for any updates from the Language Lab!



Interested in taking part in Anna or Hannah's study? Email us at [childlng@liverpool.ac.uk](mailto:childlng@liverpool.ac.uk)

If you have a child approaching **9 months old**, please email us with the subject 'Words and Object Learning study'.

If you have a child **aged 3-5**, please email us with the subject 'Learning through Imitation study'.

# Looking to the year ahead

## NEW STUDY! Speed of Processing study

Beth and Heather will be running this study with 2-year-old children to find out why children who respond faster to familiar words have bigger vocabularies. We will be inviting 2-year-old children to visit us at the Language Lab and sit in front of a computer screen and a piece of equipment called an eye tracker. They will watch some pairs of pictures on the screen and hear one of them named. We are interested in how quickly children look to the picture that is named and whether this is affected by how familiar the word is to them. Afterwards, they will play a language game where they will hear some funny-sounding words and then have to repeat them back to Beth or Heather. We're just in the process of making this study and can't wait to get it up and running!



## NEW STUDY! Eye Tracking and EEG study

Lewis will be running this study with 9–14-month-old infants to investigate how well young infants understand words they encounter in their day to day life. In the first part of the study, infants will sit in front of the eye tracker whilst they view pairs of images and hear one of them named.

The second study involves EEG which is completely harmless and measures electrical activity in the brain via a rubber EEG cap. Infants will sit in front of a screen and see a series of images. These images will be paired with either their correct name, or an incorrect name and we want to see if electrical activity differs between these two types of pairings.

Interested in taking part in Beth and Heather's or Lewis' study? Email us at [childlng@liverpool.ac.uk](mailto:childlng@liverpool.ac.uk)

If you have a child who will be **turning 2 next year**, please email us with the subject 'Speed of Processing study'.

If you have a child who is **aged 9-14 months**, please email with us with the subject 'Eye Tracking and EEG study'

## Our new staff at the Liverpool Language Lab

### Heather Turnbull

I have been working at the Language Lab for the past three years on a range of projects including Language 0-5, Language 0-6 and Word Learning. During my Masters and PhD I will be looking at whether babies can learn sounds which appear together in speech, and whether they can use this knowledge to learn words. My studies will be for 8 to 12-month-old children and will use eye tracking. Eye tracking is a really great way to help me find out which sounds infants like to listen to the most. I will be posting more about my research on our social media pages in the coming months so keep a look out for any exciting updates!

### Dr. Andrew Jessop

After spending two years working at a research institute in The Netherlands, I have come back home to Liverpool to start a new project building computational models of how children learn their first language. This project is only possible thanks to our Language 0-5 families. Our team have transcribed recordings of parents talking with their children, which gives us an insight into the language that babies hear in their everyday life and how they use this input to learn how to talk. We will be presenting these transcripts to a computer program that imitates the way we think babies learn language. We can then test this model by comparing the results with the behaviour of the real babies that visit our lab. I am excited to start work on this project and I will hopefully have some interesting updates for you in future newsletters.

