

Leeds Child Development Unit

Spring 2018 Newsletter

Welcome to the Spring 2018 edition of our newsletter! It's here to update you on what our researchers have been up to, and what you can do to help the Unit go from strength to strength! Our research is only possible with your help so if you know of anyone who might want to take part in our projects, please direct them to our [website](#) - see the bottom of this page.

Many Babies!

Throughout summer 2017, we worked with 20 families with 12-to-15 month-old children as part of an international project involving over 60 labs.

Research shows that babies and young children pay more attention to speech with higher pitch and exaggerated intonation. This is sometimes referred to as child-directed speech, motherese, or baby talk. This can help with early language learning such as separating words and phrases, as well as helping babies understand when they are being spoken to. The *ManyBabies* project investigates the strength of this effect, and how it varies between babies, languages, and cultures. For more information, see the [ManyBabies project page](#).

We have completed the eye-tracking part of the study and are now following up our families by asking them to tell us which words their child produces and understands. To do this, we're using the [Oxford Communicative Development Inventory](#) - a widely used tool in vocabulary research. This will help us understand how child-directed speech might affect children's language at 18 and 24 months.



Bedtime Stories

Since Summer 2017, we have been working with parents of children aged 3 to 4 years to discover what is the best time of night to be reading bedtime stories to their little ones.

Research has shown that school age children remember new words better after a night's sleep and that nursery age children remember more new words from stories read to them if they have a nap afterwards. We adapted this research so that it was more like real life, with parents reading stories to their children either at bedtime or breakfast time. We wanted to know when was the best time of the day for parents to read with their children to maximise their learning and memory for new words.

We have now finished recruiting families for this project and we would like to thank all the families who took part, we had some lovely feedback about our storybooks. We will shortly begin analysing the data to see what time of day was best for learning new words during shared story book reading!



Who's New @ the LCDU?

[Dr Jamie Lingwood](#)

I am a language development researcher. My research is broadly focused on how we can design, implement and evaluate evidence-based interventions to foster children's language development.

Rachael Staunton

Rachael graduated with a BA (Hons) in German and Linguistics from Leeds in 2015 and has since worked with adults with residual communication difficulties following a stroke. She is now working towards her MA by Research in Linguistics with Dr Cat Davies.



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New Research !

[Children's experience, understanding, and use of adjectives across the socioeconomic spectrum.](#)



This project is designed to reveal how the socioeconomic background of children might interact with their understanding of descriptive language.

Cat and Jamie will use analyses of parents interacting with their children, eye-tracking experiments, and a randomised controlled trial to investigate this. Running until 2021, we hope that the research will lead to recommendations for families and practitioners working with children facing challenges with adjectives and other descriptive language tools.



Bilingual Exposure

In an ongoing study, Dr Ekaterini Klepousniotou and her PhD student, Lydia Gunning are investigating whether the amount of exposure a bilingual or multilingual child receives in their home language (or languages) can affect language development and academic attainment. Novel questionnaires and assessment tools have been specifically developed for this project. The data will help us not only identify children who are struggling at school due to their language experience, but will also increase our knowledge of how best to support bilingual and multilingual children so they can perform to the best of their abilities in the classroom.

LCDU is Turning 2!

The Leeds CDU growing up and will soon turn two years old! On top of this, we are heading towards celebrating our 300th family to join our database. We love working with all of you—THANK YOU for all of your invaluable assistance.



Please remember that we are always on the look out for new families to join our family here at Leeds CDU. If you know of anyone who may be interested please send them our way!



Why We Contact You

The research we do is very specific and so the children we work with have to be of an age that matches exactly what we are looking for. If we don't contact you for a certain study it's probably because, unfortunately, your child just isn't the right age. In addition, multilingualism may also be a reason as to why your family is not asked to participate. Often, we are looking for children who are monolingual as learning to understand how a child learns and is affected by one language is already very complex. However, we do use multilingual children in some investigations if that is what we are specifically looking at. Whether we contact you is all down to whether you fit the criteria we need for our research. However, we are often unable to contact families due to their contact details being outdated. We try our best to get in touch with you through phone and email but if *any of your details have changed then do not hesitate to contact us*. In addition, if you wish to be taken off the database then please contact us. We'd be very sad to see you go!

And Why We Don't

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FAQs about Language Learning

Q: I'm worried that my child is late to talk or has some difficulty with language

A: *There is no 'right' moment for a child to start to talk. Just like potty training, walking, and reading, it varies from child to child. This link has some useful information:* <https://speechbloguk.com/help-toddler-isnt-talking/>

Q: I think my child may need to see a speech and language therapist. What is the next step?

A: [The Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists website](http://www.rcsl.org.uk) is the place to go for advice on this matter. They provide professional, accurate information about seeking an SLT.

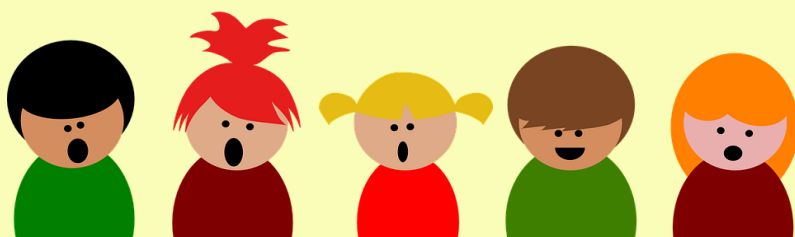
Q: What can I do to encourage my child's language development?

A: *There are some things you can do to help your child's language development, for example making sure you have your child's attention before talking to them so they are focused. The websites below give you lots of tips and suggestions:*

<http://www.lucid.ac.uk/resources/for-parents/>

<https://www.nct.org.uk/parenting/how-can-parents-encourage-language-development>

Please head over to our [website](http://www.lucid.ac.uk) if you want to read more about some of the Frequently Asked Questions surrounding child language development. Our website also has links so you can learn lots more about our research and about language development more generally.



Useful Resources !

I CAN's [Talking Point](http://www.iccan.org.uk) website has loads of amazing free resources to help any parents/carers of children with speech, language and communication needs.

The Communication Trust's resources for parents and families:
www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk

Resources for parents and families from the National Literacy Trust: <https://literacytrust.org.uk/>

LuCiD's videos on how children learn language and communication:
www.lucid.ac.uk/resources/for-parents/child-language-talks/

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