Dear all,

Thank you for your continued interest in the Child Language Lab. It has been an eventful quarter, with over 40 families coming in to participate in our studies since July. We have welcomed 2 new research fellows and 2 new research assistants into our team, and are looking forward to seeing many more families come through our doors over the school holidays.

We currently have several studies for 5 and 6 year-olds, with more on the horizon, so if you're looking for school holiday activities, please get in touch or visit our website for more information.

And of course, we still have a need for many 18 month-olds, as well as 2 and 3 year-olds. Please pass the word along to family and friends who might be interested in participating.

We are also looking for Mandarin-speaking children who have recently begun learning English. It is exciting to be able to include studies on languages other than English so please spread the word to your Mandarin-speaking friends!

This quarter, the Child Language Lab joined Facebook! We have enjoyed connecting with you in this way and having a social media presence. If you have not yet visited our page, please have a look and "like" us to keep updated with our lab and relevant language issues. We always love to hear from you, so please feel free to comment on our posts, share photos of your experience, or 'check in' when you come for our studies.

Thank you again for your involvement, and your contributions to science. We look forward to meeting more of you throughout the next quarter!

Best regards,
Welcoming our new Research Fellows

In August, we welcomed Elaine Schmidt and Carmen Kung into the Child Language Lab team. We are delighted to have Elaine and Carmen as part of our team here at the Child Language Lab.

Elaine joins us from the UK, where she recently completed her PhD thesis on the bilingual acquisition of prosody at the University of Cambridge, England.

Carmen joins us from the Netherlands, where she has been examining on-line speech comprehension in Cantonese Chinese, for her PhD thesis at Radboud University Nijmegen, the Netherlands.

Together with lab director Prof. Katherine Demuth, Elaine and Carmen will be working on the bilingual acquisition of lexical stress using EEG. They will also be investigating the perception of prosodic boundaries and the interaction between prosody, focus and semantics with MEG technology.

Look out for their studies <<here>> on our website!

Introducing Research Assistant, Amy German

Beyond words: learning to use intonation

5-6 yr-olds
Meaning isn't all about the words you use - it's also the way you use them! We want to find out how children are using words. Take home a $40 Coles/Myer gift card!
Hi, I’m Amy! I work as a research assistant at the Child Language Lab. A research assistant helps a researcher with running studies and collecting language data, as well as data analysis.

I very much enjoy interacting with you and your children on a day-to-day basis.

I have a keen interest in the mechanisms by which children acquire language, especially in connection with bilingualism and the multilingualism of Australia. Prior to commencing a Masters of Research here at Macquarie University, I am going to tour Australia and visit many language centers to learn about the documentation and revitalization of Indigenous Australian languages.

I would like to thank Prof. Katherine Demuth and the CLL team for all the support and encouragement, and all our wonderful participants for taking the time to get involved in our research. I’m looking forward to seeing more of you over the school holiday period!

Amy is currently helping conduct the Beyond Words and Children’s Connected Speech studies for 5.5-6.5 year-olds.

Conversations with Researchers
Professor Katherine Demuth in the research spotlight

From This Week at Macquarie University
28 July 2014

What would be an ‘elevator pitch’ of your research area?

My research looks at the processes underlying language acquisition in children. One can address this by looking at how children learn different languages (e.g. English versus Mandarin), how they perform on experiments in the lab, or by examining what goes on in the brain when they listen to language. Thus, the study of language acquisition is at the interface of many different disciplines, including linguistics, psychology, cognitive science, neuroscience, and even computational linguistics.

In layman’s terms, what is the wider impact of your research?

Much of our research provides a baseline for understanding how children’s language typically emerges. This is critical for providing insight into what goes wrong in children with language delay (also called Specific Language Impairment (SLI)), and how this might be clinically addressed. It can also inform the design of more effective therapy for children with hearing loss, and can help identify problems that bilingual children learning English might face.

In ten years’ time, I see my research...

In 10 years time we will hopefully have a much better idea of what typical language acquisition looks like, and a better understanding of how to address different language problems when they appear.

But to carry out this research we need lots of child participants, and parents and grandparents willing to bring them into our lab in the new Australian Hearing Hub. If you are interested, please send an email to ling.cll@mq.edu.au.

Read the full interview here >>

Conference Fever

Researcher Qandeel Hussein speaks about the recent EU conference season

What is your area of research?

I am a PhD student working at the Child Language Lab. I am interested in acoustic phonestics and articulatory phonology. Currently, I am working on the coronal obstruents of Punjabi, using acoustic and articulatory methods.

Why are conferences important?

Conferences allow researchers internationally to get together and discuss ideas and plans for future research.

For example this year my abstract was accepted for a poster presentation at the 14th Conference on Laboratory Phonology (LabPhon) hosted by the National Institute for Japanese Language and Linguistics (NINJAL), in Tokyo. I always wanted to present my research work at LabPhon because this is the best conference for bringing together many of the leading phonologists and phoneticians.

I really enjoy talking to people about my research, and receiving feedback. People were interested in how I analysed the data and what acoustic measures I used to investigate the contrast between Punjabi retroflexes and dentals.

Do you have time to see the sights?

Well I did find time to see some other research labs! After attending the 22nd Manchester Phonology Meeting, in England, I was able to visit some phonetics labs in Europe, including Dr. Adamantios Gafos’ lab in Berlin, where I discussed future experiments that I’m planning to conduct using EMA (electromagnetic articulograph). I also was able to fly to Paris to visit the phonetics lab at Universite Sorbonne Nouvelle - Paris 3 to present my research to the members of the lab there. So that was really valuable!
Upcoming Events

Workshop
Dec 8-9 2014
Register Online
The role of prosody in language learning: stress, tone and intonation
Australian Hearing Hub
Macquarie University

The use of stress, tone, and/or intonation varies widely across languages, and is important for separating words within speech, learning vocabulary and sentence structuring rules, and using language functionally in conversation. Using prosody correctly in everyday speech is critical to becoming a competent speaker of any language.

This free public workshop will bring together researchers working on various aspects of stress, tone and intonation to discuss how these prosodic cues are exploited by learners, and put to use in language comprehension and production.

Learn more and register online >>

Recent Events

Australian Hearing Hub Open House a success!
To celebrate Hearing Awareness Week, the partner organisations of the Australian Hearing Hub (AHH) hosted an open house event on Saturday August 23.

The event was opened by the Minister for

Bilingual Workshop brings international experts together
The August 8 bilingual workshop, sponsored by the Centre for Language Sciences (CLaS) and the ARC Centre of Excellence in Cognition and its Disorders (CCD), was a great collaborative event for researchers.

Come and see us at the Baby and Toddler Show at the end of the month! There will be additional appearances by Peppa Pig and Ben & Holly from Ben & Holly’s Little Kingdom.

We will be right near the Main Stage, making our famous balloon animals, and very close to Pinky McKay and the event face painters, so it promises to be a lot of fun!

Book in for one of our school holiday studies and receive a free ticket* to the Show!

*tickets are limited so get in fast!
Health and Medical Research, The Hon. Jillian Skinner MP, who described The Australian Hearing Hub as "a great example of collaboration...[working] to positively impact people’s lives."

The event attracted nearly 300 people, who were given the opportunity to receive free hearing tests, tour the facilities, and hear talks from Hearing Hub researchers.

Children had fun on the jumping castle, face painting and doing arts and crafts.

<<See more here>>

Click above to see slide presentations from the day by Lab Coordinator Katherine Revius (how we study language), and colleagues Prof. Harvey Dillon (hearing in the classroom) and A. Prof. Genevieve McArthur (dyslexia).

Talks and discussions brought together researchers looking at different aspects of bilingual language acquisition. Research studies and techniques ranged from electroencephalographic (EEG) measures of bilingual brain responses, to investigating bilingual child acquisition of English sounds and word forms using eye-tracking and audio recordings.

This interdisciplinary event helped to compare and bring together results from various different arenas to strengthen bilingual research.

View the full program <<here>>

The next workshop will be on the role of prosody in language learning, on December 8-9.

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