FALL 2016

Language & Cognitive Development Lab

UC Berkeley

Letter of Thanks

Dear Families, Teachers, and Directors,

Thank you very much for participating in our research this past semester! Our research is made possible by the generosity of families and communities like yours, and we greatly appreciate your support.

Our research focuses on how children learn different aspects of language, what this might tell us about the nature of cognitive and social development, and how these different aspects of development interact. This newsletter highlights some of the studies that your child or student may have participated in over the past year and gives an overview of our current findings.

If you have any questions about our projects, please feel free to contact us at (510)-664-4494 or lcdlab@berkeley.edu.

Best wishes,

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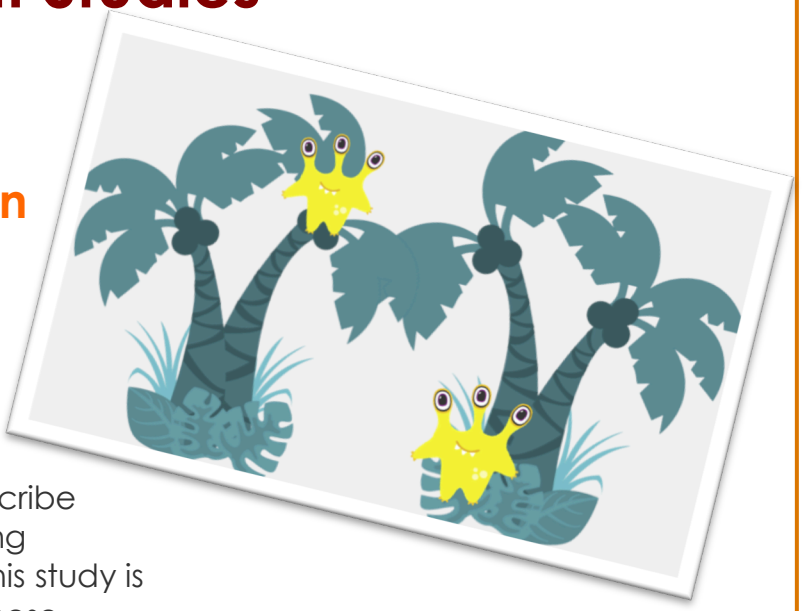
Current Studies



Spatial Metaphor Extension

In this study, we are examining how children form associations between different physical dimensions and the role that metaphors may play in this process. For example, we frequently use spatial language to describe time and pitch (e.g.,"she went on a long vacation" or "she sang a high note"). This study is exploring how spatial metaphors like these affect how children think and reason about these different dimensions.

Math Concept and Anxiety

While we may talk about 'math' as if it were a universally well-defined subject, people conceptualize what counts as 'math' very differently. In this study, children and adults sort a variety of activities according to whether or not they 'involve math.' For example, "does sewing involve math?" We are interested in how individuals' definitions of 'math' may relate to their anxiety about it.

How do preschoolers learn about social norms?

Preschool-aged children encounter a variety of rules regarding how they ought to behave. This study explores how children begin to distinguish between moral norms (which concern the welfare of others) and arbitrary norms (like what is an appropriate outfit for school). Children play a game with a puppet, "Max," who breaks an explicit rule. We explore how children judge Max's action and whether they consider Max's knowledge (or lack of knowledge) about the rule when deciding how bad Max's action is. So far, we've found that preschoolers judge that Max's rule breaking is worse when he breaks a moral rule than when he breaks an arbitrary rule.

The Development of Analogical Reasoning

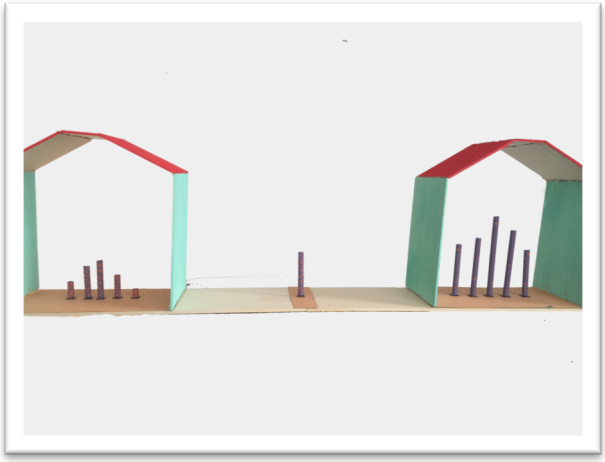
In this study, we are examining how reasoning ability develops during childhood. In particular, we are interested in how children reason about relations between different sets of items or concepts, and how children reason about relations between relations. This study uses an eye tracker to provide information about how children are acquiring and integrating information during the reasoning game.

What types of patterns do children use to help learn object names?

The ability to use a single word in multiple related ways is a feature in many languages. For example, in English the word "glass" can refer to the material "glass" and can also refer to "a glass" that one can drink out of. Our study explores whether children use this relationship between word meanings to structure their understanding of a new word. Children are introduced to a novel material (some "dax") and a new object that either shares the material name (a "dax") or does not (a "wug"). We explore whether sharing the material name leads children to categorize the object with other objects made from the same material.

Disagreeing about Relative Meaning

Children understand that some words are objective like "red" and "spotted." If two people disagree about whether an object has one of these qualities, one of the people is objectively wrong. However, for words like "pretty," disagreement should be permitted because it is based on personal opinion. Similarly, disagreement may be permitted for words like "tall" which can depend on one's experience. In this study, we explore whether children allow two puppets to disagree about whether something is "spotted," "pretty," and "tall" if the puppets have had different previous experiences.



Thank You!

We greatly appreciate all of the museums and preschools that continue to support our research. Our work would not be possible without your generosity and commitment to furthering the field of psychology!

Bay Area Discovery Museum – Habitot

Harold E. Jones Child Study Center – Lawrence Hall of Science

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