We greatly appreciate all of the infants and parents who have participated in our studies. Without you, our research would not be possible!
EXPRESSING INTENTION TO INFANTS

BY MEG MICKELSEN

In varied cultures and languages, adults speak to infants differently than they do adults. Specifically, caregivers often speak to babies in higher, more musical tones, and they exaggerate vocal cues that communicate intentions (Fernald, 1989), (Kuhl, 1997). These differences serve to compensate for infants’ inability to garner meaning from the syntax and vocabulary that adults rely on. For example, infants respond differently to the cooing musical sound of an adult trying to comfort their cries than they do to the lower, more abrupt tones of an adult reprimanding their cries, despite not understanding the semantic meaning of the words the adult uses.

Researchers Gregory A. Bryant and H. Clark Barrett wondered how well adults can distinguish infant directed (ID) speech from adult directed (AD) speech, and if they are able to recognize the intentions behind both types of speech when listening to an unfamiliar language. To test these questions, they recorded eight English speaking mothers talking as they would to their child with four different categories of intention (prohibition, approval, attention, and comfort). The mothers were then asked to speak as they would to an adult within the same four intention categories, creating eight separate recordings for each mother. Researchers then played these recordings to non-English speaking Shuar adults (South American horticulturalists) and asked them to distinguish whether the mothers were using ID or AD speech as well as to discern what intention category they were speaking within for both ID and AD speech.

Shuar adults were able to discriminate between ID and AD speech with a 73% accuracy, supporting the authors’ hypothesis (Bryant & Barrett, 2007). They were also able to discern the intention category in which the mothers were speaking with an accuracy of 75% when hearing ID speech and a 64% accuracy when hearing AD speech (Bryant & Barrett, 2007). This is consistent with the hypothesis that ID speech exaggerates cues expressing intentionality. Bryant and Barrett’s work is the first to show that adults from “indigenous, non-literate and non-industrialized cultures” can both discriminate between ID and AD speech spoken in an unfamiliar language, and correctly identify the intention behind both ID and AD speech spoken in an unfamiliar language (Bryant & Barrett, 2007, p. 750). Further research will be necessary to provide more insight into the factors that influence an individual’s ability to recognize the intentions of speech in an unfamiliar language.


INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS OF INFANT STUDIES

The ILP lab team presented the following projects at the 40th meeting of the International Congress of Infant Studies (ICIS) this summer in Philadelphia, PA:

**Behavioral reactions of 10-month-old infants to dynamic facial expressions**
Authors: Allie Neenan, Dr. Emily Touchstone, Mariah Fowler, & Dr. Melanie Spence

**Eye tracking 10-month-old infants viewing Static and Dynamic Facial Expressions**
Authors: Mariah Fowler, Pricilla Jacob, Dr. Emily Touchstone, & Dr. Melanie Spence

**Visual fixation patterns to multimodal infant- versus adult-directed speech by three clusters of 6-month-olds**
Authors: Dr. Kate Shepard & Dr. Melanie Spence

**Two-year-olds’ expressive vocabulary and their mouth preference at 6 months of age: Effects of modality and familiarity**
Authors: Dr. Kate Shepard & Dr. Melanie Spence

We will publish findings from these studies in our next issue of Developments and copies of the posters mentioned above on our lab website.

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CONGRATS UT DALLAS GRADUATES

DAVID JOSEPH HUGHES
B.S IN SPEECH LANGUAGE PATHOLOGY AND AUDIOLOGY

Class of 2018

ALEXANDRA NEENAN
B.S IN PSYCHOLOGY WITH MINOR IN NEUROSCIENCE
THE THINK LAB IS LOOKING FOR YOUNG SCIENTISTS!

**Eligibility:** Children ages 4 through 10 are invited to participate in our studies about how children evaluate information.

Children will play games, view pictures, and/or hear stories and will then answer questions designed to measure how they think about explanations. The child’s guardian may also be asked to fill out a few surveys (depending on the project).

**Duration/Compensation:** Testing sessions last between 30 and 60 minutes, and each family will receive either Sona credit or a $10-30 gift card as a thank you.

If you are interested in participating or have any questions, please contact us at 972-883-6075 or at utdallas.thinklab@gmail.com.

We look forward to hearing from you!

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MOTHER AND CHILD PLAY STUDY

Researchers at the University of Texas at Dallas are conducting a study to learn more about how mothers and their children talk to each other when they play together. We are looking for mothers who have a child between the ages of 4 & 6 years old to help us. The study will take about 30 minutes in which you and your child will be recorded playing together and your child will play 2 short matching games with the researcher. As a thank you for helping us out you will get a $10 gift card and a small toy. If you are interested in participating contact Yvonne Ralph at Yvonne.Ralph@utdallas.edu to learn more and schedule a time to come in.