



The Child Study Centre

UNDERSTANDING HOW CHILDREN LEARN TO TALK, PLAY AND
MAKE FRIENDS

We're thrilled to launch our newsletter!

What's inside?

- Ongoing research studies you can get involved in
- News and stories from around the Centre
- Fascinating updates from some of our latest studies

OUR CURRENT STUDIES

Complex Sentences

This online study investigates how children understand English sentences in different orders. For example "After I had breakfast, I brushed my teeth" and "I brushed my teeth after I had breakfast".

Do you have a 4.5 - 5.5 year old and want to take part?

Contact: shije.zhang@manchester.ac.uk

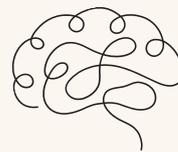


Language at home

We want to find out more about what children and parents do at home and how they use language together before children start going to school. The study is an online survey.

Do you have a 3 - 5.5 year old who is not yet attending school? Interested?

Contact: chen.zhao-2@manchester.ac.uk



Decision making study

This in-person study investigates if children make better decisions by themselves, or with others.

Do you have a decisive 4 or 5 year old? Interested?

Contact: kiara.jackson-2@manchester.ac.uk



THE CHILD STUDY CENTRE VISITS...



Manchester Museum

We've been spending a lot of time at our neighbours, Manchester Museum. In March we attended British Science Week and during school holidays we've enjoyed playing games and handing out stickers to all the children who pass by, speaking to parents and signing people up to our database.



Universally Manchester

We attended the Universally Manchester festival in June and were lucky enough to speak to lots of interested parents and little scientists. We had two mini scientists helpers on the day, giving out stickers and playing games with passers by!

Baby and Toddler Groups

We've been out and about visiting lots of different baby and toddler classes, speaking to the parents and grandparents about who we are and what we do and signing lots of mini scientists up to our important database.





STUDY UPDATES

Interaction types study



One of our PhD students, Sally Chen, recently studied how 12–16-month-old babies learn new words during play. Babies were introduced to a made-up word (like “blicket”) while interacting with toys in different ways—such as when they looked at a toy, were shown one, or shared it with an adult.

Initial results showed that babies were much better at remembering the word when they were the ones to initiate sharing the toy and heard the label during that moment. This suggests that active, child-led interaction helps babies link words to objects more effectively.



When is a cow a dog?

How children’s understanding of words changes over development.



Researchers Alissa Ferry and Katie Twomey explored how young children understand size words like bigger, smaller, and taller. When asked to build something “bigger,” 3- and 4-year-olds made constructions larger in every direction. By age 5, they understood smaller meant fewer blocks, but it wasn’t until around age 7 that they grasped taller as meaning specifically “up.”

This shows that children often start with broad meanings for words and refine them with experience—which helps explain those funny mix-ups like calling a cow a dog!



Thank you