



Tuesday 29th June 2021

Testing Language Learning Abilities in Children

Dear Parents and Guardians

St Thomas More Catholic School has been approached by Holly Jenkins, who is a PhD student at Newcastle University researching how children learn language. Holly is supervised by Dr Faye Smith, who has conducted research projects with the school previously.

We have been asked to circulate the attached advert for an online memory experiment. They are looking to recruit a range of children between the ages of 13 and 15 years old for the experiment (children in years 8, 9 and 10). The experiment is run online and the child will complete a computer task which involves remembering sequences of animal pictures that are shown on screen. Some of these sequences have a hidden pattern, which may make them easier to remember than sequences without a pattern.

The study has been approved by the ethical review board Faculty of Medical Sciences at Newcastle University. Your child is under no obligation to participate. After your child has completed the experiment, you will be emailed with a £5 amazon voucher for your child to thank them for taking part in our experiment.

If you have any questions about the survey, or you are interested in having your child take part, please email H.E.Jenkins1@newcastle.ac.uk.

Yours sincerely,

Mr J Parkinson
Head Teacher

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Online Memory Experiment for Children

Do you have a child aged **8 to 10 years** or **13 to 15 years**? We are recruiting children for an online experiment to help us find out more about how children learn language!

Your child will complete an online memory task, where they will be asked to remember sequences of pictures of animals. The experiment will take place on a **desktop/laptop computer or tablet**, and can be completed anywhere with internet connection.

The experiment takes around **40 minutes**, and breaks will be available throughout. Parents will be sent a **£5 Amazon** voucher for their child to thank them for taking part.



Interested in your child taking part?

Please email **Holly Jenkins** at h.e.jenkins1@newcastle.ac.uk for more information.



Testing language learning abilities in children

School Information Sheet

We will be using a memory task to investigate how children notice patterns or rules in sequences of pictures. Using this task we may be able to identify basic skills which children use to learn rules in language. If we understand these basic skills, we may be in a better position to understand why some children have particular difficulties learning language. The study has been approved by the Faculty of Medical Sciences ethics committee at the University of Newcastle.

Which children would we like to recruit?

We are looking to recruit children between the ages of 13 and 15 years old for this experiment (school years 8, 9 and 10).

What does the study involve?

In this experiment, the child will complete a computer task which involves remembering sequences of animal pictures that are shown on screen. Some of these sequences have a hidden pattern, which may make them easier to remember than sequences without a pattern. We are interested in finding out whether children can learn this pattern without being aware of it.

At the beginning of the experiment, the instructions will be presented on the screen for the child to read. We will also ask what their gender is and how old they are. During the experiment they will play a memory game. In this task, a series of pictures of animals will be presented on the computer screen. After these animals have disappeared, we will ask them to recreate the sequence by clicking on the animals in the order that they appeared. After they have completed the memory game, we will test how well they have learned any patterns by presenting different sequences, and asking them if these sequences fit or break the pattern, and getting them to create their own sequences. The experiment will take approximately 40 minutes to complete, and breaks will be offered throughout the study.

Who is conducting the study?

The study is run by Holly Jenkins, a PhD student at Newcastle University.

Where will the experiment take place?

The experiment will take place online, either on a desktop/laptop computer, or on a tablet.

What safeguards are there?

The study has been approved by the ethical review board Faculty of Medical Sciences at Newcastle University. The researchers will only have contact with the parent/caregiver, and will not be in contact with the child at any point. The researcher they will be in contact with (Holly Jenkins) has DBS clearance (the successor to the CRB).

Are there any risks?

We do not believe that there are any risks above and beyond normal interactions with a computer/tablet.

What if the child does not wish to participate?

The child is under no obligation to participate. They can leave the experiment at any time without giving a reason by pressing the “escape” key and closing the experiment window.

Will the child benefit from the study?

After the child has completed the experiment, we will email a £5 amazon voucher to the parent/caregiver for the child to thank them for taking part in our experiment. The data we collect will improve our understanding of how we learn language, which might help us to understand why some children have problems with language learning.

What will you do with the information?

Any information we collect will be kept on a secure online server, which stores information in line with all legal GDPR requirements. The data will also be stored on a password protected computer at Newcastle University. The child’s name will not be entered onto the database, instead we give each child an anonymous ID number. The data we collect will only be used when we write up this research, and will not be shared with anyone else. When we report the data, for example in research papers, we will not identify any individual participants, and will be analysing group performance as a whole, not the performance of individual children.

Who do I contact in case I have any queries?

Please contact Holly Jenkins at h.e.jenkins1@newcastle.ac.uk.