DALHOUSIE UNIVERSITY

Cognition and **L**anguage
Learning **R**esearch **G**roup

NEWSLETTER

Issue 3: December 2025

WHO WE ARE

Before they start talking, babies have learned a surprising amount of knowledge about the sounds, words, and grammar of their language. Within the first year of life, infants start to learn and recognize words in the spoken language around them.

At our centre in the Department of Psychology and Neuroscience at Dalhousie University, we want to understand the mechanisms that support language acquisition.

We are always looking for new participants (aged 0 - 8) and would love to have your family participate!

Contact & check us out!

Website

GCLL@dal.ca

Cognition.langauge.learning

@gcll_babygroup

General Sign-up

THE GCLL TEAM

Dr. Drew Weatherhead
Lab Director

Ayush Saha
Lab Manager

This Newsletter was made by:

Amelia MacEachen & Sara Anvari

Graduate Students

Madison MacLachlan
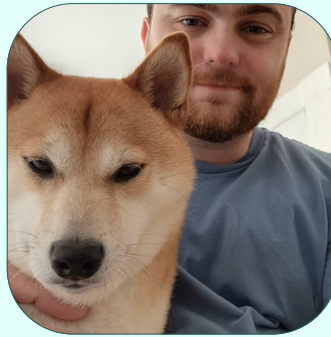**PhD Clinical Psychology**

Maura Whitman
MSc Experimental Psychology

Gabrielle Zeller
MSc Experimental Psychology

Honours Students

Luke Forsyth
Adult & Infant fNIRS

Ava Khan
Cultural Familiarity

Independent Research Project Students

Amelia MacEachen
Diversity and Social Reasoning & Language Expectations

Sophie LeBlanc
Sociolinguistic Tracking

Noa Waks
Adult & Infant fNIRS

Thank you to our dedicated volunteers: Sara Anvari, Heather Carr, Mya Goeseels, Samantha Fraser, Ankana Boruah

WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO!

Adult fNIRS

October 31

Lab manager Ayush and Owlbert dressed up for Halloween!

End of Semester Get Together!

December 7

fNIRS Demo

December 9

Our new Adult fNIRS study is up and running! This project is led by Honours student Luke Forsyth with Independent Project student Noa Waks. They have assistance from Ayush, Amelia, and Heather.

Of course, thank you to our first few participants and friends of the lab!

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Current Studies

Language Expectations

Primary Researchers: Dr. Drew Weatherhead, Madison MacLachlan

Virtual Study

15 - 20 months old

The aim of this study is to investigate how social properties (e.g., race) influence toddlers assumptions about unfamiliar individuals.

How many languages do toddlers expect others to speak?

We are looking for 15-24 month-old toddlers **learning English and another language** to participate in an online study on how many languages babies expect others to speak!

Participating families will be entered for a chance to win a $150 CAD gift card.

Click here to learn more and register!

Baby fNIRS

Primary Researchers: Dr. Drew Weatherhead, Luke Forsyth

How do babies process words?

We are looking for families with babies between the ages of **10 to 13 months old** who speak primarily English at home to participate.

After participating in the study, families will receive a $10 Amazon gift card and a free storybook!

In-person study

10 - 13 months old

We will measure how babies process these words by tracking their eye movements and measuring brain activity with a **safe, non-invasive neuroimaging method called fNIRS**.

fNIRS works by shining gentle, invisible light into the scalp and measuring changes in oxygen, the brain's source of fuel.

It tolerates movement, and doesn't require the baby to stay still in a scanner - instead, your baby can sit on your lap!

Think of fNIRS as **a tool that allows for safe exploration of brain activity during critical developmental stages**, all while ensuring that your baby's experience is as comfortable as possible.

Click here to learn more and register!

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Sociolinguistic Tracking in Children

NEW!

Primary Researchers: Dr. Drew Weatherhead, Maura Whitman, Sophie LeBlanc

Does speaker diversity affect children's language learning?

This study aims to explore the social information (e.g., race and sex/gender of the speaker) that children aged **5-7 years** old who are **fluent in English** track during language processing.

Virtual Study

5 - 7 years old

Each participating family will receive a $10 CAD Amazon gift card!

With growing diversity across North America, children are learning language in far more socially (e.g., race and ethnicity) and linguistically (e.g., languages and accents) diverse environments than ever before. Our approach to studying language acquisition not only considers real-world linguistic and social diversity but is sensitive to how this diversity supports language learning.

Click here to learn more and register!

Diversity and Social Reasoning

Primary Researchers: Dr. Drew Weatherhead, Maura Whitman, Gabrielle Zeller

Virtual Study

5 - 8 years old

This study aims to look at how how children **aged 5-8 years old** reason about diversity in their environment.

Each participating family will receive a $10 CAD Amazon gift card!

How do children reason about social groups and how does diversity influence this reasoning?

Through this study, we look at three different aspects of children's social reasoning:
1) Their beliefs about diversity in a group setting,
2) How learning a language might influence what people think about us
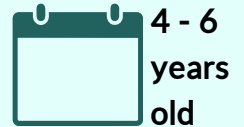3) How the clothing we wear is a cue to the types of things we know.

Click here to learn more and register!

Cultural Familiarity and Word Learning

Primary Researchers: Dr. Drew Weatherhead, Ava Khan

What is the effect of cultural familiarity on word learning?

We are recruiting children in the HRM between the ages of **4 to 6 years old** who are receiving school instruction in English.
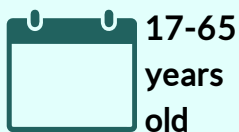
In-person study

4 - 6 years old

Participating families will receive a $10 CAD Amazon gift card.

Reading is central to children's academic and life outcomes; even in elementary school, teachers expect children to be able to learn from what they read. In this study, we are looking at **how cultural context plays a role in children's word learning**.

Click here to learn more and register!

Adult fNIRS

NEW!

Primary Researchers: Dr. Drew Weatherhead, Luke Forsyth

In-person study

17-65 years old

We are recruiting monolingual English speaking adults aged **17-65 years old** who have **normal or corrected normal vision and hearing.**

How does the brain respond to different types of speech?

Participating individuals will receive a $20 CAD Amazon gift card.

The aim of this study is to investigate **how the brain responds to a diverse range of speech stimuli.** This will help us discover the neural mechanisms that underlie our ability to understand verbal language in our everyday life.

Click here to learn more and register!

Cognition and Language Learning Research Group

Research Referral Program

Earn entries for a chance to win a **$100 CAD gift card** to Indigo or Barnes & Noble**

<u>How to enter:</u>

▶ **Participate in one of our studies.** If you were referred, let us know who referred you.

✓✓

2 entries each for you and your friend!

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🌐 https://languagedev.wixsite.com/gcll

✉ GCLL@dal.ca

📷 @GCLL_babygroup

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**Only one available. Selection of gift card is based on the winner's location (Canada or US).