Research Spotlight

Building Robby’s House Game

Dr. Dan Hufnagle and Dr. Lori Holt are investigating how context influences sound perception in children. The children help Robby the Robot (in the center of the picture below) to build his house by repeating the name of the building block that they hear. Another robot (upper right) tells the children over headphones what kind of block is needed, either “da” or “ga”. The child then tells Robby, who chooses one from the appropriate pile of blocks. Before the robot says the name of the block, it either beeps or says, “Please say what this word is.” Sometimes the name of the block is ambiguous (acoustically between “da” and “ga”). For adults, the context influences what sound they hear, depending on the pitch of the tones or words. We are interested in whether these sounds influence children in the same way they do adults in order to determine how the effect develops. The answer to this question will help us understand the nature of auditory perception.

The Da and Ga Game

Dr. Dan Hufnagle and Dr. Lori Holt are investigating how children learn sound categories. The children hear a story about a boy named Da and a bird named Ga. We ask them questions about the story to gauge how well they have understood it. Then, they hear the words “da” and “ga” many times and are asked to tell the experimenter which sound they hear. Sometimes the sound is ambiguous (acoustically between “da” and “ga”). We are testing children at several ages to understand how sound categories (like “d” and “g”) develop across time. The answers will help us understand the nature of auditory perception.

Your Baby Could Be A Scientist!

The Carnegie Mellon University Infant Cognition Lab and Language & Learning Lab are looking for infants between 3 and 26 months to participate in our safe, quick, and fun studies.

What we do: We are interested in how babies learn about the world around them. Our studies last no more than 45 minutes, and take place in the infant labs located next to the Children’s School. We will have your child watch a computer display and play with some small toys while we observe his/her behavior.

To learn more or schedule participation, please contact us!

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