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Dear Parents:

To continue building on our knowledge of how children acquire their native language, I am studying children's acquisition of word stress. Stress is the emphasis placed on the most prominent syllable in a word and is very important in English. In fact, two words with the same spelling, if stressed on different syllables, can have two different meanings, as in *cónvert* and *convért*. This study has been approved by the Wellesley College Psychology Department and I am writing to describe the project and invite your child to participate.

Researchers have found that adults are better able to learn a stress rule that is found in natural languages than one that is very similar but not found in language. These findings suggest that language learning is aided by a language-specific mechanism in the brain. To date, there has been no similar research done with children to see if they use the same learning mechanisms as adults in these kinds of language-learning tasks. This study will help us to compare children's learning of stress rules to that of adult learners. The experiment will be in the form of learning a group of words where your child will hear made-up words and see the pictures that go with the words. Each child will then be tested on how s/he remembers the words and to what extent s/he is able to pick out other words that sound as if they follow the same pattern as the words already learned. We expect that children will be better able to remember words that have the same stress rules as English.

There will be one session of 30-40 minutes and your child can quit at any time if he or she is uncomfortable. The game is played on the computer, and the child gets encouragement as he or she plays. Confidentiality is important and your child's identity will never be made public. Each child will be assigned a unique coded number which will be his or her sole identification for analysis. To ensure further confidentiality your child's responses will be grouped with the other children's responses and analysed together. In no case do we ever identify individual children by name. All results from this work will be reported in a confidential manner. All records will be kept in a password-protected computer file and paper copies will be kept in a locked cabinet. As soon as the initial results are in, I would be happy to report them to you.

Your decision to have your child participate or withdraw from the study will in no way affect any relationship with Wellesley College. If you have any questions or concerns about your child's rights as a study participant, please contact Sarah Merrill at smerrill@wellesley.edu or 781-283-3024. This project has been reviewed and approved by the Wellesley College Ethics Review Board, which is a committee whose task it is to make sure that participants are kept from harm. Child research greatly depends on parents' help and participation, and we will be very grateful if you are able to help us out.

If you would like to hear more about the project and how we would work with your child, please contact me directly. Thank you for your consideration of this project.

Sincerely,

Angela C. Carpenter, Ph.D
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PARENT CONSENT FORM

I have been asked to give consent for my child to participate in a study on children's acquisition of a novel stress pattern in an unfamiliar language. I understand that my child will also be asked to give permission and that her/his wishes will be respected. This study is in the form of a computerized language learning game where my child will learn unfamiliar names of familiar objects such as an egg, leaf, tractor, etc. S/he will then be tested on how well the words were learned.

I understand that there are minimal risks to my child in participating in this experiment. My child can stop anytime he or she wishes. Although there is no direct benefit to my child, he or she will receive a gift for participating in the study, regardless of performance or whether he/she completes the session. My child will be able to take breaks during the experiment, if desired.

I understand that the sessions may be audio taped and/or videotaped in order to allow researchers to take notes on the children's responses. The tapes and the research notes will be used to compile and report results in terms of group averages. No individual results will be reported; my child's name will be kept confidential.

I can ask questions about the procedure now or after the study. I understand that my child can decide to end his or her participation at any time and for any reason, and that the researcher will monitor my child for signs that the experiment should be stopped.

I agree to allow my child to participate in this project. I understand that my decision to have my child participate or withdraw will in no way affect any relationship with Wellesley College.

Child's name (first name is sufficient) _____

Child's date of birth _____

Parent/guardian's signature _____

Date _____

CHILD CONSENT FORM

I would like to participate in a study on how children learn new words in an unfamiliar language. This study is a computerized language learning game where I will learn unfamiliar names of familiar objects such as an egg, leaf, tractor, etc. I will then be tested on how well I learn the words.

I understand that this is a safe experiment and that I can stop anytime I want to. I can also take a break if I want to.

My answers will be kept private and no one will know how I did in the study except the researchers. My answers will be grouped with others when the results of this study is discussed. I may be audio taped and/or videotaped in order to allow researchers to take notes on my responses.

I can ask questions about the procedure now or after the study. If I decide to stop the experiment I will just tell the person in charge that I want to stop.

My first name _____

My signature _____

Today's date _____

CONSENT TO AUDIO- OR VIDEOTAPE

I understand that my responses in this study may be audio- or videotaped. All recordings will be treated in a confidential manner. Only the researchers will have access to the recordings, which will be locked away in a secure place or in a password-protected computer file when not in use.

Any videotapes will not be made public, nor will it be posted on the internet.

I give permission to be recorded by audio or videotape.

Child's Name _____ Date _____

Child's Signature _____ Date _____

Parent's Name _____ Date _____

Parent's Signature _____ Date _____