Dear Families,

Thank you for taking part in our studies of language and reading at the University of Michigan!

Our research group studies how children learn to speak & to read. We are interested in reading development in bilingual children, and children with language difficulties. Thanks in part to your support of our research, we are excited to share some of our discoveries!

1. Reading Words in English

Lots of words are made up of smaller meaningful parts (farm+er, or ear+ring). We find that knowing how words break down into parts is an important piece of reading unfamiliar words, even as early as kindergarten or 1st grade!

When reading or talking with your child, we encourage you to talk about how we make words!

2. Learning to Read in Two Languages

Words are made up of different sounds. Learning to break down the sounds of words \((k + a + t = \text{CAT})\) is an essential skill for learning how to read.

This year we are focused on studying children’s language and literacy in English, Spanish, and Chinese.

We have also opened our studies to children with dyslexia!
3. Language and the Brain!

The human brain has four lobes - frontal, temporal, parietal, and occipital. In our research, we study the frontal and temporal lobe on the left side of the brain, which are key for language.

As we listen to someone speak, the temporal lobe helps us process **words and sounds**. The frontal lobe helps **put words together to make sentences**.

As children’s language skills mature, they show less activity in the frontal lobe and more activity in the temporal lobe, a sign of automatic and improved language processing.

In children with language and reading difficulties, we observe less activity in the temporal lobe. This may be a sign that identifying small but important word parts like the **-ed** in the sentence “yesterday, he walked the dog” might be a bit more challenging for children who struggle with language.

To better understand why some children struggle with language and reading, our research team will continue to look at the brain and behavior of children who speak different languages.

By speaking and reading with our children, in English, Spanish, Chinese, and any other languages, we help their brain development for language and literacy!

If you have questions about language, literacy, or bilingualism, we are here to answer your questions and help you find resources for your child to succeed. Thank you for your support!

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