Melbourne School of Psychological Sciences

Plain Language Statement

PROJECT TITLE: Word learning and optimality

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Introduction
The purpose of this project is to acquire data about how people communicate and optimise their use of language. The data will be used to better understand the cultural evolution and optimisation of language.

What will I be asked to do?
You will take this experiment online. After answering some demographic questions, you will undergo a language learning task, learning short and long word forms associated with novel images of plants. You will then play a communication game with a word learning bot based on the words you learned. This will happen twice. You will then be asked to fill out exit questions based on your experience doing this experiment. Please do your best and have fun!

What are the risks?
Risks are minimal. This experiment is self-paced and will take around 30-50 minutes to complete, so it's a time investment. There is some risk of boredom, although you may enjoy playing this language learning game. If you are frightened or distressed by learning new words or seeing pictures of robots or artificial plant-like objects, this will not be pleasant and you may not want to participate. That said, all images are very unthreatening and not particularly emotionally charged so we expect distress to be unlikely.

What are the benefits?
Although much is known about the cultural evolution of language, we have surprisingly little data about how learners optimize languages. The purpose of this experiment is to try to understand that. The data will be used to better understand the optimisation of language, and what may prevent that. You will be compensated for your time with 1 point of course credit.

Will I hear about the results of this project?
The results of this experiment will be published in an honours thesis and a scientific journal article and be presented at scientific conferences. Please check our websites for updates or email us.

What will happen to information about me?
The answers you provide in the experiment will be stored for analysis by the researchers above and also be made available to other researchers in an anonymized format. We will store the data from your experiment separately from any information that could identify you. We will not ask your name or record your IP address.

What if I want to withdraw from the Research?
Participation in this research is completely voluntary. You are free to withdraw at any time without penalty. If you do not complete the experiment, we will not use any of your data.

Where can I get further information?
This research project has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee of The University of Melbourne. If you have any concerns or complaints about the conduct of this research project, which you do not wish to discuss with the research team, you should contact the Manager, Human Research Ethics, Research Ethics and Integrity, University of Melbourne, VIC 3010. Tel: +61 3 8344 2073 or Email: humanethics-complaints@unimelb.edu.au All complaints will be treated confidentially. In any correspondence please provide the name of the research team or the name or ethics ID number of the research project.

How do I agree to participate?
If you agree to participate, please click the "Begin the experiment" button.

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