

Purpose. Children learn language at astonishing rates. By age six, they can recognize sound patterns that are not permissible in their language (Morehead, 1971), and by age 10, they are learning thousands of new words per year (Share, 1995). They are able to learn rules in language (e.g. *-ed* completes a regular past-tense verb), without explicit awareness of what rules they are learning. Given that language acquisition occurs during childhood, it is possible that the mechanisms to learn these rules disappear by adulthood. In the present study, we aim to determine if it is possible for adults to learn rules in language, just as children do. Specifically, we aim to see if adults can learn new spelling rules.

Method. University students age 18 to 24 (n=40) will be presented with 36 pseudowords, spelled out and paired with an image on a computer screen. The pseudoword/image pairings will also be presented with a recording of the pronunciation of the pseudoword. Each image will refer either to an anime noun (i.e. a living species) or an inanimate noun (i.e. an object). Each word/image pairing will be presented twice for familiarization. The pseudowords will follow a new spelling rule whereby animate nouns will end with a double consonant (e.g. *datt*), and inanimate nouns will end with a single consonant (e.g. *vug*). This rule will be balanced across participants. In a subsequent test phase, first, the familiar images will be presented again with the recording, but without the spelling, and participants will need to spell the word themselves on paper. Next, new images following the same rule will be presented with audio recordings, and participants will need to spell these words on paper as well.

Results. In line with previous research comparing children and adult abilities to detect patterns in oral language (Morehead, 1971), we expect adults to successfully learn the new spelling rule based on animacy. If this is the case, we expect adults to spell the familiar and new words accurately (i.e. with the correct ending) above chance levels. If they are able to spell the new words accurately, we will conclude that they were able to generalize the rule to novel stimuli.

Conclusions. This study will inform our understanding of adults' ability to acquire language rules. Specifically, we will be able to see if adults are able to learn new spelling rules with which they are unfamiliar.