

# Psychologist to study how we put stress into words

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How does a child learn that the stress is on the second syllable of giraffe, and on the first of zebra? Is it memory, the structure of the word itself or clues provided by the sounds in the word?

New research by psychologist Dr Padraic Monaghan, of the University of York, will try to answer the question. He is leading a new project to study the mechanism of language processing that governs how stress is assigned in words.

The research findings may help in the treatment of reading difficulties and assist in learning a second language, as well as potentially helping recovery after brain injury.

In a joint study with social scientists at Charles Sturt University, in Bathurst, New South Wales, Australia, he will examine what role the mechanism plays in learning to read. The research, which is supported by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) and the Australian Research Council, will also focus on the variation between languages in the patterns of stress.

Dr Monaghan, of the University of York's Department of Psychology, said: "This research has implications for the developmental processes of reading and language development. It is critically important to be able to understand the process of reading in order to more thoroughly help children with difficulties in reading.

"We shall also look at the sources of information in English, Dutch, German, and Italian to see if similar processes apply in learning to read in these languages. We predict that each language will have a different set of subtle combinations to help in stress assignment, and the extent to which these differ across languages should be a contributor to ease of second language learning.

"The research will also give important insights into the neurological representation of language, with implications for impairment and recovery following brain injury."

Source: University of York

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