

# Linguistics 3C03

## Press Release Project

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When the news media, magazines and bloggers report on scientific findings, their reports are often inaccurate and misleading, as the comic linked above illustrates. Your job in the PR project is to write a press release that reports a recent finding in the scientific literature on child language acquisition.

Because the audience for your press release is the general public, not a university student or researcher, you will need to make sure that your press release explains the relevant scientific ideas using language that is accessible to someone without training in the field. But you will also use your knowledge of the field to ensure that the press release is accurate, and to explain why the research you are reporting on is important.

Begin by **choosing an article**. You may choose one of the following articles:

Choi, J., Cutler, A., & Broersma, M. (2017). Early development of abstract language knowledge: evidence from perception–production transfer of birth-language memory. *Royal Society Open Science*, 4(1), 160660. <http://doi.org/10.1098/rsos.160660> [LINK VIA MCMaster LIBRARY]

Huang, Y. T., Leech, K., & Rowe, M. L. (2017). Exploring socioeconomic differences in syntactic development through the lens of real-time processing. *Cognition*, 159, 61–75. <http://doi.org/10.1016/j.cognition.2016.11.004> [LINK VIA MCMaster LIBRARY]

Poepsel, T. J., & Weiss, D. J. (2016). The influence of bilingualism on statistical word learning. *Cognition*, 152, 9–19. <http://doi.org/10.1016/j.cognition.2016.03.001> [LINK VIA MCMaster LIBRARY]

Potter, C. E., & Saffran, J. R. (2017). Exposure to multiple accents supports infants' understanding of novel accents. *Cognition*, 166, 67–72. <http://doi.org/10.1016/j.cognition.2017.05.031> [LINK VIA MCMaster LIBRARY]

Or you may, if you wish, choose another article in a peer-reviewed journal from 2015, 2016, or 2017 that reports on an empirical study of a question in child language acquisition (that is, not a review article). If you want to choose your own article, some journals to browse are the *Journal of Child Language*, *First Language*, *Developmental Science*, *Infant Behavior & Development*, and *Child Development*. If you are choosing your own article, check it with Dr. Anderson by e-mailing the reference before proceeding with your press release.

Once you have read and understood your article, start thinking about **your audience**. Decide whether to pitch your press release at either a general news media outlet (such as the Globe and Mail or the CBC) or a parenting magazine. There are several sites linked below that give general advice on writing press releases on a variety of topics and for a variety of audiences. Do not follow the advice of any single site slavishly, but take the most relevant and useful advice from each of these and apply it to your project.

This link [[from uVic](#)] is focused on press releases about government programs but contains lots of useful advice about the structure of press releases.

Excellent advice from the Public Library of Science [[PLoS](#)].

This site [[SciDev.net](#)] is oriented to scientific press releases in general and has a lot of good writing advice.

Another science site [[spacetelescope.org](http://spacetelescope.org)], that has very good advice, not just for astronomers!

Browse these science news articles at [NSERC](#) (Canada) and [NSF](#) (U.S.A.) to get a feel for the writing style.

Try to avoid the clichés parodied [here](#)!

This project is to be completed individually (not in teams). Your press release should be **no more than one page long**. Submit your press release via the [Press Release Project Submissions](#) Folder **by 4:00 p.m. on Friday, Feb 2**. Consult the rubric linked in the assignment submission folder for details about how the project is graded.