

Public Abstract

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Title:Causes of the noun bias in early vocabulary development

Children's early vocabularies consist mainly of nouns. The cause of this noun-bias is unclear. We tested the role of word frequency and perceptual salience by controlling the number of times toddlers heard novel nouns and verbs across development. When input frequency of novel nouns and novel verbs was controlled, children did not show a noun-bias in production or comprehension. Children produced the verbs more often in all production contexts. The noun and verb comprehension tasks were not directly comparable, but children did not appear to comprehend more nouns. Thus, contrary to prior studies of word learning in English-speaking children, we did not find a noun-bias when input word frequency was controlled. Alternative explanations for the noun-bias are considered.