

1 Semantic development

Learning the meanings of words

2 The relation between words and their referents

- The relationship between the name and the referent is arbitrary and symbolic.
- Young children believe that the name and the referent are intrinsically related.
- They think that one cannot change the name of something without changing its nature as well.
- Mental images

3 Acquiring categorical concepts

- Semantic feature

- Prototype

- Probabilistic

4 Learning Theory

- Children learn through association.
- Behavioral model
- Learning theory may explain the earliest and simplest kinds of linking between words and objects.
- Association can be facilitated by many factors, e.g., adults put special emphasis on new words and things they refer to.

5 Developmental Theories

- Development theories consider semantic development within the wider context of the child's unfolding social, cognitive, and linguistic skills.
- Ontological categories: concepts about how the word is organized
- A novel word they hear probably relates to an object or event that the speaker is paying attention to.
- The ability to establish and maintain joint focus of attention with those around them is crucial for children's efficient word learning.

6 Principle and strategies

- Words refer to objects
- Shape bias
- Taxonomic principle
- Novel name-nameless principle
- Principle of contrast
- Principle of mutual exclusivity
- after using semantic and syntactic information or pragmatic information

7 Fast mapping

- Children as young as 18 months old can make an initial word-referent mapping after only

a few exposures to a new word, also without explicit instruction by an adult.

- As with most other kinds of learning, exposure distributed over several days makes for more successful word learning than the same number of exposures in a single day.
- Children may learn nouns as effectively through incidental learning as through ostension.

8 Early words

- The study of vocabulary
 - diaries, checklists
- Children's initial productive words are similar.
 - Phonological composition
 - Noun bias
 - Reflect input directed to them
- Core group—8 or 10 words that children use frequently and in a variety of contexts

9 Unconventional word/meaning mapping

- Overextension
- Underextension
- Reasons
 - 1.No clear-cut boundaries
 - 2.Retrieval problems
 - 3.Not yet acquire the proper label
 - 4.Use analogically to comment on similarities they have noticed
 - 5.humor

10 Invented words

- *What would you call a man who zibs?*
- More compound words (*zib-man*) than derived words (*zibber*)
- Principles
 - simplicity
 - semantic transparency
 - Productivity

11 Differences between comprehension and production

- Comprehension— when hearing the word, anticipate or do something
- Production—speak the word at an appropriate time and place
- Productive vocabularies typically lag behind receptive vocabularies
- Vocabulary comprehension tasks
 - pointing, preferential looking paradigm

12 How adult speech influence children's semantic development

- When adults look at and label objects that are visible to children, children assume the label refers to the adult focus of attention, and make an initial object-label mapping.
- Naming games
- Basic-level categories
 - Similarities within categories
 - The most general level at which objects are similar because of their forms, functions, component parts or motions.

13 Teaching Strategies

- Basic level terms: ostension—pointing
- Superordinate terms: inclusion
- Rare words—explain explicitly or embed them in a context that calls on the child's prior knowledge or real world experience
- Clearly and slowly enunciated, exaggerated intonation, clear pauses
- Corrective feedback

14 Later semantic development

- Complex concepts
- Semantic networks
- Metalinguistic development

15 Complex concepts

- Kinship terms
- Deictic terms
 - reference point depends on who say says them
- Color terms
 - isolate color from object
 - differentiate among hues
 - notice similarities among shades

16 Acquisition of complex concepts

- Semantic feature hypothesis predicts that terms whose meanings are defined by many features would be more difficult for children to master than terms that are semantically less complex.
- Children's order of acquisition could be described in terms of adding component features. (p.143-144)
- Stage 1: no component feature
- Stage 2: some features but not relational ones
- Stage 3: relational terms are used but not reciprocal
- Stage 4: both relational and reciprocal

17 Semantic networks

- Children establish multiple links among words and concepts.
- Semantic overlap between the word used incorrectly and the correct word
 - Ex. "Daddy take his pants on."
- Free-word-association
- Restricted-word-association
- Set tests

18 Results for word associations

- Older individuals' responses represent a narrower, better defined set than do young children.
- On set tests, older children produce longer lists of group members.
- Young children respond to free-word-association with words that typically follow the stimulus word (e.g., eat → lunch). Older individuals tend to respond with words that are of the same grammatical category (e.g., eat-drink). Around age seven, children begin to

respond with class-related words.

- 19 **Factors influencing children's vocabulary development**
- Extreme individual variability
 - Individual: memory, understand concepts
 - Contextual: home, caregiver, classroom, peer interactions, exposure to reading and other media.
 - Research on home language environments has identified the quantity, variety and contextual richness of the words heard as key predictors of children's vocabulary acquisition.
- 20 **Assessing vocabulary in bilingual children**
- Young bilingual children's vocabulary develop at the same rate as monolinguals' when both their languages are taken into account.
 - Assess in both languages
- 21 **Vocabulary and socioeconomic status**
- Monolingual children from low-socioeconomic-status families and less educated parents are exposed to a reduced quantity and variety of words.
 - Bilingual children from low-SES families display vocabularies that lag considerably behind school expectations.
 - Rich vocabulary instruction that focuses on depth of vocabulary, contextualized words, frequent exposure and recurrent use of taught words is the most effective.
- 22 **Metalinguistic development**
- Children begin to notice words as objects, and later become able to manipulate them to learn to read and write and to accomplish nonliteral ends, such as metaphors, creating puns, and using irony.
 - They must understand that a word and its referent are separable.
 - Then, they can begin to reflect on the properties of words and objects separately.
- 23 **Word-concept awareness**
- Older children acknowledge both content and function words as words, while younger children sometimes reject the latter.
 - Young children failed to differentiate between favorite words and favorite things. (See examples on p.126)
- 24 **Word-sound awareness**
- Boundaries between words in the speech stream are not identifiable on the basis of pauses or other acoustic features.
 - Children must depend on a variety of other cues and information about syntax and semantics to identify word boundaries.
 - Tasks: count words, tap out each word in a phrase or sentence, or represent each word with a token, reverse or pause between pairs of words.
- 25 **Word-sound awareness**
- Children as young as four are aware of words, but their awareness is strongly related to the context.
 - Children first were able to recognize phrase boundaries, then syllable boundaries, and finally word boundaries.
 - Developmental change in children's word awareness tends to coincide with

their beginning to read.

26 **Word-meaning awareness: Humor, metaphor and irony**

- Word play: rhyming, puns, riddles
- Metaphor is used for clarifying.
- Irony is used to evaluate or criticize (express sarcasm)
- Adults rely on both contextual cues and intonational cues in interpreting sarcasm.
- Children are more sensitive to intonation than contextual cues.
- Children younger than about eight rarely understand sarcasm even when intonational cues are present.

27 **Word definitions**

- Defining a word involves metalinguistic skills as well as semantic knowledge.
- Werner and Kaplan's (1950) study about children's ability to use linguistic context to deduce the meanings of new words (p.151)
- The development of word definitions beginning with an emphasis on personal experience toward information of a more general, socially shared nature.
- Knowledge of the conventional form for good definitions, opportunities to practice hearing and giving definitions are necessary for the development of definition skills.

28 **A lifelong enterprise**

- Semantic development continues apace throughout the life span.
- We continue to add new words to our lexicon and fine-tune the extensions of old words in response to widening experience and to social and culture changes.
- Reflection on and analysis of language result in continual lexical reorganization, essential for us to use our language in the most adaptive and effective way to address various communicative tasks throughout life span.