Lecture 4, Nouns, Verbs, & Argument Structure – Are There Special Biases for Word Learning?

How do children infer what a new word refers to? Are they guided by innate constraints specific to word learning? By good guesses about the intentions of adult speakers?


Markman, E. (1994). Constraints on word meaning in early language acquisition. Lingua, 92, 199-277. (Markman has been influential in arguing in favor of constraints specific to word learning. This is an overview of her research.)


Object word vs. relational words. Are object concepts more ‘natural’ (easier to form) than relational concepts? Hence object word meanings more obvious than relational word meanings? This debate has led to a big literature on the relative importance of nouns vs. verbs in children’s early speech.


**Ontological categories.** Do children make different assumptions about a new word’s meaning depending on what kind of entity the referent is? Objects and object shape, versus substances.


**Verb meaning and argument structure; Syntactic Bootstrapping**


Lecture 5, Language and Cognition:
Thinking for Speaking, Whorfian Hypothesis

‘Thinking for speaking’; Motion Event Typology


Kita, S. & Özyürek, A. (1999). Expressing manner and path in English and Turkish: Differences in speech, gesture, and conceptualization. In M. Hahn & S. Stonness (Eds.), *Proceedings of the 21st Annual Conference of the Cognitive Science Society*, 507-512. (The structure of language influences not only what people attend to in their speech, but also form of the spontaneous iconic gestures that accompany their speech.)


**Whorfian Hypothesis – general**


Gentner, D. & Goldin-Meadow, S. (2003). Language in mind: Advances in the study of language and thought. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. (This book has chapters by many leading researchers working on language-and-thought issues; viewpoints both for and against a Whorfian perspective are represented.)


**Whorfian Hypothesis – Frames of reference**


**Whorfian Hypothesis – Space and motion**


**Whorfian Hypothesis – Universal ontology (objects, substances)**


**Whorfian Hypothesis – Time and space**


Boroditsky, L. & Ramscar, M. (2002). The roles of body and mind in abstract thought. *Psychological Science*, 13, 185-189. (Experiments showing that people’s interpretation of sentences specifying time is influenced by their concurrent experience of space.)


**Whorfian Hypothesis – Gender**


**Whorfian Hypothesis – Color**


**Whorfian Hypothesis – Appearance vs. reality distinction; false belief**


**Whorfian Hypothesis – Miscellaneous**


Malt, B., Sloman, S., Gennari, S., Shi, M., & Wang, Y. (1999). Knowing versus naming: Similarity and the linguistic categorization of artifacts. Journal of Memory and Language, 40, 230-262. (Find that speakers of different languages group and distinguish containers differently through their naming (i.e., the linguistic categories are different), but their nonlinguistic judgments of the similarity of the containers are pretty much the same. No Whorfian effect here.)