Investigating the Impact of Object Labeling on 12-Month-Old Infants' Performance in a Virtual Stimuli Differentiation Occlusion Event

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By 12-months, the way infants remember and represent an object is substantially impacted by the way it is named. When different objects from the same object category are given distinct names, infants encode the distinctions among them, and when they are given the same consistent names, infants form a category based on commonalities [1]. Past literature supports that infants' sensitivity to changes in objects is affected by how they mentally categorize the objects [2]. At issue is: how robust are infants' representations of that individual? To address this, we adapted the LaTourette & Waxman paradigm [1]. In this paradigm, infants were shown four different objects labeled with either a consistent or distinct name in the Learning Trial, and then those objects were placed side-by-side with a novel object in the Test Trial. Preferential looking measures were then employed to identify how naming affected infants' ability to distinguish learned objects from the novel object. In the present study, an occlusion task was added to the Learning Trial to test 12-month-old infants' representation of the distinct individuals. For all infants, each object disappeared behind a screen and reappeared 10 seconds later. At this point, infants saw either the same object that was hidden or a different novel one. Based on the violation of expectations paradigm, infants tend to look longer at events they find interesting or surprising [3]. We therefore predicted that infants in the Distinct Name condition – but not Consistent Name condition – would be surprised on object change trials and thus look longer at the event. Data collection, still underway, is promising. For Distinct Names, remembering the individual suggests that infants' representation of the object is sufficiently robust to be retained over an occlusion event. Evidence from the Consistent Names condition (still underway) will provide an additional test for this claim.

References

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