

The Effect of Object Naming on Infants' Memory and Reasoning About Objects: Evidence From a Change Detection Task

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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 in a set are labeled the same name, infants focus on commonalities, leading them to form an object category at the expense of the ability to distinguish each object from others of the same kind. However, when objects in that set are each labeled with a different name, infants focus on the unique differences between them, leading them to remember each individual at the expense of category formation [1]. Past literature supports that infants' sensitivity to changes in objects is affected by how they mentally categorize the objects [2]. This study investigated the strength of naming on memory and object representation in 12-month-old infants by adding an occlusion change-detection task to the object-naming paradigm from Latourrette & Waxman. Infants were shown a set of objects each labeled with a distinct name that were then hidden from view with a descending screen. Upon screen lifting, the object either remained the same or changed to another. Via the violation-of-expectations paradigm, babies are more interested in and look longer at unexpected events because they defy what they know [3]. Hence, infants given distinct labels that remember the first object should focus more on differences between each object and be surprised when the object changes to a new one during occlusion than when there is no change because their expectations have been violated. Data supported that labeling affected the robustness of object representations in infants, as those who heard the distinct labels for the objects looked significantly longer at change events than no-change events. The results highlight the effect of naming on infant learning and memory. Further investigations will compare this effect with infants who are only given a consistent name for all objects in a set using a 2x2 design to focus on the impacts of different naming effects on the formation of mental representations in infants.

References

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