

Language Development Game

What are Phonemes?

- **Phonemes** are basic units of sound in a language. Everybody says particular phonemes slightly differently, but when you say a different phoneme, you say a different word. (e.g. “ch” is a different phoneme from “th” as “chug” is different from “thug.”)

Whole Object Constraint

- One thing that facilitates children’s world learning is the bias (i.e., assumptions) they have when they hear new words. We will see several examples of this in our next class when we discuss **fast mapping**.
- Children behave according to a **whole object constraint**. They *assume* that a novel word refers to the entire object we are paying attention to, rather than about a part or a quality of the object.

Language Explosion

- Between speaking our first words (about 12mo - 16mo) and starting to put together sentences (about 20mo - 30mo), we go through a period where we acquire a vast number of words (15mo - 22mo).
- As children approach 2 years of age, they experience a **language explosion**. They learn about 10 to 20 new words each week. Most of those words are nouns.

Over-Extension & Under Extension

- An **over-extension** or **under-extension** of a word’s meaning, is a particularly common error for children as they learn new words.
- An **over-extension** is to use a word to refer to *more* than its intended referent. For example, a child may say “ball” to refer to balls, marbles, balloons, and eggs.
- An **under-extension** is to use a word to refer to *less* than its intended referent. For example, a child may only refer to her teddy-bear as “bear” rather than recognizing that everybody else’s teddy-bear and real bears are also “bears.”

Pragmatics

- The spy sees the police officer with the gun.
- The spy sees the police officer with the binoculars.
- Notice how the grammar of the two sentences is exactly the same. The ability to use background knowledge and context to understand language is called **pragmatics**.

Language Development Theories

- Three broad kinds of developmental theories explain language acquisition.
- **Nativism**: special innate abilities, that may include a language module, where acquiring language is different from other learning
- **Interactionism**: language is fundamentally a social experience
- **Connectionism**: Language is acquired through the regularities in our experience and exposure.