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The Rate of New-Word Learning in Children

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Abstract:

Vocabulary acquisition is largely sequential in nature, it would appear possible to identify that sequence and to ensure that children at a given vocabulary level have an opportunity to encounter words they are likely to be learning next, within a context that uses the majority of the words that they have already learned.

Keywords: acquisition, context, new-word learning, basic level, child-directed speech.

The process of learning the words of a language is referred to as **Vocabulary Acquisition.** The ways in which young children acquire the **vocabulary** of a native language differ from the ways in which older children and adults acquire the vocabulary of a second language. The rate of new-word learning is not constant but ever increasing. Thus between the ages of 1 and 2 years, most children will learn less than one word a day whilst a 17-year-old will learn about 10,000 new words per year, mostly from reading. The theoretical implication is that there is no need to posit a qualitative change in learning or a specialized word-learning system to account for the 'remarkable' rate at which young children learn words; one could even argue that, given the number of new words to which they are exposed daily, infants' word learning is remarkably slow». At some point, most children manifest a *vocabulary spurt*, where the rate of acquisition of new words increases suddenly and markedly. From then until about six years old, the average rate of acquisition is estimated to be five or more words a day. Many of the new words are verbs and adjectives, which gradually come to assume a larger proportion of the child's vocabulary. The vocabulary acquired during this period partly reflects frequency and relevance to the child's environment. *Basic level* terms are acquired first, possibly reflecting a bias towards such terms in *child-directed speech*.

Children appear to need minimal exposure to a new word form (sometimes just a single occurrence) before they assign some kind of meaning to it; this process of *rapid mapping* appears to help them to consolidate the form in their memory. In the early states, mapping is exclusively from form to meaning; but it later also takes place from meaning to form, as children coin words to fill gaps in their vocabulary. If **vocabulary acquisition** is largely sequential in nature, it would appear possible to identify that sequence and to ensure that children at a given vocabulary level have an opportunity to encounter words they are likely to be learning next, within a context that uses the majority of the words that they have already learned." Although additional research is sorely needed, research points us in the direction of natural interactions as the source of vocabulary learning. Whether through free play between peers . . . or an adult introducing literacy terms (e.g., *sentence, word*), as children engage in play with literacy tools, the likelihood that vocabulary will 'stick' is heightened when children's engagement and motivation for learning new words is high. Embedding new words in activities that children want to do recreates the conditions by which vocabulary learning takes place in the crib.

Second – language learners and vocabulary acquisition: The mechanics of vocabulary learning are still something of a mystery, but one thing we can be sure of is that words are not instantaneously

acquired, at least not for adult second language learners. Rather, they are gradually learned over a period of time from numerous exposures. This incremental nature of **vocabulary acquisition** manifests itself in a number of ways. . . . Being able to understand a word is known as *receptive knowledge* and is normally connected with listening and reading. If we are able to produce a word of our own accord when speaking or writing, then that is considered *productive knowledge* (*passive/active* are alternative terms). . . .

Mastery of a word only in terms of receptive versus productive knowledge is far too crude. . . . Nation proposes the following list of the different kinds of knowledge that a person must master in order to know a word. These are known as types of *word knowledge*, and most or all of them are necessary to be able to use a word in the wide variety of language situations one comes across. Several of our own studies . . . have explored the use of annotations in second-language multimedia environments for reading and listening comprehension. These studies investigated how the availability of visual and verbal annotations for vocabulary items in the text facilitates **vocabulary acquisition** as well as the comprehension of a foreign language literary text. We found that especially the availability of picture annotations facilitated vocabulary acquisition, and that vocabulary words learned with picture annotations were better retained than those learned with textual annotations. Our research showed in addition that incidental vocabulary acquisition and text comprehension was best for words where learners looked up both picture and text annotations. There is a quantitative and qualitative dimension to **vocabulary acquisition**. On the one hand we can ask 'How many words do learners know?' while on the other we can enquire 'What do the learners know about the words they know?' Curtis refers to this important distinction as the 'breadth' and 'depth' of a person's lexicon. The focus of much vocabulary research has been on 'breadth,' possibly because this is easier to measure.

Arguably, however, it is more important to investigate how learners' knowledge of words they already partly know gradually deepens. Student will use strategy/strategies with no more than one cue or reminder. The student will explain groupings of people, objects, places, events, and actions from story contexts to demonstrate likenesses and differences among items. The student's explanations will include **(X-word)** sentences which are meaningful to the context. In order to understand how children move between stages, it's important to understand how children take in stimuli from the environment and use it to grow. Most theorists agree that there are periods in children's lives in which they become biologically mature enough to gain certain skills that they could not have easily picked up prior to that maturation. For example, research has shown that babies and toddlers' brains are more flexible with regard to learning to understand and use language than are older children's brains.

Children are ready and open to develop certain things during specific stages; however, it doesn't just happen. Instead, they need proper environmental stimuli to develop these abilities. For example, babies have the ability to grow in length and weight in amazing amounts during the first year, but if they're not fed and nurtured enough during that time, they will not have the tools and building blocks to grow and will not grow and thrive. This is why it's so important for parents and caregivers to understand how their children are growing in all ways and channels and to know what stimuli, or stuff, they need to give their children to help them thrive. From time to time children without any cognitive or physical problems at birth may not be able to develop certain milestones during the stage or time period they are most receptive. There may be an injury, illness, caregiver neglect or abuse, or a shortage of needs such as food or medical care, that make it difficult for a child to absorb all the basic building blocks and stimulation they need to gain certain abilities at certain times in life.

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