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Joint Attention Predicts Novel Word Recall in Preschool-Aged Children

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Joint attention (JA) is a critical early communicative behavior that has been strongly linked to word learning and vocabulary development. However, relatively little research has examined JA in children older than 36 months, despite its potential importance for learning in live social and classroom contexts. In the present study, we used head-mounted eye-tracking in a socially interactive setting to examine the relationship between JA and word recall in preschool-aged children. JA was measured during parent–child play with unfamiliar objects, during which parents actively labeled the objects. Children were subsequently tested on their ability to recall the object names. Results indicated that JA significantly predicted recall of unfamiliar words but was not associated with overall vocabulary development. These findings extend prior research on JA by highlighting its role in supporting novel word learning beyond early childhood