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High Similarity Comparison Experience Helps Japanese- and English-speaking Children Learn New Verbs

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Abstract

Learning verbs is critical to learning one's native language. Two new studies with comparison trials and additional test trials reveal better verb learning by both Japanese- and English-speaking children than prior studies (Imai et al., 2005; 2008). Specifically, 2½-, 3½- and 4½-year-old Japanese-speaking children (total n=170; n= 43 2.5s; n= 48 3.5s, n= 48 4.5s) in Japan and English-speaking children in the US (total n=107 to date; n= 28 2.5s; n= 36 3.5s; n= 43 4.5s) were shown 3 events linked to each of 4 novel verbs, either in a Progressive Alignment (similar before varied events) or All Varied condition; children pointed to new events at test. Multivariate ANOVAs in both languages show children benefit from seeing high than low similarity events during verb learning, particularly at younger ages. Links to key theories in verb learning, including structure mapping and statistical learning, will be discussed.