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Authors

Luna, Michelle Lynn
Sandhofer, Catherine

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Supporting Word Learning from Shared Book Reading Sessions with Preschoolers

Michelle Luna
University of California, Los Angeles, Los Angeles, California, United States

Catherine Sandhofer
University of California, Los Angeles, Los Angeles, California, United States

Abstract

Shared book reading with preschoolers has been linked to lasting, positive effects on children's vocabulary development. However, some evidence shows children quickly forget target words learned from books, which suggests these words may need extra memory supports. The current studies examined two memory supports that could help word learning: variability and presentation timing. Study 1 examined the effect of question variability by showing 4-year-olds novel words accompanied by irrelevant questions (control), the same questions (no variability), or different questions (variability) each time the target word was presented. Study 2 examined the effect of presentation timing by presenting 4-year-olds with novel words either massed or spaced in time. Children's memory of the novel target words was tested in one of three delays: 0 minutes, 5 minutes, or 24 hours. Ultimately, these studies inform word learning theories and help improve the quality of shared book reading sessions between caregivers and children.