Young children’s uptake of new words in conversation

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Introduction

Experiment
  Repeat rates for new words
  Repeat-rates for the new words VS new-to-give shift

Discussion
Introduction

- A typical exchange:
  Hal (1;10;26):  *What’s this?*
  Mother:  It’s a beaver.
  Hal:  *Beaver.*
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• Uptake of new words
• The role of repetition
Uptake of new words

- New words exposition can happen:
  - ‘under cover’ (indirect offer):
    Adult: Give me your mug.
    Anna holds out the drinking vessel she has in her hand.
Uptake of new words

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  - observable (direct offer):
    Mother: It’s a beaver.
    Hall: Beaver.
    - Evidence that children are attending
The role of repetition

- Repeat new information (familiar words):
  - acknowledge the other's use of $X$
The role of repetition

- Repeat new information (familiar words):
  - acknowledge the other’s use of $X$
- Repeat new words:
  - recognize $X$ as a new term or expression
  - ratifying $X$ on this occasion
  - trying $X$ for themselves
  - adding $X$ to the common ground
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Discussion
Hypotheses

- The function of repetition with new information differs from the function of repetition with new words.
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- The repeat-rate for the new information should be lower than for the new words.
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For testing 5 corpora in the CHILDES Archive were used
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Discussion
Method

- Extract direct offers of unfamiliar words
Method

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- child’s next turn direct after the offer, was categorized as:
  - REPEATED the word just offered
  - ACKNOWLEDGED the word just offered
  - MOVED ON on the same topic
  - (changed topic)
## Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Child</th>
<th>Offers n</th>
<th>Repeats</th>
<th>Acknowledgements</th>
<th>Move-on’s</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eve</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naomi</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adam</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarah</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abe</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean %</td>
<td>54</td>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Conclusions

• When repeating, acknowledge, or produce a relevant move-on, children give evidence of attending to and accepting, to some degree, the new word.
  • The five children offered strong evidence of attending to new words offered.
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• When *repeating*, *acknowledge*, or produce a relevant *move-on*, children give evidence of *attending* to and *accepting*, to some degree, the new word.
  • The five children offered strong evidence of attending to new words offered.

• The responses also function to *ground* the new information.
  • For grounding children must make some inference what the word is likely to mean in the current context ⇐ joined attention.
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- 2 timeframes of 200 child utterances:
  1. containing the first new word offer identified
  2. containing the last new word offer identified
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• count how many of these utterances are repetitions of any of the information from the preceding adult utterance
## Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Child</th>
<th>Time 1</th>
<th>Time 2</th>
<th>New word</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eve</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naomi</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adam</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarah</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>56</td>
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- This affirms the hypothesis: 
  *The repeat-rate for the new information is lower than for the new words.*
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This affirms the hypothesis: 
*The repeat-rate for the new information is lower than for the new words.*

And therefore supports the hypothesis: 
*The function of repetition with new information differs from the function of repetition with new words.*
Uptake of direct offers

From the experiment done here and previous work, 4 steps involved in uptake of new words:

1. If possible identify $X$ on this occasion, and the domain it belongs to.
2. Identify other (known) terms from that same domain.
3. Identify some properties that distinguish $X$ from other familiar terms.
4. Add any information linking $X$ to other familiar terms.
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- The process of uptake should be the same for both direct and indirect offers.
- But, indirect offers provide no overt clues to children’s progress in uptake.
Acquisition of meaning is gradual

- Adults often stick with partial meanings only.
  - non-experts are often not able to distinguish: bay, alder, hornbeam, rowan, or gingko
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  - non-experts are often not able to distinguish: *bay, alder, hornbeam, rowan, or gingko*
  - Not go thorough with all the steps for all the words.
- Enough overlap with their conversational partner to make communication feasible
• First steps in the uptake of new words require attention.
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• In direct offers, children repeat the new word.
Conclusion

- First steps in the uptake of new words require attention.
- In direct offers, children repeat the new word.
- Clark argues that repetition signals both *attention* and *ratification*.
Thank You!