Title

The Role of Attention in Learning through Overheard Speech

Authors

Neer, Emily M
Sandhofer, Catherine

Peer reviewed

The Role of Attention in Learning through Overheard Speech

Emily Neer

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

Catherine Sandhofer

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

Abstract

Children can learn words through overhearing (i.e., without being directly addressed, Akhtar et al., 2001). Although research shows that children attend to experimenters when new information is presented in an overheard context (Akhtar, 2005), the role attention plays in retention is understudied. In prior studies, spacing of presentations in time facilitates an effortful retrieval process that strengthens long-term retention of the newly learned word (Vlach et al., 2012). The current study examined whether monolingual children retain novel labels for novel shape categories in an overhearing context and the role that attention plays in successful retention. Preliminary results (N = 17) suggest that children regardless of chance performance in the task are showing less attention duration when objects are presented spaced out in time rather than presented in mass succession. This study has implications for how children learn from indirect input and the role attention plays in this unique learning environment.