Learning change-of-state verbs: Does transitivity affect lexicalization biases?

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Research question: Language development

Overall
• How do children find out which meaning features are encoded in verb?

RQ
• To what extent does transitivity guide lexicalization preferences in children?
Hypothesis & Predictions

• Telicity is associated with direct objects

• If so, transitivity guides lexicalization choices
  
  • Novel verb in transitive frame will trigger more often a result meaning than novel verb in intransitive frame

• Both in adults and children
Study 1
Training

Intransitive / Transitive

The monster is going to dax (the chair).

Look, the monster is going to dax (the chair).

He’s daxing (the chair).

See, he daxed (the chair).

The monster daxed (the chair).

Mills & van Hout, 2019
Which video shows daxing?

Manner match

Result match
Results forced-choice selection task

Analyses
- Age p < .001
- Result bias in Adults p < .001
Study 2

Look! The blue monster is blorking (the vase)
Is the orange monster blorking (the vase, or not)?

Match
Results match-to-sample task

Result bias

Manner bias
Research question

RQ

• To what extent does transitivity guide lexicalization preferences?

• Not in adults

• Not in 3-yr-olds
  • Not replicate prior studies
  • Instead overall result bias

• Yes in 5-yr-olds
  • Transitive triggers result lexicalization

Skordos & Papafragou, 2014; Wagner, 2010
Hypothesis & Predictions

• Telicity is associated with direct objects

• If so, transitivity guides lexicalization choices
  
  • Novel verb in transitive frame will trigger more often a result meaning than novel verb in intransitive frame
  
  • Both in adults and children

Only supported by 5-yr-olds...
Conclusions Language Development

• 3-yr-olds
  • Represent multi-interpretable scenes in terms of result. Why?

• Goal bias
  • Non-linguistic, cognitive bias
  • Triggers initial lexicalization of result meaning
  • Needs to be given up in subsequent stages

  Carpenter et al., 2005; Csibra et al., 2003; Lakusta et al., 2007; Woodward, 1998

• Homology
  • Similarities event structure in language and cognition
  • Linguistic encoding builds on non-linguistic event representation

  Ünal, Ji & Papafragou, 2019