The relationship between phonological and lexical development

Words have two essential components, sound and meaning, and the link between the two is arbitrary, varying from one language to another. One of the major tasks facing children learning to talk is figuring out the sound-meaning relationships of the words in their ambient language. Most studies of lexical acquisition assume that the abstract, cognitive demands of word meaning represent the foremost task in acquiring a word, and the physical aspects of articulating that word play a secondary role. Research on speech and language development in young children, however, raises questions about this view, suggesting that, at least in the early period of word learning, factors associated with the production of speech may be as important as the cognitive factors. This presentation will provide information on the interactions between lexical and phonological development in children with typical development and those with disorders. Particular attention will be given to the age-range from birth to four years, with a summary of research on prelinguistic vocal development and the emergence of first words, the role of input, and the notion of “ease of articulation”. For older children, and adults, it has been shown that word frequency (a lexical factor) and phonotactic probability (a phonological factor) influence the learning of new words and the accuracy of production of those words. These effects have also been documented for children with phonological disorders. This research will be summarized and clinical implications of the findings will be presented.

Références bibliographiques


interface between phonetic and lexical abilities in early Cantonese language development.

Clinical Linguistics and Phonetics, 18, 535-545.


