

The role of nouns in adjective acquisition

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Typical cases of nominal modification include modification by adjectives. Previous acquisition research has shown that nouns play a crucial role in the acquisition of adjectives, which is a complex task for the child language learner. More specifically, access to information about category membership has been reported to help children identify the property described by adjectives (Barner & Snedeker, 2008; Mintz & Gleitman, 2000). In this talk, I will further examine the role of nouns in acquiring adjectives by presenting data from spontaneous speech and from a comprehension experiment. I will show that soon after producing their first adjectives, young children begin to combine nouns and adjectives. Furthermore, I will show that nouns have a privileged role when determining the context for the interpretation of gradable adjectives.