Speaker perspective and reference in young children*

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ABSTRACT

When speakers choose a word, they choose the perspective from which they wish to present an entity or an event. In the present study we tested the hypothesis that young children accept multiple perspectives from an early age. That is, they know that two terms can refer to the same entity, as shown by their comprehension and production of multiple terms for the same referent. A total of 36 children aged 2;2 to 4;8 answered questions about pictures that required shifts in level (e.g., from cat to animal or the reverse) or domain (e.g., from dog to sailor or the reverse). Even the youngest two-year-olds managed both tasks: they understood multiple terms for the same referents and also produced second terms for referents that had already been labelled. These data support a many-perspectives view of lexical acquisition over a single-perspective view.

Recent research on word acquisition in young children has focused on possible semantic constraints that, by limiting the options, make the initial acquisition of new word meanings simpler (Markman 1989). One assumption has been that children make things easier by limiting their lexicon to one term per referent. The evidence for this comes from two sources: first, from anecdotal reports of spontaneous rejections of...
second terms for referents for which children already have words (e.g., Macnamara 1982, Valentine 1942); and second, from experimental studies of three- and four-year-olds where the children often reject a second term that has been taught for an already-labelled referent (e.g., Markman 1987, Markman & Wachtel 1988, Merriman 1986, Merriman & Bowman 1989). A child who uses the term dog in referring to dogs should reject uses of animal or spaniel on the one hand, or of pet or hunter on the other, in reference to dogs. In short, this research suggests that if children can at first manage just one term to refer to instances of a particular kind, they must be taking just one perspective on that type. Later, of course, children must over-ride such constraints and learn that they can apply multiple terms to a single referent – a dog can be the dog, that animal, Tim’s pet, or the spaniel, according to the perspective chosen by the speaker on each occasion. In this account, then, children start out with a one-perspective view, and only at around three or four begin to master additional perspectives (with the additional terms) on the things they talk about.

For adult speakers, though, we take for granted a many-perspectives view: words offer speakers flexible ways of categorizing and presenting the world to others. They can talk about a tree stump by referring to the stump on one occasion, to my chair on another, or to that table on a third (Miller 1978). On each occasion, the speaker takes a different conceptual perspective: in the first reference the tree stump is presented as a stump, in the second as a seat, and in the third as a supporting surface. With each categorization, the speaker’s perspective is chosen from one of the relevant terms (Clark 1996). Under this view of lexical choices for reference, speakers can take many different perspectives on the same entity, with each perspective reflecting a different categorization.

Even when adults talk to one- and two-year-olds, they offer multiple perspectives from the start. As Brown (1958) pointed out, adults use a variety of terms for the same entity, with their choices typically determined by what appears most useful in context: an apple vs. some fruit vs. something to eat vs. a slice. Adults reword utterances to oneandel two-year-olds and, in doing so, often shift perspective in their efforts to get the children to attend to directives, as in ‘Pick up the blocks. Put your blocks in the box. Put them in here. The blocks go back in the box. Can you put them in?’ (Shatz 1978, Snow 1972). And they offer explicit directions to young children when they introduce new words for familiar, already-labelled, referents, with kind of, for example, as in ‘A ladle is a kind of spoon’; or when they introduce superordinate terms as in ‘Cats and dogs and bears are all animals’ (e.g., Blewitt 1983, Callanan 1985, Shipley, Kuhn & Madden 1983).

Such introductions make clear what the relation is between two (or more) terms produced, and hence what kind of shift in perspective is required in the move from one term to the other. In short, adult speakers tacitly assume that even very young children are capable of realizing that an entity can be considered from more than one perspective. The question is, do young children start with a one-perspective view and then move on gradually to a many-perspective view, as suggested by many of the experimental studies of early word-learning? Or do children start out by assuming many perspectives – and hence multiple terms for the same referent?

There is some evidence that the latter might be the case. First, in their spontaneous speech one-year-olds may refer to a toy horse on wheels with the term horse on one occasion when pulling it along, but with chair on another when sitting down on it. Or they may refer to a waste-basket with the term basket when looking at it, but shift to hide when putting it over their heads (Clark 1995a, 1996). Second, two-year-olds readily construct second terms – subordinate terms – for subtypes in familiar categories: they coin terms like Dalmatian-dog and poodle-dog for kinds of dogs, otherwise referred to with dog, or Volvo-car and Ford-car for kinds of cars, otherwise referred to with the term car (e.g., Clark, Gelman & Lane 1985; see also Waxman & Senghas 1992). Third, when they reject second terms, they are probably rejecting the perspectives thus presented and not the words themselves. For instance, a child who knows the two terms bird and parrot may on occasion reject bird in favour of parrot – presumably because he is concerned with the particular kind of bird rather than just with whether something is a bird or not. Detailed analysis of all the rejections recorded in a diary study (Clark 1993) showed that the majority were rejections of familiar terms already known to and produced by the child. The child’s rejections, then, could not have been rejections of the words as second terms for the referents in question; instead, they appeared to be rejections of those perspectives.

[1] The rejections in the anecdotal reports, however, seem to have been rejections based on the meanings of the words rejected. Grieve (1975), Macnamara (1982) and Valentine (1942) reported similar episodes: in two children rejected use of the superordinate term animal when it referred to a single instance, but accepted it when it referred to a group of animals. These rejections, then, appear to have been based on their meaning for animal, which for them denoted a collection and not a kind. As a result, it could not apply to single instances. The third case was similar, with a child treating car as a collection term and therefore as inapplicable to single cars. In short, the children’s meanings for animal and car were not yet equivalent to the conventional superordinate meanings assumed by adults, and their collection meanings precluded their being used to refer to single instances.
The present study was designed to test the hypothesis that young children start out with a many-perspectives view. The many-perspective view hypothesizes that, from the start, children take for granted that speakers use multiple terms for things, and realize that different words serve to present the same object or event from different perspectives. In the same way that in early play a pebble can be presented as a pebble or as a car, so a block can be referred to with the term block when building or with apple when handed to an adult in play. The two terms, block and apple, mark two different perspectives (two different categorizations) on the part of the speaker. This view therefore predicts that even very young children should accept multiple terms for the same referent and should be willing to produce a second term for a referent that has already been identified with a first one. In contrast, the one-perspective view hypothesizes that two- to four-year-olds will reject multiple terms applied to the same referent under the assumption that they implicitly apply an economy metric in the early stages of lexical acquisition. The metric says: 'You only need one term for an object; don’t bother with any more than one.' Children should also be unwilling, according to this view, to produce a second term for anything that has already been labelled.

To test these predictions, we chose a simple book-reading task where children had to identify specific characters when asked to point to instances of various categories, and to produce a second appropriate term for each referent. Two types of perspective potentially accessible even to young children are the perspectives involved in shifts of Level (dog vs. animal, or oak vs. tree) and shifts in Domain (boy vs. friend, or goldfish vs. pet). But two-year-olds generally have a rather limited vocabulary and the ability to recognize and make use of different perspectives depends on vocabulary, so it was unclear whether children would find it easier to deal with terms from two distinct levels or terms from two distinct domains. The present study examined both possibilities in a pragmatically natural task already familiar to the youngest children. The age range was chosen to include the full range for which researchers have assumed that constraints apply on word acquisition, namely two- to four-year-olds.

METHOD

Procedure

Children were interviewed individually in a small room adjacent to their classroom in the nursery school. The experimenter asked each child to take part in two tasks by looking at a picture-book with her.
were animals (e.g., ‘Is this hammer an animal?’). In this way, all the animals in each picture were either identified as referents of two distinct terms or labelled with a second term, by each child, in response to questions checking on multiple terms for the same referents.

In the Domain task, the experimenter again used four vignette pages, each with four small scenes showing two animals performing some activity. Here too she asked children a preliminary set of questions (not analysed) about the first page. She asked the child to find a certain type of animal, ‘Can you find a cat?’, then she asked, ‘What is that cat?’ If the child responded by naming the activity (for example, ‘He’s sailing’), rather than by giving a noun for the occupation, the experimenter prompted by asking, ‘What do you call someone who does that?’ If the child still did not give an occupation term, the experimenter followed up a second time with, for example, ‘Is that cat a sailor?’ This procedure was then repeated a second time to make sure the child was attending both to the occupations and the kinds of animals pictured. (The occupations pictured and the terms for each were selected after pilot-testing with terms listed as common in three-year-old vocabularies; Edwards & Gibbon 1964, Rinsland 1945.) For the three remaining pages, the experimenter asked a systematic series of questions; first, to find a specific kind of animal, ‘Can you find a dog?’ and then to identify that animal’s occupation, ‘What is this dog?’ (or the reverse). Then she asked the child to find all the animals with a certain occupation, ‘Can you find all the nurses?’ and then (of the two animals identified) asked ‘What is this nurse?’ where the response expected was the term for the kind of animal (a rabbit, say). Then she asked further questions with the form: ‘Is this X a Y?’ in which the terms for occupation and animal-type alternated as the first term, e.g., ‘Is this cat a fireman?’ and ‘Is this nurse a dog?’ Two of the questions were designed to be answered in the negative to ensure that children were not simply agreeing with whatever was asked. When the child answered ‘No’, the experimenter followed up with a further question, for example, for a cat that was not a fireman but a painter, ‘What is this cat then?’ Each child answered 12 comprehension and 12 production questions. Both tasks were recorded for later transcription.

Materials
The materials consisted of a book with eight pages of pictures. All pictures were drawings of animals modelled on those in the Richard Scarry series of children’s books (e.g., Scarry 1968). This type of drawing was used because most children are familiar with these books and are used to looking at such pictures and talking about the...
activities depicted. The animals in the pictures were dogs, cats, rabbits and pigs.

For the Level task, there were four pages, each depicting some general activity designed to elicit children's comprehension and production of terms for the participants from different levels in the same domain. The first page contained 12 animals (three of each of the four kinds), several wearing hats, and surrounded by different types of fruit. This page was used as a pretest for the remaining three pages which each contained six animals (two each of three kinds), with each picture depicting a joint activity - all six animals helping to build a house, all six playing with toys and all six driving vehicles. Each child answered six questions about each page (two checking on comprehension, two eliciting production, and one plus a follow-up as a check on children's general propensity to answer 'yes').

The other four pages for the Domain task were vignette pages designed to find out about children's knowledge of terms from two domains. Each page contained four vignettes, with each vignette depicting an activity with two different animals dressed appropriately for that activity. Each page therefore showed eight animals in all, two of each of four kinds. The first page was used to introduce the task and the remaining three for elicitation. Each child answered 12 questions per page (four to identify and label subsets, as in 'Can you find the rabbits?' followed by 'What are they?', another four on comprehension as in 'Is this a cat a captain?', with two questions requiring positive 'yes' answers and two requiring 'no' answers, and four on production as in 'What is the other cook?').

The order of presentation of the Level and the Domain tasks was counterbalanced across subjects within each age group.

Subjects
Thirty-six children participated in the study. They were divided into three age groups of 12 each (with six boys and six girls at each age level): two-year-olds (2;0 to 2;11, mean age 2;5), three-year-olds (3;0 to 3;10, mean age 3;5) and four-year-olds (4;0 to 4;8, mean age 4;3). All the children were from middle-class backgrounds and were learning English as their first language. Half the two-year-olds and all the three- and four-year-olds were attending the same nursery school; the other two-year-olds were contacted through the Infant Studies Laboratory at Stanford.

Results
All the children, regardless of age, succeeded in the two tasks and successfully answered nearly all the questions put to them. In so doing, they accepted multiple terms and produced second terms in addition to an initial term already presented and accepted. The children's responses in the two tasks were scored first for the appropriateness of the response to each question asked. Some questions required children's acceptance of two terms for the same referent; others elicited a second term for a referent already identified by means of a first term. All the children at each age level succeeded in answering some, and often all, of these questions appropriately in both tasks. None of the children rejected two terms for the same object, and nearly all of them were able to produce a second term for an already-labelled object when asked.

All the children answered all the set and subset questions correctly, so these will not be analysed further. In response to the comprehension and production questions, children offered appropriate answers 96% of the time overall, with little difference between the two tasks: the Level task received 97% appropriate responses and the Domain task 96%. Even the two-year-olds were almost at ceiling, with 93% of their responses overall being appropriate. When they did not give appropriate responses, they typically said 'Don't know', gave no response at all, or, on rare occasions, gave an irrelevant response. Three- and four-year-olds gave appropriate responses 98% and 100% of the time, respectively.

The Level task
In the Level task, the experimenter asked children six questions (two per page) that tapped their acceptance (comprehension) of two terms in the same utterance for the target referent, and six questions that elicited their own production of a second term. Overall all 12 children at each of the three ages answered nearly all of these questions appropriately. The percentages of these responses by age are shown in Table 1. There were no significant differences with age in either comprehension or production. That is, even the two-year-olds supplied appropriate responses to these questions over 90% of the time.

In the Level task, children were also asked two further questions per page, designed to check on whether they understood that the term animal applied only to animals and not to inanimate objects. For example, the experimenter might point at a hammer in the picture and ask 'Is this an animal?' and follow up with 'Why not?' or 'Why?'?'. The first of these two questions therefore required the answer 'no'. This also served as a check on children's tendency to give compliant 'yes' answers to comprehension questions. Many of the two-year-olds found this question hard. But six of the 12 answered 'no' on at least one
TABLE 1. Understanding and producing multiple terms in the Level task

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Understood (%)</th>
<th>Produced (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2:5</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:5</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4:3</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Each percentage is based on 72 data points.

occasion (out of three), another five relied on 'Don’t know' or refused to answer. Overall, two-year-olds offered appropriate responses here only 28% of the time, compared with 92% for the three-year-olds and 100% for the four-year-olds. At the same time, all the two-year-olds (as well as the older children) responded appropriately on the introductory page when asked to pick out, say, 'all the animals' vs. 'all the cats'.

They never included non-animate objects in their choices and they did include all the possible target referents. These data suggest that even the two-year-olds had a good understanding of the nature of the perspective shifts from cat to animal, say, and from animal to dog. But, unlike the three- and four-year-olds, they did have difficulty with the question requiring a 'no' answer and with providing reasons for such an answer. At the same time, their general acceptance of multiple labels in the other comprehension questions (Table 1) is further backed up by their ability to produce second terms.

The Domain task

In the Domain task, the experimenter asked 12 questions (four per page) designed to check on children's understanding and acceptance of two terms, both referring to the same character, and another 12 questions (again, four per page) to elicit production of a second term for a previously labelled character. The percentages of appropriate responses are shown in Table 2. Again, as in the Level task, the two-year-olds did very well on both types of questions and gave appropriate responses 95% of the time for comprehension questions and 86% for production ones. While there were no differences with age for comprehension, there was a significant difference for production ($F(2,33) = 27.05, p < 0.001$), with the two-year-olds providing significantly fewer terms (86%) than the three- or four-year-olds (99% and 100%, respectively). This suggests that the larger vocabulary required by the Domain task was somewhat more demanding than the Level task, in production, for the youngest children: they had to be able to come up with terms for occupations as well as for animal subkinds, and this was sometimes difficult.

In this task, half the comprehension questions were designed to require a 'yes' answer in response to questions such as 'Is that cat a painter?' (where this was true), and half were designed to require a 'no' answer, again as a check on any tendency to give only 'yes' answers. Ten of the 12 two-year-olds answered all six 'yes' questions appropriately; one answered five of the six questions appropriately, and one answered three. With the 'no' questions, all 12 two-year-olds answered at least one appropriately, four answered all six appropriately, three answered five, two answered four, two answered three, and one answered only one appropriately. In short, even the two-year-olds showed here that they could answer 'no' questions appropriately. Among the three- and four-year-olds, all 12 children at each age answered both the 'yes' and the 'no' comprehension questions correctly. Table 3 gives the percentage of correct responses for 'yes' and 'no' comprehension questions separately, by age.

In summary, this pattern of responses, with even the youngest children (aged two) accepting and producing multiple terms of the same referents nearly all the time, is predicted by the many-perspectives
account, but not by the one-perspective one. Although two-year-olds had difficulty with comprehension questions requiring the answer ‘no’ in the Level task, data from the same children in the Domain task showed that they could answer questions requiring ‘no’ appropriately 76% of the time overall, with 11 of the 12 two-year-olds giving appropriate ‘no’ answers at least half the time.

Finding the right word
To shift from a term at one level to a term at another, children need to know the conventional words for the categories in question and to understand the relation between the words at different levels. In the Level task, they needed to know the terms animal, cat, rabbit, bear and dog. In the Domain task, they needed to know rather more – not only terms for the animal-types, as in the Level task, but also terms for occupations such as cowboy, cook, sailor and pilot. In order to respond appropriately to the questions, either by pointing out the relevant characters or by answering ‘yes’ or ‘no’ or by producing an appropriate second term for some character, children had to be able to shift perspective from basic to superordinate level (or the reverse) in the Level task and from animal-type to occupation (or the reverse) in the Domain task. To do this, children have to know the appropriate words.

The high number of responses at all three ages (Tables 1 and 2) showed that children as young as two years can both understand and produce multiple terms for the same referent; and on most occasions, they appeared to have no difficulty in doing this. But they did sometimes fail to find the right words. On such occasions, children sometimes coined a new word for the category in question or, having proposed one term, repaired it with another term. They were more likely to coin words and to make repairs when shifting perspective in the Domain task than in the Level task, presumably because they needed to draw on a greater number of terms for the Domain task.

Children coined new words on only four occasions (four different children) in the Level task, but on 45 occasions (19 different children) in the Domain task, for an 8% to 92% split (significant at $p < 0.001$ by Mann-Whitney). In these coinages, children nearly always constructed compound nouns (90%) rather than derived forms (10%) (see Clark for target ‘soldier’). Four-year-olds made more repairs than the two- or three-year-olds in the Domain task, apparently in an effort to be more precise. One four-year-old, for instance, in response to the experimenter’s asking ‘What is this rabbit?’, replied ‘Drummer. Oh no no no. A soldier.’ In their repairs to domain-shift responses, four-year-olds offered a more specific label 65% of the time, compared with simply changing the label offered the rest of the time. Overall, then, children made more repairs and also produced more lexical innovations in the Domain task than in the Level task.

These differences between the two tasks, though small, are consistent with the greater demands placed on the children in the Domain task when they were asked to produce terms for both occupations and animal subkinds. They are also consistent with the one age difference observed in production: in the Domain task, two-year-olds produced significantly fewer appropriate terms than the three- and four-year-olds. In summary, even the two-year-olds were very close to ceiling in their responses to both tasks. They could all deal appropriately with two distinct terms for the same referent nearly all the time, and there were no significant differences with age for comprehension in either task. All the children, regardless of age, gave over 90% appropriate responses. In production, two-year-olds did slightly less well in the Domain task, but were no different from three- and four-year-olds in the Level task. But the Domain task was slightly more demanding overall in that it also elicited more lexical innovations and more repairs than the Level task. Overall, children at all three ages showed considerable skill in shifting perspective, whether in responding to comprehension questions that contained multiple terms or in producing further terms of their own (Tables 1 and 2). These results are consistent with the predictions of the many-perspectives hypothesis: even the
DISCUSSION

The present findings offer strong support for the view that children are able to use two distinct terms for the same entity: from age two, they accept two distinct terms for the same referent, with no rejections of the second term. And, also from age two, they are able to produce a second term for referents that have already been labelled with a first one. Children succeeded in this in the Level task, where they used the superordinate term animal and various animal-type terms (e.g., bear, rabbit, pig), and in the Domain task, where they used terms for occupations (e.g., pilot, sailor) and for animal-types (e.g., cat, dog). In short, these data support a many-perspective view of children’s ability to use words, even in the earliest stages of language acquisition, over a one-perspective view which assumes that children can apply just one term per referent.

The present data, then, are consistent with and add to earlier findings, both from children’s spontaneous speech and from elicitation tasks in which children showed they could use multiple terms for the same object. In a new-word learning task, for example, Waxman & Senghas (1992) showed that two-year-olds (mean age 2;1) readily learned two terms, differing in level, for the same referent. Two-year-olds also readily construct new compound nouns for subcategories of familiar categories, and produce nouns like snow-car for a subkind of car (otherwise referred to with car), or poodle-dog for a subkind of dog (Clark et al. 1985; also Berman & Clark 1989, Gelman, Wilcox & Clark 1989, Waxman, Shipley & Shepperson 1991).

These findings are also consistent with findings that three- and four-year-olds can use multiple terms for the same referent. Waxman & Hatch (1992), for example, elicited terms for pictures from three- and four-year-olds by asking appropriately worded questions (e.g., of a rose, asking ‘Is this a dandelion/a tree/an animal?’) to see whether children could produce more than one term for the same referent. They found that most three-year-olds (75%) and all but one four-year-old produced more than one term for the same object on at least 50% of trials (see also Au & Glusman 1990).

The findings of these studies, together with the present results, offer strong evidence that children can understand and produce more than one label for an object, and they can do so as young as age two. But for this to occur, use of a second (or subsequent) term needs to be motivated, to make sense to the child either within the context of the task itself, as in the book-reading tasks, or through use of added pragmatic directions about the relation between an earlier, perhaps familiar, term and the later one. Such directions may be non-linguistic, in the form of heightened attention from the speaker and other signals of interest marked by eye-gaze, physical stance, gestures, pointing, demonstrations of action or function, and so on. Or the speaker may draw the child’s attention to how certain objects or actions differ in the same setting (e.g., Akhtar & Tomasello 1996, Tomasello & Akhtar 1995, Tomasello & Barton 1994, Waxman & Senghas 1992). Other pragmatic directions, of course, are linguistic, as when the adult interlocutor specifies the relation between the term already known and a new term being offered, e.g., ‘An X is a kind of Y’ or ‘Xs are baby Ys’ (Blewitt 1983, Callanan 1985, 1989, Shipley et al. 1983). In conversation, children are usually offered both non-linguistic and linguistic clues to the relations among the different terms being used by the speaker for the same referent (Clark 1995b).

Yet experimental studies of early word learning have suggested that three- and four-year-olds often fail to accept second terms for referents already labelled. Why should this happen? We suggest that one reason for this is that children lack information about how the second term is connected to the first. Use of a second term without any pragmatic directions, non-linguistic or linguistic, present children with a problem: Is the second term being introduced a repair made to replace the first term? Is the second term more specific in meaning than the first? (Or more general?) Is the second term drawn from a different domain? In everyday conversation, adult speakers are likely to offer explicit information about such options, but just this information is typically missing from the word-learning contexts. So children have to decide, on their own, what the status of a second term is. If it is a mistake, for example, then adherence to a prior term (with implicit rejection of any later one) makes a reasonable strategy for responding. When the referent objects are unfamiliar as well, children may take a different route instead and assume that the first term was a mistake and so stick only with the second one proffered by the speaker. Both interpretations would be reasonable where the speaker has given no indication of how the two terms are related. And in either case children will appear to accept only one term (e.g., Merriman 1986), and hence only one perspective, on the referent in question. In short, children try to make sense of experimental tasks in the light of what they know about everyday conversation (e.g., Siegal, Waters & Dinwiddy 1988). Where
these tasks do not conform to everyday pragmatic expectations, children may have a difficult time working out what the intended relations are among the new words they are presented with, and between familiar terms and new terms proposed by the experimenter.

Finally, one might suppose that adults would refrain from using two labels for the same referent in talking to very young children, but this is not the case. In one study where parents were asked to teach their infants words for items in three domains, they offered second terms 17% of the time to children with fewer than 50 words of vocabulary in production (mean words produced = 21, mean age = 16 months), and did so over 30% of the time to slightly older children with vocabularies of at least 100 words (mean words produced = 290, mean age 23 months) (Callanan, Sabbagh, Perez & Cervantes 1995). That is, adults rely on more than one term for the same referent even in speaking to one-year-olds, but they link the meanings of such terms to words already known to their young interlocutors.

The speech adults address to young children is consistent with the general nature of the lexicon and the uses to which it can be put by speakers. The same referent can be viewed from a variety of perspectives, and speakers signal their choice in this regard in the words they use (Clark 1996). Entities in some domains are organized hierarchically, so terms lower in the hierarchy are included in those higher up: a speaker can refer to her spaniel on one occasion as the spaniel, on another as the dog, and on yet others as the animal. The same entity may be also be referred to variously as the guard-dog, the barker, the garbage-disposal or the dribbler, depending on which perspective is relevant to the speaker’s conversational goals (Ravn 1988). In short, the lexicon offers great flexibility to speakers by allowing them to use words with very different senses to refer to the same entity. Adult speakers expose children to this property of words from the start.

SUMMARY

The present study looked at young children's ability to use more than one term for the same referent in two tasks – one where the second term belonged to the same semantic domain and was hierarchically related to the first, and one where the second term belonged to a different domain. Even the youngest children, aged two, had no difficulty and showed that they could readily deploy two distinct terms for the same referent. That is, they were able to take more than one perspective on the same entity and switch from one to another. These data support the many-perspective view of lexical acquisition and offer evidence against a one-perspective account.

REFERENCES


