

Dan Yurovsky - Abstract

A Coordination Approach to Early Word Learning

Young children learn the meanings of thousands of words by the time they can run down the street. The computational problem they solve is daunting: extracting discrete word forms from a sequence of continuous speech signals and mapping these forms onto their meanings. Yet, the same children who solve this problem continuously forget where they left their coats and hats. How do children learn language so quickly despite cognitive constraints on memory, attention, and information processing? My research aims to resolve this puzzle by reframing language acquisition as a coordination problem. The problem is not how children learn language, but how parents and children construct it together.