

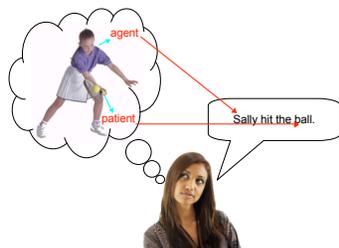
Who is she and why is she so scary? Psych verbs and the mapping from semantics to syntax

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Subjects and objects of verbs play specific conceptual roles.

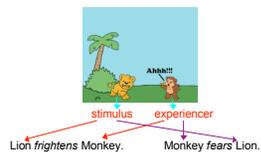


These mappings generalize across verbs as well as to novel verbs (Marantz, 1982).



Psych verbs present a challenge for theory

(Dowty, 1991; Levin & Rappaport Hovav, 2005):



Questions:

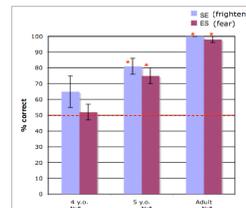
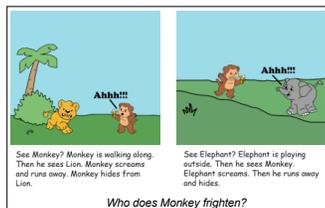
Do psych verbs present a problem to the learner?
Is there a default mapping?

Child-directed frequency counts for verbs used in this study (CHILDES; MacWhinney, 2000)

Experiencer-Stimulus	Stimulus-Experiencer
like (13,515)	scare (251)
love (1,333)	surprise (62)
hate (169)	frighten (22)
trust (22)	bore (18)
fear (8)	confuse (15)
admire (4)	amaze (2)

Experiment 1

At what age do kids learn the argument structure of psych verbs?
6 ES verbs and 6 SE verbs

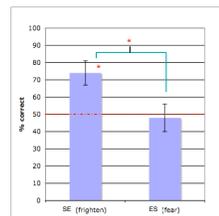
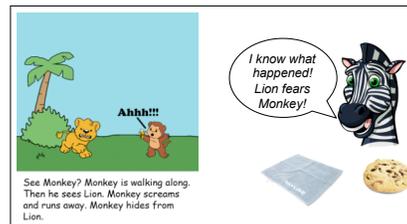


Discussion

4 y.o.s are just beginning to learn psych verbs.
Task might be too challenging.

Experiment 2

4 y.o.s (N=16)
Truth-Value Judgment Task (Crain & Thornton, 1998)



Experiencer-Stimulus	Stimulus-Experiencer
frighten, scare, surprise	Above Chance
amaze, bore, confuse	At Chance
	Below Chance
	fear, trust

Discussion

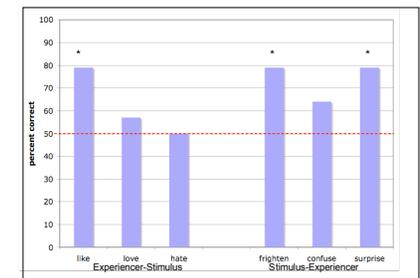
4 y.o.s may assume *like*, *love* & *hate* are bidirectional.
Their experience tends to reinforce this.
Fright and surprise are rarely bidirectional.



Patricelli (2005) Blankie

Experiment 3

New, unidirectional stories for *like*, *love* & *hate*.
Old frighten, confuse & surprise stories used as filler.
4 y.o.s (N=12)



Discussion

Reinforcing unidirectionality improved performance on *like*
- The most common psych verb.
But *love* and *hate* remained at chance.

Conclusion

4 y.o.s know argument structure of some SE verbs (e.g., *frighten*).
But have poor knowledge of argument structure of ES verbs (e.g., *fear*)
Despite more experience with ES verbs.

Hypothesis 1: Early knowledge of argument structure mappings
Suggests early acquisition of these verbs is governed by generalizations.

- Not verb islands (Tomasello, 1992)

Hypothesis 2: Late knowledge of argument structure mappings
Suggests conceptual bias (cf. Pesetsky, 1995).

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