Word-learning in 14-month-old Swedish-learning infants

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Previous studies have shown that infants learn words better when they are presented in infant-directed speech (IDS) than when they are presented in adult-directed speech (ADS) (e.g., Ma et al., 2011). With the switch task paradigm (Werker et al., 1998), 13- to 14-montholds learn words presented in IDS, but not when using the preferential looking paradigm (Foursha-Stevenson et al., 2017). This discrepancy can be due to differences in task demands. In the present experiment, we tested word-learning in IDS and ADS between-subjects in 14- month-old Swedish-learning infants, using a simplified version of the traditional preferential looking paradigm (Ramachers et al., 2017). Instead of labeling two objects during training and testing infants on both (as in Foursha-Stevenson et al., 2017), only one of the objects is labeled during training, while the other one is presented and introduced without labeling it (e.g.: “Look at that one!”). At test, both objects are presented, but only the previously labeled one is named, prompting the infant to look at the correct object. Participants (n = 51, 29 female and 22 male, mean age = 13.9 months, SD = 0.6, range 11.6-14.8) did not look longer towards the target compared to the non-target in the IDS condition (t[20] = -2.22, p = 0.038, M = 45.9%, 95% CI = 42.1%|49.7%), nor in the ADS condition (t[19] = 0.488, p = 0.631, M = 51.1%, 95% CI = 46.3%|55.9%). That is, no target preference was established and we were not able to confirm that IDS facilitates word-learning, nor could we demonstrate experimental word learning in 14-month-olds with the simplified preferential looking paradigm.