Children’s first words have typically been investigated in terms of early comprehension usually using Preferential Looking Paradigms (e.g. Tincoff & Jusczyk, 2012; Syymyk, 2008). A noun bias has been shown in children’s first words. Other studies investigating children’s early production of words found that words spoken in their environment make up their early vocabulary (see Tardif et al., 2008). While early production data exist for US-English, no representative data exists for UK-English children.

Furthermore, only few studies have investigated the effect of age on the composition of children’s first word production (e.g. Symyk, 2008). If children approach language with a phonetic orientation, a first word production should not impact the composition of those words. However, if the first words reflect the most common words in the input, we might expect younger and older children to learn different words due to different environmental factors, e.g. a shift in mobility and feeding practices.

A new UK-wide parent report instrument (UK-CDI) is used to compare the composition of the first 10 words in children who reached up to 10 words at 8-10 months of age with those who reached up to 10 words at 16-18 months (Alcock et al., in prep).

RESULTS

• Mann-Whitney U Tests were conducted with the two age groups (8-10 months, 16-18 months) and the five most common categories (sounds, food, routines, people, animal words)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sound effects</th>
<th>8-10-month-olds (Md=0, n=120) and 16-18-month-olds (Md=25,n=25), U=1053, z=-2.59,p=.01,v=.22</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Food and drink</td>
<td>8-10-month-olds (Md=0, n=120) and 16-18-month-olds (Md=0,n=25), U=1179, z=3.17,p&lt;.001, r=0.46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Games and routines: 8-10-month-olds (Md=0, n=120) and 16-18-month-olds (Md=0, n=25), U=1356, z=-.84,p=0.40,r=0.07

People: 8-10-month-olds (Md=56,n=120) and 16-18-month-olds (Md=25,n=25), U=808, Z=1.66,p<0.001, r=0.3

Animals: 8-10-month-olds (Md=0, n=120) and 16-18-month-olds (Md=0, n=25), U=1354, z=1.10,p=0.27,r=0.02

Children know more than just nouns! They also show words for:

- sounds effects
- games & routines

Nouns: 79% for 8-10-month-olds vs 42% for 16-18-month-olds, p<0.001

16-18-month-olds use words that span more categories (words out of 13 different categories) in comparison to the 8-10-month-olds (words out of 12 categories)

16-18-month-olds also produce significantly more food and drink words which can be explained by more exposure to different foods in the second year of life

DISCUSSION

• The results suggest that the early environment plays a substantial role in the composition of the early lexicon within, as well as between, languages.

• The increase of more social communication (e.g. sounds, games and routines) in the older group could be due to advances in social cognition from 14-months old as described by Bergelson & Swingley (2013) when studying language comprehension.

• Future research should look at a bigger sample of the 16-18-month-old age group and a follow-up would be useful in order to investigate possible implications

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