

How Children Learn the Meanings of Words

**LD
&CC Learning, Development, and Conceptual Change**
Lila Gleitman, Susan Carey, Elissa Newport, and
Elizabeth Spelke, editors

From Simple Input to Complex Grammar, James L. Morgan, 1986

Concepts, Kinds, and Cognitive Development, Frank C. Keil, 1989

Learnability and Cognition: The Acquisition of Argument Structure, Steven Pinker, 1989

Mind Bugs: The Origins of Procedural Misconception, Kurt VanLehn, 1990

Categorization and Naming in Children: Problems of Induction, Ellen M. Markman, 1989

The Child's Theory of Mind, Henry M. Wellman, 1990

Understanding the Representational Mind, Josef Perner, 1991

An Odyssey in Learning and Perception, Eleanor J. Gibson, 1991

Beyond Modularity: A Developmental Perspective on Cognitive Science, Annette Karmiloff-Smith, 1992

Mindblindness: An Essay on Autism and "Theory of Mind," Simon Baron-Cohen, 1995

Speech: A Special Code, Alvin M. Liberman, 1995

Theory and Evidence: The Development of Scientific Reasoning, Barbara Koslowski, 1995

Race in the Making: Cognition, Culture, and the Child's Construction of Human Kinds, Lawrence A. Hirschfeld, 1996

Words, Thoughts, and Theories, Alison Gopnik and Andrew N. Meltzoff, 1996

The Cradle of Knowledge: Development of Perception in Infancy, Philip J. Kellman and Martha E. Arterberry, 1998

Language Creation and Change: Creolization, Diachrony, and Development, edited by Michel DeGraff, 1999

Systems That Learn: An Introduction to Learning Theory, second edition, Sanjay Jain, Daniel Osherson, James S. Royer, and Arun Sharma, 1999

How Children Learn the Meanings of Words, Paul Bloom, 2000

How Children Learn the Meanings of Words

Paul Bloom

A Bradford Book
The MIT Press
Cambridge, Massachusetts
London, England

First MIT Press paperback edition, 2002

© 2000 Massachusetts Institute of Technology

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form by any electronic or mechanical means (including photocopying, recording, or information storage and retrieval) without permission in writing from the publisher.

This book was set in Palatino by Achorn Graphic Services, Inc. and was printed and bound in the United States of America.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Bloom, Paul, 1963–

How children learn the meanings of words / Paul Bloom.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN-10: 0-262-02469-1 (hc : alk. paper), 0-262-52329-9 (pb)

ISBN-13: 978-0-262-02469-3 (hc : alk. paper), 978-0-262-52329-5 (pb)

1. Language acquisition. 2. Semantics. I. Title.

P118.B623 2000

401'.93—dc21

99-23901

CIP

10 9 8 7

For my brother, Howard Bloom

BLANK PAGE

Contents

Series Foreword	ix
Acknowledgments	xi
Chapter 1	
First Words	1
Chapter 2	
Fast Mapping and the Course of Word Learning	25
Chapter 3	
Word Learning and Theory of Mind	55
Chapter 4	
Object Names and Other Common Nouns	89
Chapter 5	
Pronouns and Proper Names	121
Chapter 6	
Concepts and Categories	145
Chapter 7	
Naming Representations	171
Chapter 8	
Learning Words through Linguistic Context	191
Chapter 9	
Number Words	213
Chapter 10	
Words and Concepts	241
Chapter 11	
Final Words	261
References	267
Author Index	291
Subject Index	297

BLANK PAGE

Series Foreword

This series in learning, development, and conceptual change includes state-of-the-art reference works, seminal book-length monographs, and texts on the development of concepts and mental structures. It spans learning in all domains of knowledge, from syntax to geometry to the social world, and is concerned with all phases of development, from infancy through adulthood.

The series intends to engage such fundamental questions as:

The nature and limits of learning and maturation: the influence of the environment, of initial structures, and of maturational changes in the nervous system on human development; learnability theory; the problem of induction; domain-specific constraints on development.

The nature of conceptual change: conceptual organization and conceptual change in child development, in the acquisition of expertise, and in the history of science.

Lila Gleitman
Susan Carey
Elissa Newport
Elizabeth Spelke