24 Different word acquisition of Japanese and English

～Cross-linguistic study of parental input and word acquisition～
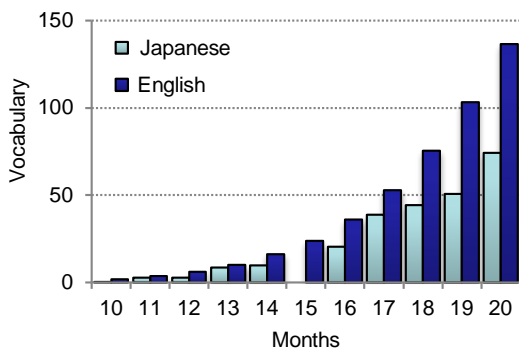
Abstract

According to vocabulary checklists, the vocabularies of Japanese-speaking children are smaller than those of English-speaking children. In contrast, Japanese-speaking children learn novel words accurately compared to English-speaking children. We addressed this issue by focusing on Japanese- and English-speaking mothers' speech to their children. Mothers described video clips of identical events to their 20-month-olds. Japanese-speaking mothers often mixed both adult words (e.g., "dog") and such infant-directed speech word as onomatopoeias and sound-symbolic words (e.g., "bow-wow") for target referents. Their number of label types was significantly larger than the English-speaking mothers. These cross-linguistic findings suggest that such differences might contribute to differences in vocabulary growth in children.
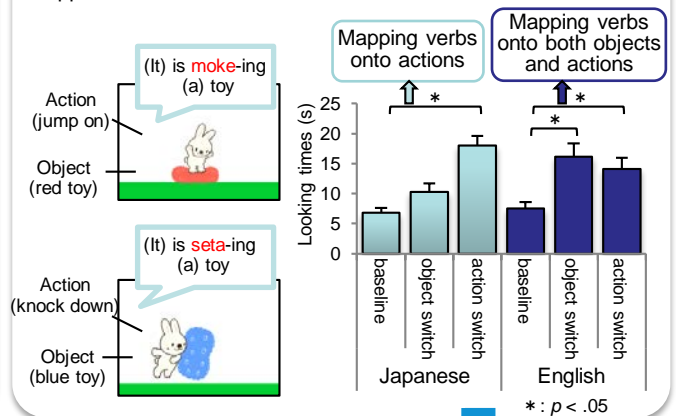
■ Children's vocabulary

Japanese-speaking children had smaller productive vocabularies than English-speaking children according to MacArthur-Bates Communicative Development Inventory

■ Learning novel words

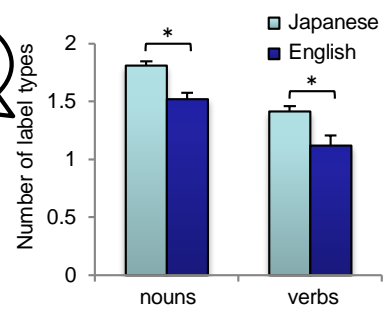By 20 months of age, Japanese-speaking children accurately mapped novel transitive verbs onto actions

(It) is moke-ing (a) toy

Action (jump on)
Object (red toy)

(It) is seta-ing (a) toy

Action (knock down)
Object (blue toy)

Mapping verbs onto actions

Mapping verbs onto both objects and actions

* : $p < .05$

Why do Japanese children learning words accurately have small vocabularies?

■ Mother's speech style

· Japanese- and English-speaking mothers described video clips to their 20-month-olds
· Maternal speech was analyzed by focusing on nouns and verbs

There's a dog! Mogu-mogu. The doggie is eating.

Japanese mothers used multiple labels

Cross-linguistic study shows relationship between maternal speech style and children's word acquisition

【Reference】
[1] Y. Okumura, Y. Oshima-Takane, T. Kobayashi, M. Ma, Y. Kayama, "Japanese children comprehend null object sentences earlier than pronominal object sentences," in *Proc. ICIS*, 2016.
[2] Y. Oshima-Takane, T. Kobayashi, "Learning novel transitive verbs in Japanese-, French- and English-speaking infants: a cross-linguistic study," in *Proc. IASCL*, 2014.
[3] T. Kobayashi, Y. Oshima-Takane, "How mothers describe dynamic action events to 20-month-old-childreb," in *Proc. ICP*, 2016.

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