

What helps children to acquire new object names on the basis of unobservable information?

Vlasova Elisabeth (Elizabeth.Vlasova@Gmail.Com)

Department of Psychology, Russian State University for the Humanities,
Miuskaya sq., 6, Moscow, Russian Federation

Kotov Alexey (Al.Kotov@Gmail.Com)

Department of Psychology, Russian State University for the Humanities,
Miuskaya sq., 6, Moscow, Russian Federation

P.Bloom (2000) states the social character of children's ability to fast map. He supposed that among simultaneously given observable and unobservable information children would prefer remembering the unobservable one because it was verbally transmitted by adults and wasn't available to the visual perception.

In our research we examined what helps children to acquire new object names on the basis of the unobservable information. We told our three- and four- year-old participants the internal color of the new artificial object as the unobservable information along with the information about its name and the external color. Additionally we tested children's color naming competence. Contrary to P.Bloom's expectations we found that the four-year-olds were equally successful in remembering both the observable and the unobservable information. But the three-year-olds' performance in acquiring the unobservable information depended on their color naming competence – those children who couldn't name the basic colors couldn't recall the object's internal color and half of those who could name colors, could recall it (after a one-week delay). Thus lexical competence in the task-relevant domain is necessary but not sufficient condition for acquiring the unobservable information.

We designed the meaningful objects for our second experiment in order to a child could expect it to have some internal color (such as a house). The three-year-olds performed significantly better in this condition (among those who could name the basic colors).

Thus acquisition of the new object names is determined by both the conceptual expectations and the lexical competence in the task-relevant domain.