

Study provides new insight into how toddlers learn verbs

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Verbs pose a challenge for toddlers because they describe actions rather than objects

Parents can help toddlers' language skills by showing them a variety of examples of different actions, according to new research from the University of Liverpool.

Previous research has shown that verbs pose particular difficulties to [toddlers](#) as they refer to actions rather than objects, and actions are often different each time a child sees them.

To find out more about this area of child language, University psychologists asked a group of toddlers to watch one of two short videos. They then examined whether watching a cartoon star repeat the same action, compared to a character performing three different actions, affected the children's understanding of verbs.

Developmental psychologist, Dr Katherine Twomey, said: "Knowledge of how children start to learn language is important to our understanding of how they progress throughout preschool and school years.

"This is the first study to indicate that showing toddlers similar but, importantly, not identical [actions](#) actually helped them understand what a verb refers to, instead of confusing them as you might expect."

Dr Jessica Horst from the University of Sussex who collaborated on the research added: "It is a crucial first step in understanding how what children see affects how they learn verbs and action categories, and provides the groundwork for future studies to examine in more detail exactly what kinds of variability affect how children learn words."

The research is published in the *British Journal of Developmental Psychology*.

More information: [onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10 ... /bjdp.12042/abstract](https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/bjdp.12042/abstract)

Provided by University of Liverpool

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