

Twenty-two month olds detect verb-noun exchanges in
fluent speech: Evidence for category
preferences for familiar content words

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In previous work, we found that 16-month-olds did not show sensitivity to exchanges of familiar nouns and verbs in fluent sentences, despite showing preferences for the grammatical sentences when the locations of inflections were manipulated. In this study, the sensitivity of older infants (18 and 22 month olds) was examined in a modified Headturn Preference Procedure. By 22 months, infants showed a reliable preference for grammatical sentences over sentences in which familiar nouns and verbs were exchanged. Despite the large number of words in English that function as both a noun and a verb (e.g. "to hug/a hug"), infants younger than two years old show preferences for the use of familiar single-category nouns and verbs in the appropriate grammatical category.