Chapter 5 OUTLINE: Learning Words

*Words aren’t like facts or numbers just to be stored and retrieved; their learning is a passage of discovery: From sound bundle serving as a container for all sorts of meanings to the prominence of concrete objects paired with words 1:1, and to words as ways to refer and stand for*

5.1 Words and Their Interface to Sound

* Which sounds to attach to meanings?
* Studying how children map sounds to meaning: The switch task experiment (14-month-olds)

5.2 Reference and Concepts

* Words and objects: Experiment testing the prominence of objects vs. their colorful parts (12 to 19-month-olds)
  + Whole-object bias > object words as natural condidates for reference
  + Categories large and small; basic-level categories and natural classes
  + How different languages cut up the concept pie
    - Cues for forming categories
    - Experiment: Animals and the truck

5.3 Understanding Speakers’ Intentions

* + - Associations versus intentions

Intent: Tomasello’s experiment on mind alignment in searching, intuition about concepts and learning through association

* + - METHOD 5.1: Revisiting the switch task
    - Mutual exclusivity and association

5.4 Parts of Speech

* + - Verbs and other learning problems: The duck and the bunny experiment
    - Children use syntax to constrain meaning: Syntactic bootstrapping/ learning from sentential context
    - Doing word statistics and memorizing prominent combinations

5.5 Words: Some Assembly Required

* + - The smallest units of meaning
    - The structure inside words
    - Doing statistics and storing prototypes
    - Word-building options: Memory, rules or analogy?
    - Learning to predict allomorphs
    - Learning irregular verbs and noun plurals

5.6 Words versus Rules

* + Rules: Learning to generalize
  + One system or two?
  + Separate brain networks for words and rules?
    - * The chicken-and-egg problem of language and thought

**Providence talks**  
<http://languagelog.ldc.upenn.edu/nll/?p=4514>  
The city of Providence in Rhode Island has launched a large-scale initiative to increase the amount of language input that is heard by children from low-income families. This link provides coverage and interesting discussion.

**The birth of a word**  
<http://www.ted.com/talks/deb_roy_the_birth_of_a_word#t-18185>  
Researcher Deb Roy recorded 90,000 hours of video to document the interactions and linguistic input that led to and accompanied his baby’s first words. In this lecture, he describes the results of this project.

**Lego nomenclature**  
<http://www.themorningnews.org/article/a-common-nomenclature-for-lego-families>  
Some activities call for specialized vocabulary. In this delightful article, a father discusses how a group of boys have converged upon a lexicon for Lego blocks.