

Toddlers link new words to whole objects

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A U.S. psychologist says young toddlers look at whole objects rather than parts when learning new words.

George Hollich, director of Purdue University's Infant Language Lab, tested 12- and 19-month-olds to see whether they would associate a novel word with a complex two-part object or with either of that object's parts, the university said Wednesday in a release.

The study found that infants associate words with whole objects, even those that could potentially be construed as two separate objects.

For example, when introducing a young toddler to a dog, the child automatically thinks of the object as a dog. If adults want to talk about the dog's tail or its bark, then they need to be more explicit when communicating with the child.

Hollich said when labeling more than just an object, adults need to do something special such as pointing at the part while saying its word or explaining what the item does.

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