Incidental Learning of Idioms
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BACKGROUND
• The meta-semantic hypothesis suggests that children analyze the components of idioms and that strong vocabulary skills are a prerequisite for idiom learning (Nippold, 1998).
• Children comprehend high frequency idioms better than low frequency idioms; exposure matters (Nippold & Rudzinski, 1993).
• Incidental learning of words in children is a well-documented phenomenon (Gray, 2006; Rice & Woodsmall, 1988; Oetting, Rice, & Swank, 1995).

QUESTIONS
Following a one time exposure:
• Do children recognize more idioms than novel expressions?
• Do children comprehend the meanings of exposed target idioms better than non-exposed idioms?
• Do older girls recognize and comprehend more expressions than younger girls?

METHOD
Subjects: Six girls aged 12-14 (older) and six girls aged 8-9 (younger). Monolingual.

PROCEDURE
• Conversational exposure during a crafts activity (4 participants, 1 producing targets)
• 12 low frequency idioms (Nippold, 1998)
• 12 novel expressions, matched in no. of syll.

POST TESTING (reading tasks)
• Recognition: “Did you hear today?” Y/N.
• Target idioms and novels + 12 non-exposed idioms and 12 non-exposed novels.
• Comprehension: Mary is angry and wants Bob to leave her house immediately. She might say: A. Stay a while. B. Pet the toad C. Hit the road. D. Mind the store 12 exposed target idioms and 12 non-exposed low frequency idioms included

RESULTS
Figure 1
Recognition of Target Idioms and Target Novel Expressions

Figure 2
Comprehension of Target Idioms and Non-Exposed Idioms

REFERENCES

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