

**Principled and precise links between object naming and object representation
in prelinguistic infants
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Abstract:

The power of human language derives not only from its own precision and complexity, but also from its intricate links to conceptual representations. But how, and how early, is a link between language and cognition forged in the first place? Long before they produce their first words, infants have already begun to forge this link. They represent objects flexibly, informed not only by whether but how the objects are named. In today's talk, I focus specifically on our flexibility in representing the very same object (e.g., the family dog) as either a unique individual (Rover) or a member of an object category (eg., a dog). This flexibility is supported by language: how an object is named - either as a unique individual or a member of a category - is instrumental to how we represent it. This representational flexibility is available to infants as early as 7 months of age. Moreover, infants' representations of objects - created in the context of naming - are sufficiently robust to support their reasoning about objects in dynamic events, and sufficiently precise to support linguistic analysis.