

The production and comprehension of novel words

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Many theories of language processing (especially localist ones) assume several levels of processing and representation. Key parts are usually a semantic level of concepts and word meanings, and a lexical level of word forms. In this framework, language production is the activation and selection of an appropriate entry at the lexical level for a given meaning, and vice versa, language comprehension is the activation and selection of an appropriate entry at the semantic level for a given word form. However, the human capacity to deal with novel words – which should not yet have such corresponding entries – complicates this picture. In this presentation, I will present several studies which examine how speakers create novel words to express specific meanings, and how they interpret novel words they have not encountered before. I will also present how distributed or distributional computational models can start to capture these empirical phenomena.