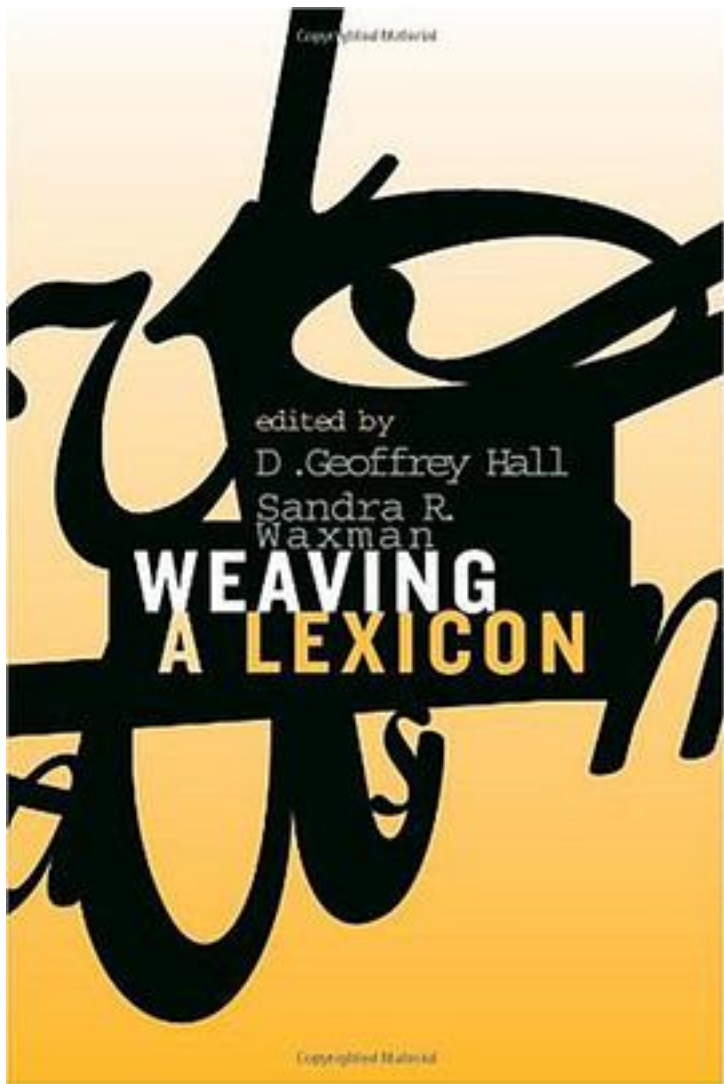


Weaving a Lexicon



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The studies in *Weaving a Lexicon* make a significant contribution to the growing field of lexical acquisition by considering the multidimensional way in which infants and children acquire the lexicon of their native language. They examine the many strands of knowledge and skill -- including perceptual sensitivities, conceptual and semantic constraints, and communicative intent -- that children must weave together in the process of word learning, and show the different mix of these factors used at different developmental points. In considering the many different factors at work, the contributors avoid both the "either-or" approach, which singles out one strand to explain word learning throughout childhood, and the "all-inclusive" approach, which considers the melange of factors together. Their goal is to discover precisely which strands of ability or understanding make which contributions to acquisition at which points in infancy and childhood. The nineteen chapters are arranged in two broadly thematic sections. The chapters in "Initial Acquisitions," focus on issues involved in word learning during infancy, including how learners represent the sound patterns of words, infants' use of action knowledge to understand the meaning of words, and the links between early word learning and conceptual organization. In "Later Acquisitions," the chapters treat topics concerning the stages of toddler and preschooler language acquisition, including part-of-speech information in word learning, the proper-count distinction, and a comparison of verb acquisition in English and Spanish. Because the contributors present their work in the broader context of the interconnection of different processes in lexical acquisition, the chapters in *Weaving a Lexicon* should suggest new directions for research in the field.

作者介绍:

Infants and young children naturally and spontaneously acquire the lexicon of their native language. This accomplishment is a topic of central interest in the cognitive sciences, because it raises core questions in psychology, linguistics, philosophy, computer science, and related fields. The past several years have witnessed an impressive accumulation of new knowledge about the learning of words. Recent discoveries in developmental psychology have been especially noteworthy, because they have helped to illuminate a process that is inherently multidimensional and dynamic.

In this edited volume, we invoke the metaphor of weaving to consider the acquisition of a lexicon. It has become clear that, to succeed in this task, learners weave together many different threads of knowledge and skill. These strands include perceptual (visual and auditory) sensitivities, general associative-learning mechanisms, conceptual and semantic constraints, an appreciation of lexical form class, and a rich understanding of communicative intent. It has also become evident that children do not intertwine these strands in a uniform fashion over the course of infancy and childhood, resulting in a *flat* weave. On the contrary, the evidence reveals much more texture to the fabric of word learning, with children recruiting some abilities and understandings more heavily at some developmental points than at others.

Like infants and toddlers acquiring their native lexicon, developmental psychologists seeking to understand word learning must also become adept at weaving. For the field to progress, researchers must move beyond cataloging the isolated strands of knowledge or skill that learners use in any given act of word learning. In particular, it has become important that we abandon 'either-or' approaches, in which a single thread is held to explain word learning from infancy throughout childhood. At the same time, we must progress beyond 'all-inclusive' approaches, in which multiple strands are invoked in ways that fail to generate falsifiable hypotheses about

lexical development. We believe that breakthroughs in theories of word learning await the discovery of precisely which threads of ability or understanding make which contributions to acquisition at which points during infancy and childhood.

This volume brings together chapters written by leading scholars in the field of lexical acquisition. Each contribution focuses directly on one or more of the various strands of knowledge or skill that underpin lexical development in infancy and childhood (e.g., perceptual abilities, lexical form class sensitivities, social-pragmatic understanding). Although the authors have centered their chapters primarily on the results of their own research programs, they have also considered explicitly how their work fits into the emerging picture of lexical acquisition as a multidimensional, dynamic task. As a result, the volume contains many chapters that explore the interactions among multiple threads of skill or knowledge at a specific point in development, and/or the unfolding of children's reliance on a particular thread over the course of development.

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