Counting pieces of stuff in Tseltal Maya
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Exp. 2: Familiar Noun Quantity Judgment

Do Tseltal speakers quantify by number for known object-denoting nouns and by substance for unknown substance-denoting nouns (H1 & H2) or do they not distinguish object- and substance-denoting nouns (H3)?

PARTICIPANTS
17 women, ages 17 – 51

STIMULI
16 entities typed as “count-like” or “mass-like,” presented in blocks, with order counterbalanced across participants

Participants judged quantity by number more for Count-like nouns than for Mass-like nouns (90% vs. 55%, p < .001).

The type of noun participants judged first influenced how they judged the second type (Interaction between Noun Type & Order, p < .001).

Participants answered yes/no to the question, “Is this a fork?”

Proportion “yes” responses to critical question by classifier and referent

Proportion “yes” responses to critical question by classifier and referent

Experiment 3: Broken Objects

How do Tseltal speakers count broken objects? Do the speakers count pieces as individuals (H3) or do they only count whole objects as individuals (H2)? Do classifiers serve to explicitly provide criteria of individuation?

COUNTING BROKEN OBJECTS

PARTICIPANTS
33 native Tseltal-speakers (28 women, ages 18 – 59)

STIMULI
12 entities, 4 from each of three categories: Complex, Simple, Non-Solid Substances (Li et al., 2009)

Participants answered yes/no to the question, “Is this a fork?”

Proportion “yes” responses to critical question by classifier and referent

Proportion “yes” responses to critical question by classifier and referent

References


*Thanks to Linda Abarbanel, The Lopack family, and all the members of the Tenacap community who participated.

Experiment 1: Novel Entity Construal

How do Tseltal speakers extend novel nouns? All by substance (H3), or by object for canonical objects and substances for canonicalDONE/ANY? (H2)

PARTICIPANTS
33 native Tseltal-speakers (28 women, ages 18 – 59)

STIMULI
12 novel entities, four from each of three categories: Complex, Simple, Non-Solid Substances (Li et al., 2009)

Participants answered yes/no to the question, “Is this a fork?”

Proportion “yes” responses to critical question by classifier and referent

Proportion “yes” responses to critical question by classifier and referent

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