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Phonological specificity of vowels and consonants in
20-month-olds' word representations

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At the onset of word learning around the age of 12 months, infants are highly capable of perceiving native phonological distinctions. However, required to make word-object associations, infants sometimes fail to perceive certain phonological distinctions. The present study used an inter-modal preferential looking technique to examine Danish 20-month-olds' sensitivity to mispronunciations involving either a vowel or a consonant in familiar words. Each mispronounced word could be "reconstructed" to either of two familiar Danish words. By way of example, the English nonword "bock" can be turned into either "rock" or "book" depending on whether the mispronunciation is perceived to be in the first consonant or in the vowel. The results so far indicate that the infants were not differentially sensitive to vowel vs. consonant mispronunciations. This result, in turn, suggests that vowels and consonants do not differ in constraining lexical access to familiar words in Danish 20-month-olds.