

FALAS NO LABFON

Working sessions of the
Phonetics and Phonology Lab & Lisbon BabyLab (CLUL)
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The Power of Words: Co-occurrence Regularities in Language as Drivers of the Development of Lexico-Semantic Organization

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There is no doubt that early language experience is critical for a child's development – from boosting word learning and language processing skills (Hurtado et al, 2014) in early childhood to predicting communication skills and academic achievement in later years (Rowe & Goldin-Meadow, 2009). However, it is less clear *what aspects of the language environment foster development* and *how*. I will present a set of studies which investigate the intriguing possibility that word co-occurrence regularities in children's language input play a powerful role in fostering both word learning and the development of semantic memory organization. These studies provide evidence that meaning of words and semantic links that connect them can be in principle learned implicitly through exposure to language (Savic, Unger, & Sloutsky, 2022; Unger; Unger, Yim, Savic, Dennis, & Sloutsky, 2023). More importantly, they reveal how the contribution of these regularities may change across development, with the maturation of learning mechanisms which support learning from word co-occurrence in language input (Savic, Unger, & Sloutsky, 2023).