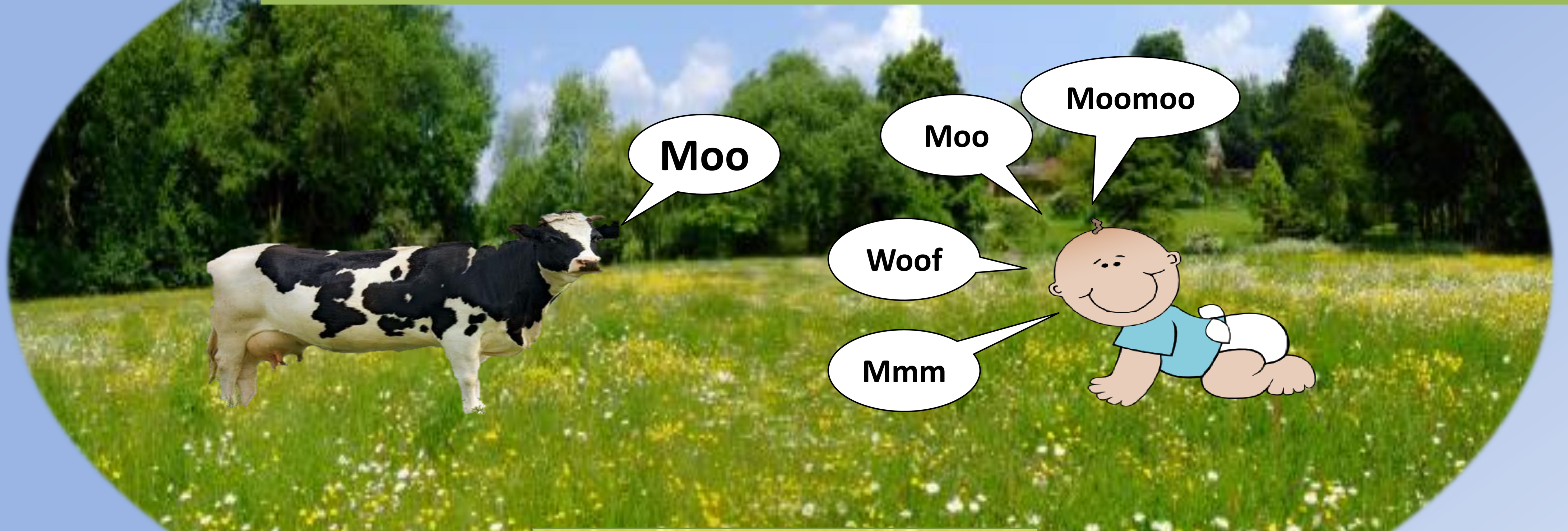


“What does the cow say”, and what can it do for us?

(or how might onomatopoeia increase an infant’s chance of success in school?)



RELEVANCE

Babytalk is an essential part of an infant’s language learning, and onomatopoeia – the formation of a word through the imitation of a sound, such as ‘moo’ – feature prominently. This project investigates the role of onomatopoeia in babytalk, as spoken by both the parent and the infant. The project asks:

- 1) Are onomatopoeia easier to understand and produce than conventional words?
- 2) Are they particularly interesting or exciting for infants?

By answering these questions we can understand **how onomatopoeia could be used in babytalk to promote language learning and production.**

IMPACT

Research has shown that:

- 1) Adults use higher pitch, longer pauses and more repetition when speaking to infants in ‘babytalk’ ^[1]
- 2) Newborns prefer ‘babytalk’ speech over adult speech ^[2]
- 3) **These features are most prominent in onomatopoeia**

This research should **inform educational policy**. A deeper understanding of language learning can have impact on:

- 1) Parents’ approach to interacting with their infants
- 2) The information provided for new parents
- 3) The development of educational resources
- 4) **A child’s chance of success in later life**

COLLABORATION

Collaboration between **linguists, psychologists, educational researchers and policy-makers** is needed in this approach:

LINGUISTS to measure the linguistic impact of babytalk in language development

PSYCHOLOGISTS to measure the social impact of babytalk in cognitive development

EDUCATIONAL RESEARCHERS to measure the academic impact of babytalk in intellectual development

POLICY-MAKERS to design and implement the necessary actions and materials to bring about a wider impact on infants’ linguistic, cognitive and intellectual development.