

Only joint actions with related objects induce to taking the object labels as conventional

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Introduction

Young children can distinguish the situations where a new word has a conventional meaning from the situations where it has only personal meaning for a speaker so other people don't know it (Diesendruck, Markson, 2001).

Previous research found out that in order to determine conventionality of a word children rely on several cues: gaze direction (Henderson, Graham, 2005), linguistic forms (Diesendruck, 2005) and communicative context (Kotov, Vlasova, 2012).

We explain the effect of such cues by the inclusion of new words in differently structured joint actions. If the joint action is focused on between objects connection, new words will be perceived as elements of integrated shared knowledge (like a language) and taken as conventional. If the joint action is a series of separate operations, new words will be perceived as situationally shared knowledge and taken as unconventional.

References

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Methods

Children:

- **2-3 year olds:** 25 children from 24 to 35 month old ($M = 31$ months)
- **3-4 year olds:** 21 children from 36 to 47 month old ($M = 41$ months)

Design: Joint action with novel objects of simple geometric shape given in two conditions

- **Connection between objects:** objects are used with functional relations between them
- **Separate operations:** objects are used without functional relations between them

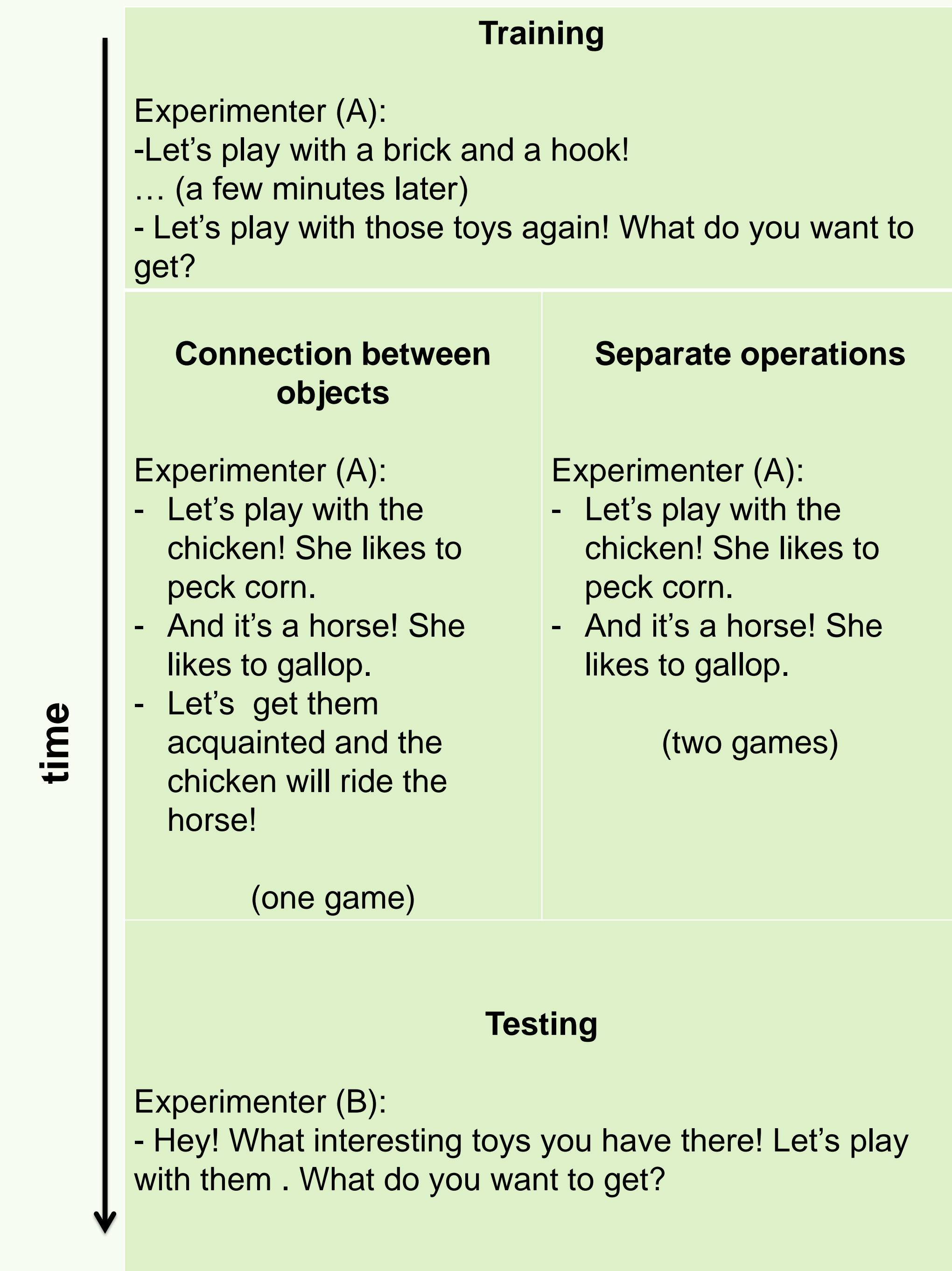


Training: At first children were familiarized with the naming procedure. The experimenter was showing two novel objects and naming them by their shapes. Only those children who could accept and use objects' names in later communication participated in the main procedure.

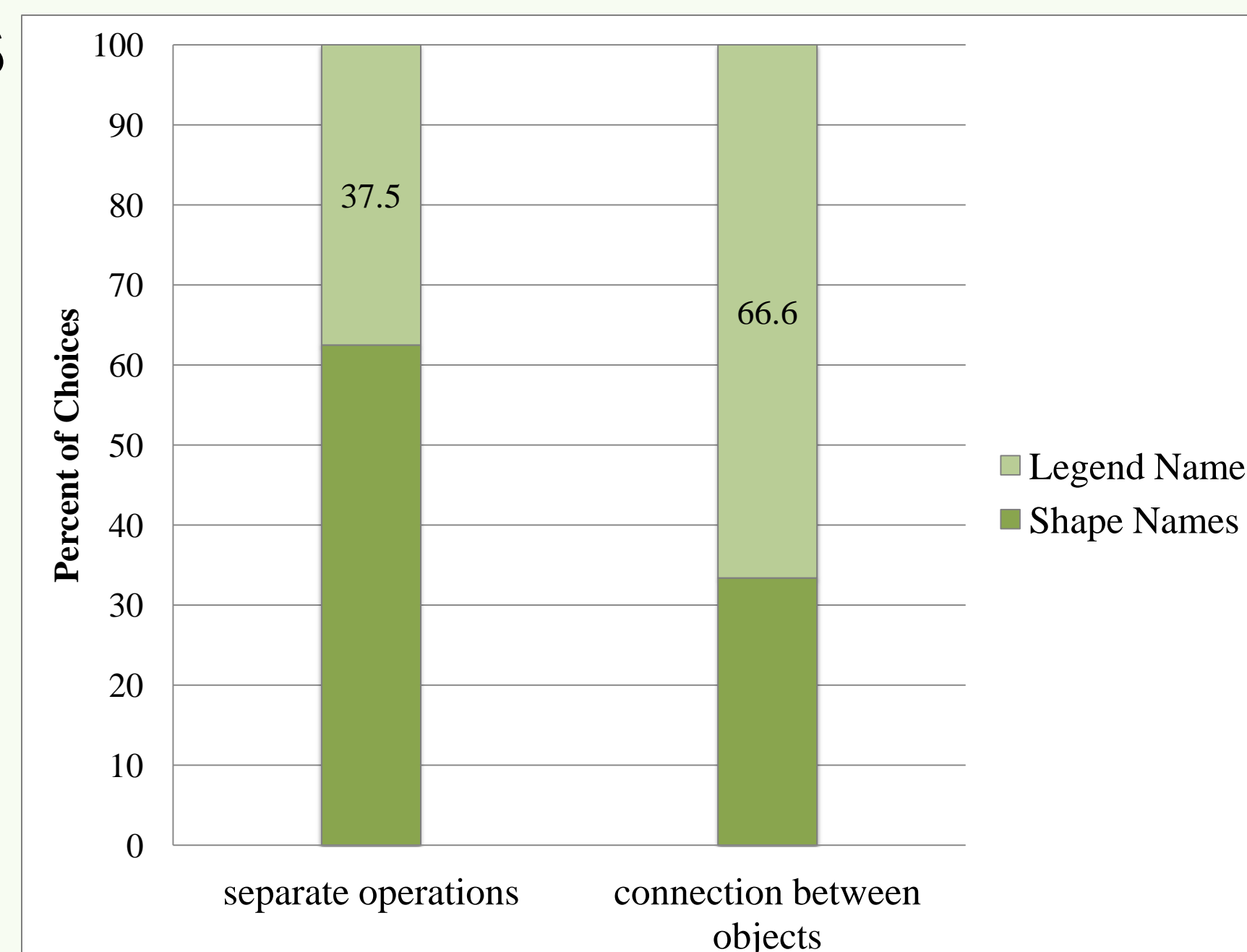
Learning: After the training children were given another pair of novel objects. At the first the experimenter (A) demonstrated those objects naming them by their shapes. Then she offered a child to play a game where each object would have a legend name.

Test: After the game the experimenter (A) placed the objects within the child's view but out of her reach and left the room. The assistant (B) then came in and asked the child which object she wanted to get.

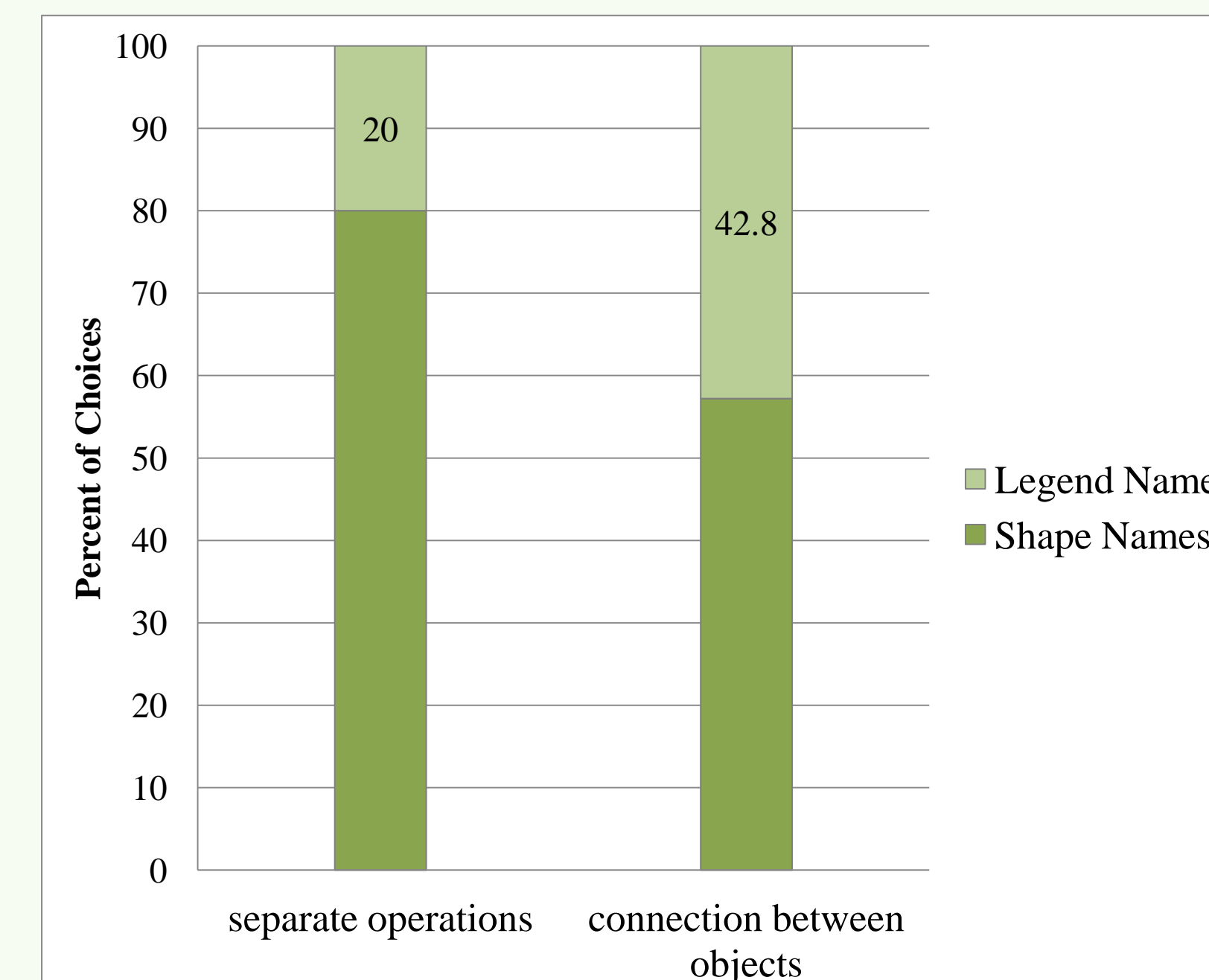
Coding: We considered the child's answer as conventional if the child had used a legend name of an object. The answer was considered as unconventional if the child had named an object by its shape or color.



Results



2-3 year olds; Chi-square: $\chi^2 = 4.9$, $p < 0.05$



3-4 year olds; Chi-square: $p > 0.05$

Discussion

➤ We found the age-related differences in the process of acquiring new words' meanings: the cue which a child of one age uses for the assessment of the new word's conventionality loses its significance in another age.

➤ The structure of the game as a communicative system is an important instrument for the perception adjustment in the younger age group. A new word is interpreted as conventional if it is embedded in the single linkage system.

➤ The children of the older age group can consider any game as an fictitious situation and they don't attribute the knowledge of that situation to any new person.