

The paper attempts to tell an "analytic-genetic" story of language acquisition. The overall aim is to present a picture of understanding a word which does not consist in knowing the truth of some privileged sentence containing the word. The argument is partly based on empirical results in developmental psychology, and partly on more theoretical issues. One upshot is that understanding is dissociated from knowledge (for any word, there is nothing one has to know in order to understand it), and there is no room for "partial understanding".