Collins and Quillian’s (1969) Teachable Language Comprehender (TLC)

Above, terms in UPPERCASE represent categories, and terms in lowercase represent one of the attributes associated with that particular category. Note, based on the idea of cognitive economy, the attributes at higher levels are not repeated at lower levels.

Collins and Quillian’s (1969) Results

On the assumption that memory is organized hierarchically, Collins and Quillian (1969) proposed that you would need to move up and down the levels in such a hierarchy to link together concepts and attributes. In their study, subjects rated the truthfulness of a number of statements about whether one category is part of another category (“A Canary is a Bird”) or whether a particular category contains a certain attribute (“A canary can fly”). They predicted that the more levels of the hierarchy that one needs cross to verify the truthfulness of a statement, the longer a person should be to respond. The results below confirm this prediction.