
Children's sensitivity to informativity inferences

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Abstract

Conversational partners expect each other to communicate rationally and cooperatively with relevant and informative utterances. Occasionally, however, speakers produce seemingly trivial utterances which may violate our expectations of informativity. In adults, we see trivial utterances interpreted as conveying additional information, e.g., implying that the situation has changed in some way. These inferences are more likely when a speaker is deemed as knowledgeable. Here we ask how children deal with seemingly trivial utterances from knowledgeable and unknowledgeable speakers. Preliminary findings (data collection ongoing) suggest that children are less sensitive to speaker knowledge than adults and draw fewer inferences from trivial utterances.

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