
Expectations of Informativeness Guide Toddlers' Discovery of Novel Communicative Cues' Meanings

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Abstract

Several theories imply that learners should rely on expectations of informativeness when attempting to discover the meaning of a novel communicative cue. We tested this hypothesis in two studies in which toddlers ($N = 72$) searched for a reward hidden in one of several containers. In all studies, an adult communicated the reward's location with an unfamiliar cue whose meaning was ambiguous. Toddlers tended to give interpretations whose informativeness was sufficiently high to novel cues. Thus, from toddlerhood onward, humans' interpretation of novel cues is guided by expectations of informativeness.

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