
What is the contribution of communicative context and interlocutors in scalar implicature derivation? Perspectives from childhood, adolescence, and adulthood.

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Abstract

We investigated the role of intention-reading and perspective-taking in scalar implicature derivation during childhood, adolescence, and adulthood. Starting from the assumption that interlocutors, with their knowledge and intentions, are essential components of implicature interpretation, we used a modified priming task in three experiments to probe the effect of an interlocutor's presence/absence on lexical and ad-hoc scalar implicature derivation. For adults, the presence of an interlocutor increases implicature derivation. Surprisingly, preliminary results suggest it has the opposite effect for children up to 13 and none for 16-year-olds. We discuss the implications of these findings for pragmatic theory, development and experimental methods.

Keywords: scalar implicatures, pragmatic development, speaker knowledge and intention.

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