
That kid is a grasshopper! Metaphor development from 3 to 9 years of age

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Abstract

The literal stage hypothesis posits that children are incapable of dealing with metaphors properly until the age 10-12 (Winner et al., 1976). The early birds hypothesis, more recent, states that children as young as 3 are capable of understanding novel metaphoric language. Both contending hypotheses are challenged in this study with a novel paradigm combining eye tracking and picture selection. Both sources of information confirm that children are able to process novel metaphors much younger than 10 years old, and at the same time question that 3 year olds are "early birds", at least when it comes to nominal metaphors

Keywords: novel metaphor, eye, tracking, development

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