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Authors

Carvalho, Paulo

Goldstone, Robert

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The sequence of study changes what is encoded during category learning.

Paulo Carvalho

Indiana University

Robert Goldstone

Indiana University

Abstract: This work investigates how the sequence of study influences encoding and memory for different properties of the categories studied. We used a transfer task with different types of items and show that following blocked study learners are sensitive to category properties that were presented frequently in the category (but were not diagnostic of category membership). However, following interleaved study learners do not seem to be sensitive to changes on these non-diagnostic properties. Moreover, when asked to judge different properties for their relevance for category learning (cue and category validity), participants rate discriminating properties more highly than similarities following interleaved study, but not following blocked study. These results are consistent with previous evidence and are captured by an exemplar model that takes into account the sequence of exemplars during learning by changing the likelihood of attending to and encoding different object properties depending on sequential similarities.