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Imitation inhibition training enhances perspective taking in preschoolers

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Abstract

Adults (Keysar et al, 2000) and children (Epley et al, 2004) sometimes commit egocentric errors when interpreting others communication, if the self-perspective differs from the speakers perspective. Training imitation inhibition reduces egocentric error in adults (Santiesteban et al., 2011), presumably because it makes salient the distinction between self and other. As managing the self-other perspective difference may undergo developmental changes during preschool years (Southgate, in press), we tested whether a social imitation inhibition training may reduce egocentric mistakes in 3-6-year-old children. Results with $n=47$ (of $n=50$ preregistered) children show that the imitation inhibition group selected the object to which the speaker referred more often than children in a control condition ($F(1,35)=5.346$, $p=.026$). However, there was an interaction with age ($F(2,35)=3.805$, $p=.032$): only 4-year-olds, but neither 3- nor 6-year-olds, were more accurate in the inhibition group. Childrens reaction times and hesitation will be analyzed on the final sample.