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Context Affects Error Correction During Cross-Situational Word Learning

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Abstract

Adjusting expectations in response to errors is a cornerstone of several learning theories (Rescorla & Wagner, 1972; Rumelhart et al., 1986). Grimmick (2019) shows that individuals deploy attention during cross-situational word learning based on the strength of the error signal. The current study introduced an equal number of accurate and inaccurate expectations about word-referent pairs. This study manipulated the difficulty of cross-situational word learning trials to examine whether the impact of errors differs depending on task demands. Individuals learned the initially accurate items better than the initially inaccurate ones. Manipulating the demands during word learning did not significantly impact the tendency to benefit from accuracy. This research is part of an ongoing project. This ongoing research explores how individual differences in vocabulary, inhibition, and working memory abilities interact with contextual factors, such as task difficulty, as individuals learn word-referent pairs that violate their expectations.