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Exploring the effects of prosocial behaviour priming on preschooler's accent comprehension, selective word learning, and preferences towards unfamiliar accented speakers

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Abstract

Preschoolers prefer prosocial individuals and members of their language in-group. In adults, priming positive vs. negative facts about an out-group impacts listeners' perception of their accent. In a synchronous, online study, 4–6-year-olds were introduced to a novel social group that spoke with an unfamiliar accent. In a between subject's design, participants heard either prosocial, antisocial, or neutral facts about the group. Participant's accent comprehension, selective learning, and affiliation preferences were assessed. Preliminary analyses (N=39) suggest that exposure to antisocial information was associated with greater accent comprehension than neutral and prosocial information, that both prosocial and antisocial information were associated with greater selective learning than neutral, and that preschoolers preferred prosocial and neutral individuals over antisocial ones. This suggests that how preschoolers think about groups and process their speech can be influenced by the information they receive about them, which has implications for how representations of groups can impact communication.