# UC Merced

**Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Cognitive Science Society**

## Title

The Relationship Between Mental-state Language and False-belief Understandingin Adulthood

## Permalink

## Journal

## Authors

Roby, Erin
Paxton, Alexandra
Dale, Rick
et al.

## Publication Date

Peer reviewed

# The Relationship Between Mental-state Language and False-belief Understanding in Adulthood

**Erin Roby**
University of California Merced, Merced, California, United States

**Alexandra Paxton**
University of California, Berkeley, Berkeley, CA, USA

**Rick Dale**
University of California, Merced

**Rose Scott**
University of California Merced, Merced, CA, United States

**Abstract:** Research has revealed a robust relationship between preschooler's use of mental-state language (e.g. think, know) and performance on false-belief tasks (e.g. Ruffman, Slade & Crow, 2002). However, investigations of this relationship with school-aged children have shown mixed results, making it unclear whether mental-state talk continues to play a role in false-belief understanding following the preschool years (e.g. Charman & Shmueli-Goetz, 1998; Grazzini & Ornaghi, 2012). This discrepancy may result from the fact that preschooler's talk has consistently been assessed during interpersonal interactions with peers, siblings, and parents, while school-aged children's talk has been assessed via descriptions of wordless picture books or absent friends. The present study bridges this gap by exploring whether adults' use of mental-state language during interaction correlates with their false-belief performance. In doing so, we help to shed light on an important issue in theoretical accounts of the development of false-belief understanding.