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A Disadvantage of Comparison and Contrast in Object Label Learning

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Abstract

Multiple studies demonstrate benefits of comparison and contrast for learning relational, taxonomic, and abstract categories. This study examined the effects of comparison and contrast with learning non-relational perceptual information, specifically on 3-year-old childrens learning of labels for novel shape categories. There were four between-subject conditions: comparison, contrast (informative), contrast (neutral), and one-example. Each condition heard the novel word three times, the difference was in the number of objects (one-example vs. the rest) and the object presentations (comparative vs. contrastive). The test asked children to extend the label to a new example of the category. The results counter-intuitively show that learning from one example outperforms learning from multiple examples via comparison or contrast, suggesting a detrimental role of comparison and contrast for shape categories for children at this level of vocabulary knowledge.