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Authors

Forbes, Samuel

Edgar, Lucy Elizabeth

Shao, Shuai

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Pupil dynamics open eyes to links between word learning and interest

Samuel Forbes

Durham University, Durham, United Kingdom

Lucy Edgar

Durham University, Durham, United Kingdom

Shuai Shao

Bard College, Annandale-On-Hudson, New York, United States

Abstract

Infant word learning is a crucial process that is of great importance to early development. Indeed, delays in early word learning are linked to poor language and educational outcomes, including Developmental Language Disorder (DLD). However infant word learning is highly variable, and the correlates of successful and delayed early word learning are not well understood. Here, we examine the role of individual temperament in word learning, examining the dynamic interplay between category interest, general curiosity, willingness to engage, and motivated word learning in a novel word learning task, using changes in infant pupil diameter as the measurement. Preliminary data suggests category interest to be of key import to early word learning, supporting previous findings from Ackermann et al (2020). We also find differences in personality contribute to word learning, suggesting that the variability in infant word learning might be related to individual differences.