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Unveiling the Path to Phonological Anticipation: Insights from Infants' Eye Movements

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Abstract

Unveiling the Path to Phonological Anticipation: Insights from Infants' Eye Movements

Phonological anticipation, predicting upcoming words based on phonological cues, is crucial in language processing (Brunellière et al., 2018; Ito et al., 2018). While infants show predictive abilities in language domains, mechanisms and developmental trajectories in native Spanish-speaking populations are less explored. This study investigates phonological anticipation in Mexican Spanish-speaking infants using eye-tracking. It examines if infants of different ages can anticipate phonologically related words in semantically restrictive sentences. Auditory sentences with restrictive contexts were presented, and visual stimuli included phonologically related and unrelated competitors. Participants were 18, 24, and 30-month-old infants. Results show 18- and 24-month-olds didn't anticipate based on semantics alone, requiring auditory presentation. However, 30-month-olds demonstrated phonological anticipation, signaling developmental changes. Understanding this trajectory is vital for comprehending language processing. This study contributes insights into the emergence and maturation of phonological anticipation, impacting language acquisition theories.