Insights from novel measures of visual statistical learning in children

van Witteloostuijn, M.T.G.; Lammertink, I.L.; Boersma, P.P.G.; Wijnen, Frank; Rispens, J.E.

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**Insights from novel measures of visual statistical learning in children**

Merel van Witteloostuijn¹, Imme Lammertink¹, Paul Boersma¹, Frank Wijnen² & Judith Rispens¹

University of Amsterdam¹, Utrecht University²

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**BACKGROUND**

**Statistical learning** is usually tested through:
- Exposure to continuous stream of stimuli
- Offline test-phase: 2-AFC

**Importance of online measure:** provides information about the learning trajectory during exposure.

Several researchers have shown that online measures provide reliable results with adult participants [1, 2, 3].

**Present study:** we assessed children’s VSL abilities using:
- an online reaction time (RT) measure [3]
- two distinct offline question types

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**METHODS**

**Participants**
53 Dutch children aged 5;9 – 8;7 (mean = 7;3)

**Self-paced VSL task**

- **Familiarization:**
  - Continuous stream of individually presented aliens
  - Four triplets, presented 24 times divided over 4 blocks [4]
  - Online measure: RT to each alien is recorded. We expect that RT’s to unpredictable aliens (alien 1) are longer than RT’s to predictable aliens (aliens 2 and 3) [3]

- **Offline test phase:**
  1. **Pattern recognition:** 24 2-AFC (“Choose the familiar group”) Chance = 50%
  2. **Pattern completion:** 16 3-AFC (“Complete the missing alien”) Chance = 33%

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**RESULTS**

**Offline test phase measures**

- Comparison children’s performance to chance level:
  - Not above chance on 2-AFC questions (p = .372)
  - Above chance on 3-AFC questions (p = .042)

**Online RT measure**

- **Main effect of alien:**
  - Alien 1 > Alien 2 (p < .001)
  - Alien 1 > Alien 3 (p < .001)
  - Alien 3 > Alien 2 (p = .037)

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**REFERENCES**


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**CONCLUSIONS**

1. 3-AFC and online measures show that children are able to learn the structure.
2. Online measure provides additional insights about the learning trajectory.