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Kindergarteners’ statistical learning is influenced by instruction

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Research questions
Can we replicate our findings that kindergarteners learn a meaningful agreement marker on the basis of distributional properties?
Does explicit instruction influence the acquisition of such a marker?

Participants
102 Dutch speaking children (51 females, \(M = 5;7\)), 50 were explicitly instructed, 52 were not instructed

Method
Exposure
Miniature language:
Four proper names, three verbs, two grammatical markers,
six frequent nouns and twelve infrequent nouns
Exposure: 108 training sentences (+ 12 fillers)

Rule
Pli: probability that the noun has multiple referents = 1
Tra: probability that the noun has multiple referents = .5

Test
Picture matching task with eye tracking

Results

Conclusion
Explicit instruction did not increase accuracy, but it did lead to earlier predictive eye movements
In a follow-up experiment, we will test children on a delayed post-test, to investigate the effect of sleep on the development of kindergarteners’ knowledge

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