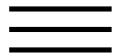


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Beliefs about beliefs: Representation and constraining function of wrong beliefs in young children's understanding of deception

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Abstract

Understanding of another person's wrong belief requires explicit representation of the wrongness of this person's belief in relation to one's own knowledge. Three to nine year old children's understanding of two sketches was tested. In each sketch subjects observed how a protagonist put an object into a location x and then witnessed that in the absence of the protagonist the object was transferred from x to location y. Since this transfer came as a surprise they had to assume that the protagonist still believed that the object was in x. Subjects had to indicate where the protagonist will look for the object at his return. None of the 3–4-year old, 57% of 4–6-year old, and 86% of 6–9-year old children pointed correctly to location x in both sketches. Of the many cases where 4–6-year olds made an error they failed in only about 20% to remember the initial location correctly. As a test of the stability of children's representation of the

protagonist's wrong belief the sketches continued with a statement about the protagonist's intention to either deceive an antagonist or truthfully inform a friend about the object's location. Independent of age, of those children who correctly thought that the protagonist would search in x, 85% of the time they also correctly thought that he would direct his antagonist to location y and his friend to location x. This shows that once children can represent a person's beliefs they can *constrain* their interpretation of this person's stated intentions to the person's beliefs. In a more story-like situation another group of children had to infer a deceptive plan from the depiction of a goal conflict between two story characters and one character's expedient utterance. At the age of 4â€“5 years children correctly judged this utterance as a lie only 28% of the time while 5â€“6-year olds did so 94% of the time. These results suggest that around the ages of 4 to 6 years the ability to represent the relationship between two or more person's epistemic states emerges and becomes firmly established.

RÃ©sumÃ©

Comprendre que ce que croit un tiers est erronÃ© requiert une reprÃ©sentation explicitÃ©e de cette fausse croyance en relation avec son savoir propre.

On a testÃ© la comprÃ©hension de deux sketches par des enfants de 3 Ã 9 ans. Dans chacun des sketches les sujets observent un protagoniste placer un objet dans un lieu â€˜xâ€™, puis sont tÃ©moins du transfert de cet objet de â€˜xâ€™ en â€˜yâ€™ en l'absence du protagoniste. Ce transfert doit causer une surprise chez le protagoniste dont on assume qu'il croit que l'objet se trouve toujours en â€˜xâ€™. Les sujets doivent dire oÃ¹ le protagoniste va chercher l'objet. Aucun 3â€“4 ans n'indique correctement le lieu â€˜xâ€™, 57% des 4â€“6 ans et 86% des 6â€“9 ans le font. Parmi les nombreuses erreurs des 4â€“6 ans seules 20% sont attribuables Ã une incapacitÃ© de se souvenir du lieu â€˜xâ€™. Pour tester la stabilitÃ© de la reprÃ©sentation de la croyance erronÃ©e, on dit que le protagoniste a l'intention soit de tromper un adversaire soit d'informer un ami sur le lieu oÃ¹ se trouve l'objet. IndÃ©pendamment de leur Ãge, les enfants ayant donnÃ© des rÃ©ponses correctes disent correctement dans 85% des cas que le protagoniste conduirait l'adversaire en â€˜yâ€™ et l'ami en â€˜xâ€™. Lorsque les enfants se reprÃ©sentent les croyances d'une personne, ils peuvent faire dÃ©pendre leurs interprÃ©tations des intentions exprimÃ©es par celles-ci Ã partir de ses croyances.

Dans une situation de type histoire, un autre groupe d'enfants doit infÃ©rer un essai de trumperie Ã partir de la reprÃ©sentation d'un but conflictuel entre deux des

personnages de l'Ã©noncÃ© tactique d'un des personnages. A 4â€“5 ans les enfants ne jugent correctement cet Ã©noncÃ© comme mensonger que dans 28% des cas alors qu'Ã 5â€“6 on a 94% de reponses correctes. Les rÃ©sultats indiquent que vers 4â€“6 ans la capacitÃ© de reprÃ©senter une relation entre les Ã©tats Ã©pistÃ©miques de deux personnes ou plus Ã©merge et se confirme.



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