

Assignment 2 Can we help people get a better understanding of others' minds? For Monday 17/2

Below you will find a description of a number of tasks that were originally designed to test how well children understand the desires, beliefs and emotions of others. It comes from the appendix of a paper written by Wellman and Liu 2004.

The tasks are really difficult for young children, but can be taxing also for adults when the circumstances are right. I want you to read these tasks carefully and to try to think of situations in which you might have failed them. Then think of the types of support that you would have benefitted from to avoid similar failures. Can you draw any conclusions about how and when these issues should be taken into consideration in design?

We will talk about the first example in class, to get you started. You can do the rest of the assignment individually or in pairs, as you choose. I want a short written discussion (no more than 4 A4 papers). This assignment shall be emailed to me in accordance with the instructions in the course description (Monday 17/2 09.00), and you should be prepared to present your ideas and discuss them at the next lecture. My email address is: annika.wallin@lucs.lu.se

Diverse Desires

Children see a toy figure of an adult and a sheet of paper with a carrot and a cookie drawn on it. "Here's Mr. Jones. It's snack time, so, Mr. Jones wants a snack to eat. Here are two different snacks: a carrot and a cookie. Which snack would you like best? Would you like a carrot or a cookie best?" This is the own- desire question. If the child chooses the carrot: "Well, that's a good choice, but Mr. Jones really likes cookies. He doesn't like carrots. What he likes best are cookies." (Or, if the child chooses the cookie, he or she is told Mr. Jones likes carrots.) Then the child is asked the target question: "So, now it's time to eat. Mr. Jones can only choose one snack, just one. Which snack will Mr. Jones choose? A carrot or a cookie?" To be scored as correct, or to pass this task, the child must answer the target question opposite from his or her answer to the own-desire question. This task was derived from those used by Wellman and Woolley (1990) and Repacholi and Gopnik (1997).

Contents False Belief

The child sees a clearly identifiable Band-Aid box with a plastic toy pig inside the closed Band-Aid box. "Here's a Band-Aid box. What do you think is inside the Band- Aid box?" Next, the Band-Aid box is opened: "Let's see if it's really a pig inside!" The Band-Aid box is closed: "Okay, what is in the Band- Aid box?" Then a toy figure of a boy is produced: "Peter has never ever seen inside this Band- Aid box. Now here comes Peter. So, what does Peter think is in the box? Band-Aids or a pig? (the target question) "Did Peter see inside this box?" (the memory question). To be correct the child must answer the target question "Band-Aids" and answer the memory question "no." This task was derived from one used initially by Perner, Leekam, and Wimmer (1987) and widely modified and used since then (see Wellman et al., 2001).

Real – Apparent Emotion

Initially, children see a sheet of paper with three faces drawn on it a happy, a neutral, and a sad Face, to check that the child knows these emotional expressions. Then that paper is put aside, and the task begins with the child being shown a cardboard cutout figure of a boy drawn from the back so that the boy's facial expression cannot be seen. "This story is about a boy. I'm going to ask you about how the boy really feels inside and how he looks on his face. He might really feel one way inside but look a different way on his face. Or, he might really feel the same way inside as he looks on his face. I want you to tell me how he really feels inside and how he looks on his face." "This story is about Matt. Matt's friends were playing together and telling jokes. One of the older children, Rosie, told a mean joke about Matt and everyone laughed. Everyone thought it was very funny, but not Matt. But, Matt didn't want the other children to see how he felt about the joke, because they would call him a baby. So, Matt tried to hide how he felt." Then the child gets two memory checks: "What did the other children do when Rosie told a mean joke about Matt?" (Laughed or thought it was funny.) "In the story, what would the other children do if they knew how Matt felt?" (Call Matt a baby or tease him.) Pointing to the three emotion pictures: "So, how did Matt really feel, when everyone laughed? Did he feel happy, sad, or okay?" (the target-feel question) "How did Matt try to look on his face, when everyone laughed? Did he look happy, sad, or okay? (the target-look question). To be correct the child's answer to the target-feel question must be more negative than his or her answer to the target-look question (i.e., sad for target-feel and happy or okay for target-look, or okay for target-feel and happy for target-look). This task was derived from one used by Harris, Donnelly, Guz, and Pitt-Watson (1986).

Source

Wellman, Henry, M., & Liu, David (2002). Scaling of theory-of-mind tasks. *Child Development*, 75(2): 523-541.