# Abstract

Language comprehension often requires making *implicatures*. For example, inferring that “I ate some of the cookies” implicates the speaker ate some *but not all* (scalar implicatures); and “I ate the chocolate-chip cookies” where there are both chocolate chip cookies and raisin cookies in the context implicates that the speaker ate the chocolate chip, but *not both the chocolate chip and raisin cookies* (ad-hoc implicatures). Children’s ability to make scalar implicatures develops around age five, with ad-hoc implicatures emerging somewhat earlier. In the current work, using a time-sensitive tablet paradigm, we examined developmental gains in children’s ad-hoc implicature processing, and found evidence for successful pragmatic inferences by children as young as 3 years in a supportive context and substantial developmental gains in inference computation from 2 to 5 years. We also tested whether one cause of younger children (2-year-olds)’s consistent failure to make pragmatic inferences is their difficulty in inhibiting an alternative interpretation that is more salient than the target meaning (the *salience hypothesis*). Our findings supported this hypothesis: Younger children’s failures with pragmatic inferences were related to effects of the salience mismatch between possible interpretations.