

Do You See What I See?

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The Economist:

HUMAN beings are not born with the knowledge that others possess minds with different contents. Children develop such a “theory of mind” gradually, and even adults have it only imperfectly. But a study by Samantha Fan and Zoe Liberman at the University of Chicago, published in *Psychological Science*, finds that bilingual children, and also those simply exposed to another language on a regular basis, have an edge at the business of getting inside others’ minds.

In a simple experiment, Dr Fan and Dr Liberman sat monolingual, bilingual and “exposure” children aged between four and six with a grid of objects placed between them and an experimenter. Some objects were blocked from the experimenter’s sight, a fact the children could clearly see. With a large, a medium and a small car visible to the child, but the small car hidden from the adult, the adult would ask “I see a small car” and ask the child to move it. Both bilingual and those in the exposure group moved the medium-sized car (the smallest the experimenter could see) about 75% of the time, against 50% for the monolinguals. The successful children were less likely even to glance at the car the experimenter could not see.

Read the whole story: [The Economist](#)