

Parental Inductive Discipline and Theory of Mind in 5 and 6-year-olds

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INTRODUCTION

Background and aims: Inductive discipline (Hart et al., 1999; Hoffman, 2000) that contains reasoning about consequences of child's behavior including how it can affect the mental states of others promotes theory of mind (ToM) in young children (e.g. Fitzgerald, White, 2003; Ruffman, Perner, Parkin, 1999). However, there is no data on the relationship of induction in disciplinary context and interpretive ToM (iToM), i. e. more complex social skills such as understanding of ambiguity (Tafreshi, Racine, 2016) in children over the age of 5. The main aim was to find if parental induction remains important for interpretive ToM skills and predicts these abilities longitudinally.

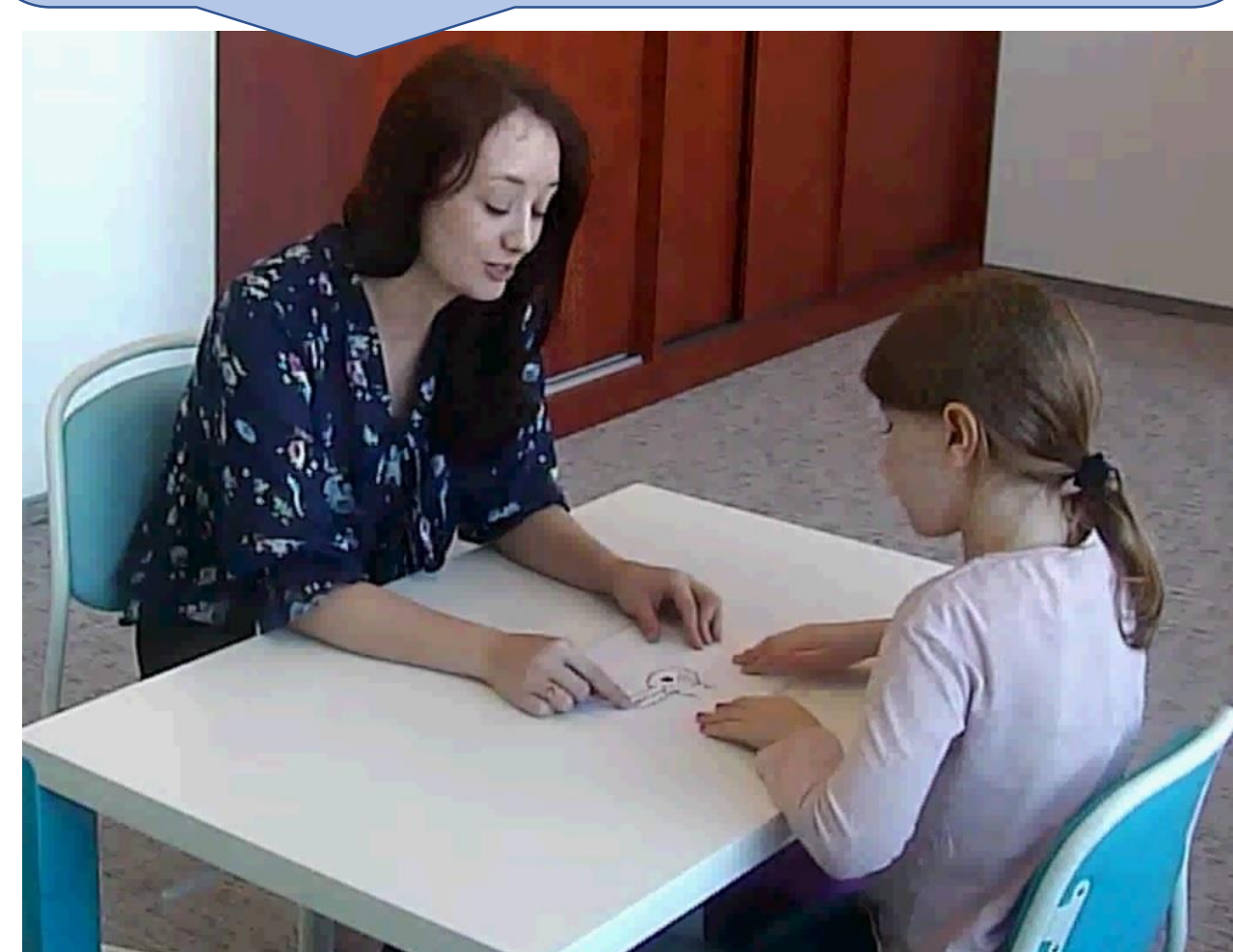
- Research questions:**
- Is there a relationship between the level of parental induction and iToM skills of their 5-year-old children?
 - Is there a relationship between the level of parental induction and iToM skills of their 6-year-old children?
 - Does level of parental induction at age 5 predicts iToM at the age of 6?

METHOD

Participants: 109 children (60 girls) were tested twice: at Time 1 (as 5-year-olds, M=5.64; SD=0.10) and at Time 2 (as 6-year-olds, M=6.62; SD=0.13). Their parents (93 mothers) were interviewed at Time 1 and 2

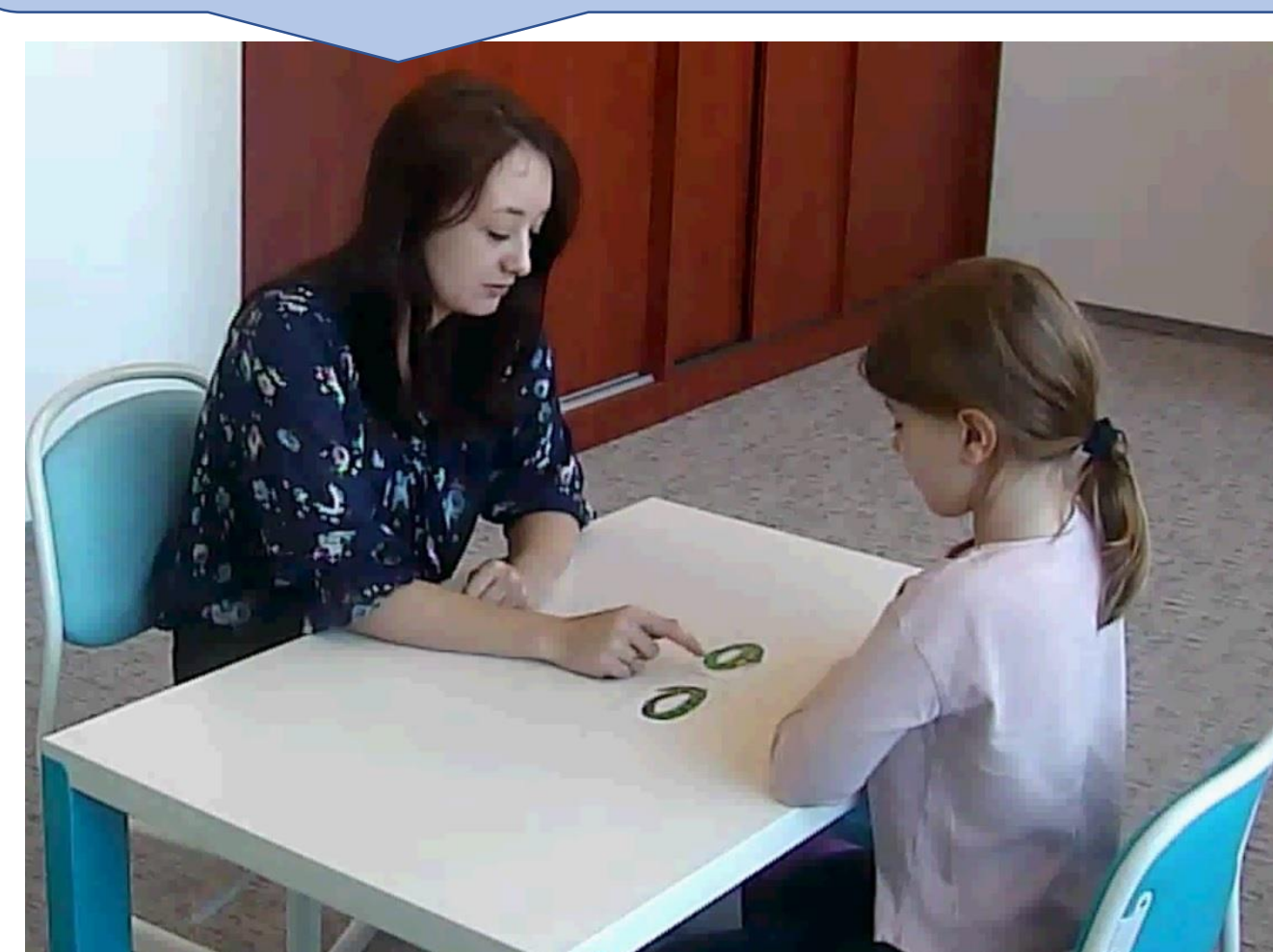
Parent's Task: Verbal responding to six hypothetical disciplinary situations (Hart, Ladd, Burlison, 1990)

Is it okay for Sophie to say it's a rabbit and for Frank to say it's a duck? Why?



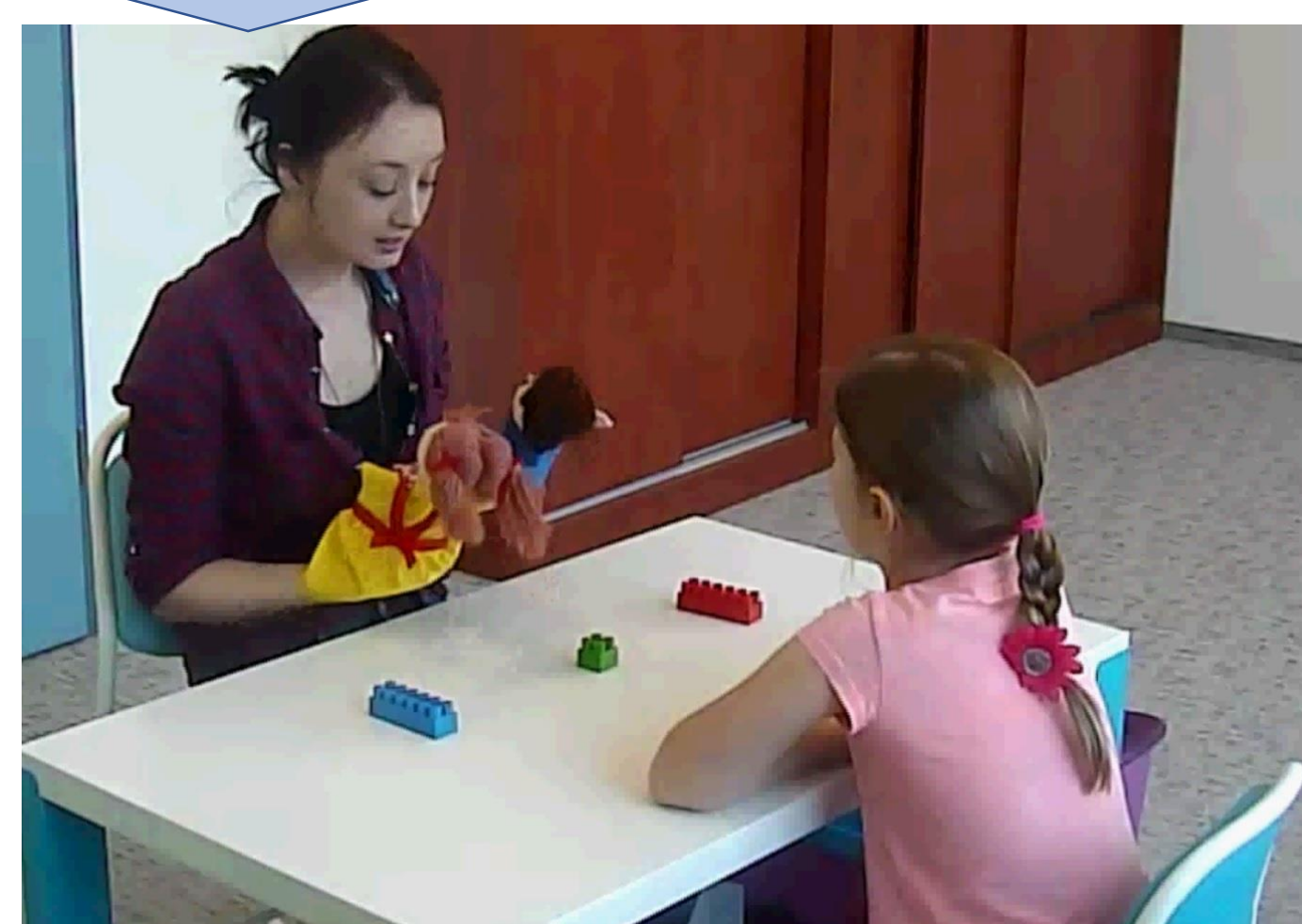
2 Ambiguous Figures Tasks

Is it okay for Sophie to say she brought us a snake and for Frank to say he brought us a snake? Why?



2 Lexical Ambiguity Tasks

Is it okay for Sophie to say she thinks the sticker is under the red block and for Frank to say he thinks it is under the blue block? Why?



1 Ambiguous Referential Communication Task

(Carpendale, Chandler, 1996; Tafreshi, Racine, 2016)

Performing Factor Analysis on answers from all 5 tasks allowed to obtain **iToM factor score**.

'What would you say or do if your child...'
e.g. Hurt the feelings of another child by name-calling

Responses transcribed and coded according to coding scheme provided by Hart and colleagues (1999):

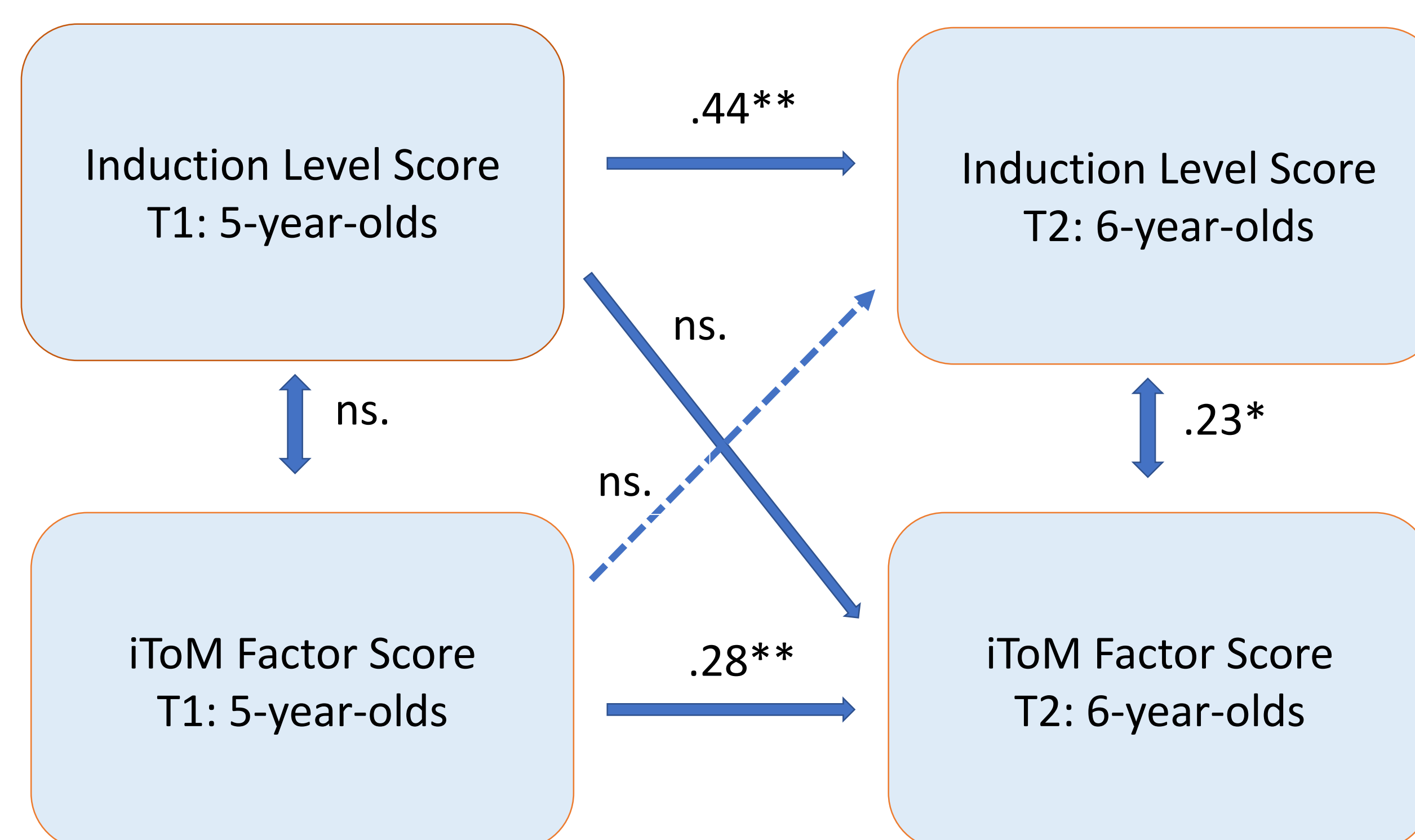
Levels (scores)	Examples of answers
6	I ask him how he would feel if someone would also call him names.
5	Well, I explain to him that he shouldn't do it because if anyone else would behave in this way towards him, he would be sad too.
4	I would say that now he should fix this situation somehow.
3	I'm saying that he shouldn't do that because it is rude to behave like that.
2	I'm asking her for apologize to that child.
1	Yes, it happened... and I shouted at him.

Note: Kappa between two raters were 0.77-1.00 at Time 1 and 0.72-0.96 at Time 2

Scores for the highest-level responses in each situation summed and averaged to compose **induction level score**.

RESULTS

- There is a moderate consistency between level of induction used by parents to their children in disciplinary context at Time 1 and Time 2.
- There is a weak, positive relationship between iToM in children at the age of 5 and 6.
- There is a weak, positive relationship between level of inductive discipline used by parent and iToM at age 6, but not at age 5.
- The predictive relationship between parental induction and iToM turned out to be insignificant.



Correlations and predictions between variables at T1 (5 years) and T2 (6 years)

CONCLUSIONS

- We found that for 6-year-olds but not for 5-year-olds parental inductive discipline is helpful for child's iToM as child is probably cognitively ready to understand the complexity of parent's instructions (Hoffman, 2000).
- The lack of longitudinal relations between parental induction and child's iToM might be explained by the late onset of the iToM development or its distinctiveness in comparison to 1st order ToM.
- In general, we can claim that in 6-year-olds inductive discipline as a form of reflective discourse (Tomasello, Rakoczy, 2003) provides a scaffolding that facilitates development of interpretive ToM skills. In other words, induction that contains conversation about consequences of child's misbehavior opens child to other people's perspectives: by using it, even without explicitly referencing to mental states, parent confronts the child with different points of view on the same situation (child's vs. victim's or vs. parent's themselves). This in turn may help the child to understand that people may differ in interpretations.

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