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'Where does a wug go?' How pre-schoolers use sentence context to infer the taxonomic categories of novel nouns

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USING VERB SELECTIONAL RESTRICTIONS TO INFER NOVEL NOUN MEANINGS

Prior studies......

❑ Only examined inferred semantic categories at very broad level.
  ➢ e.g. animate vs. inanimate.
❑ Only required identification of object appearance.
❑ Novel object appearance logically connected to verb selectional restrictions.
  ➢ 'the veps is crying' → only 1 obj has eyes.
❑ In many studies, learning could have occurred in test phase itself.

METHOD

TRAINING:

- 36 4-yr-olds, all exposed to 1 novel food AND 1 novel clothing
- Objects shapes did not indicate category
- Story-book context
- Each frame had a target AND a foil.

DESIGN: (between-subjects)
  1. Verb selectional restrictions
    a) **Food:** *cook X; eat X; spill X; feed baby X*
    b) *Clothes:* *iron Y; wear Y; put on Y; take off Y*
  2. Label-only: *'is with X; 'X is there'; there is the X'*
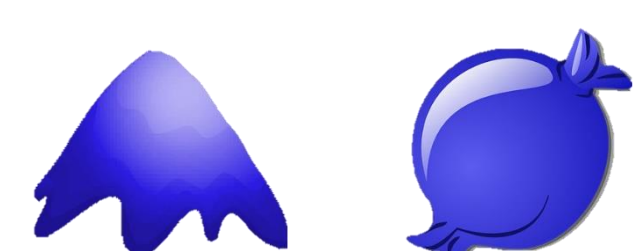
TEST:
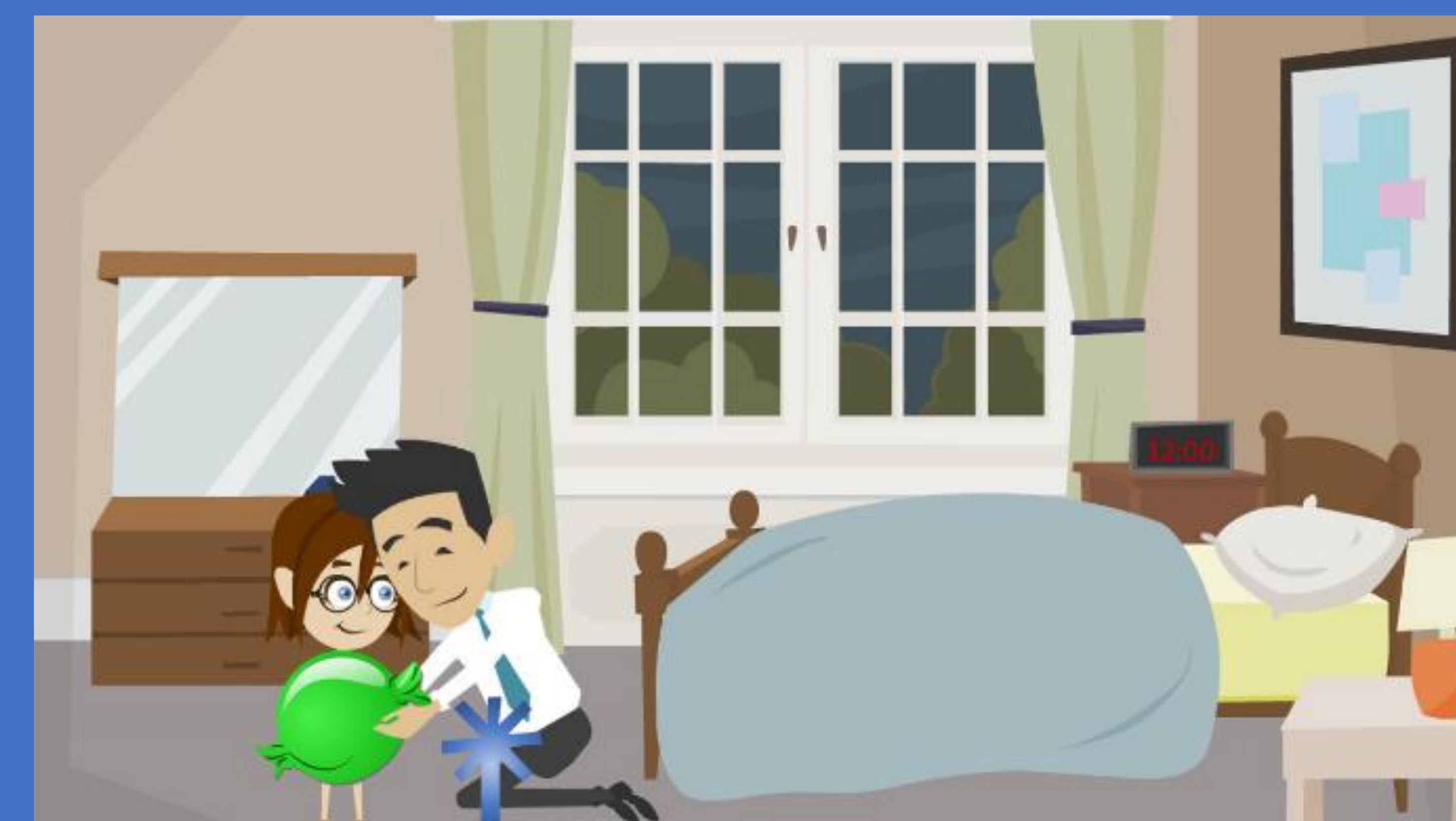 1. Taxonomic categorisation
    'Where does a wug go?'

  2. Object-label mapping
    'Show me the wug!'

Preschoolers can **infer** object **function** from **sentential context** alone

'Where does a wug go?'
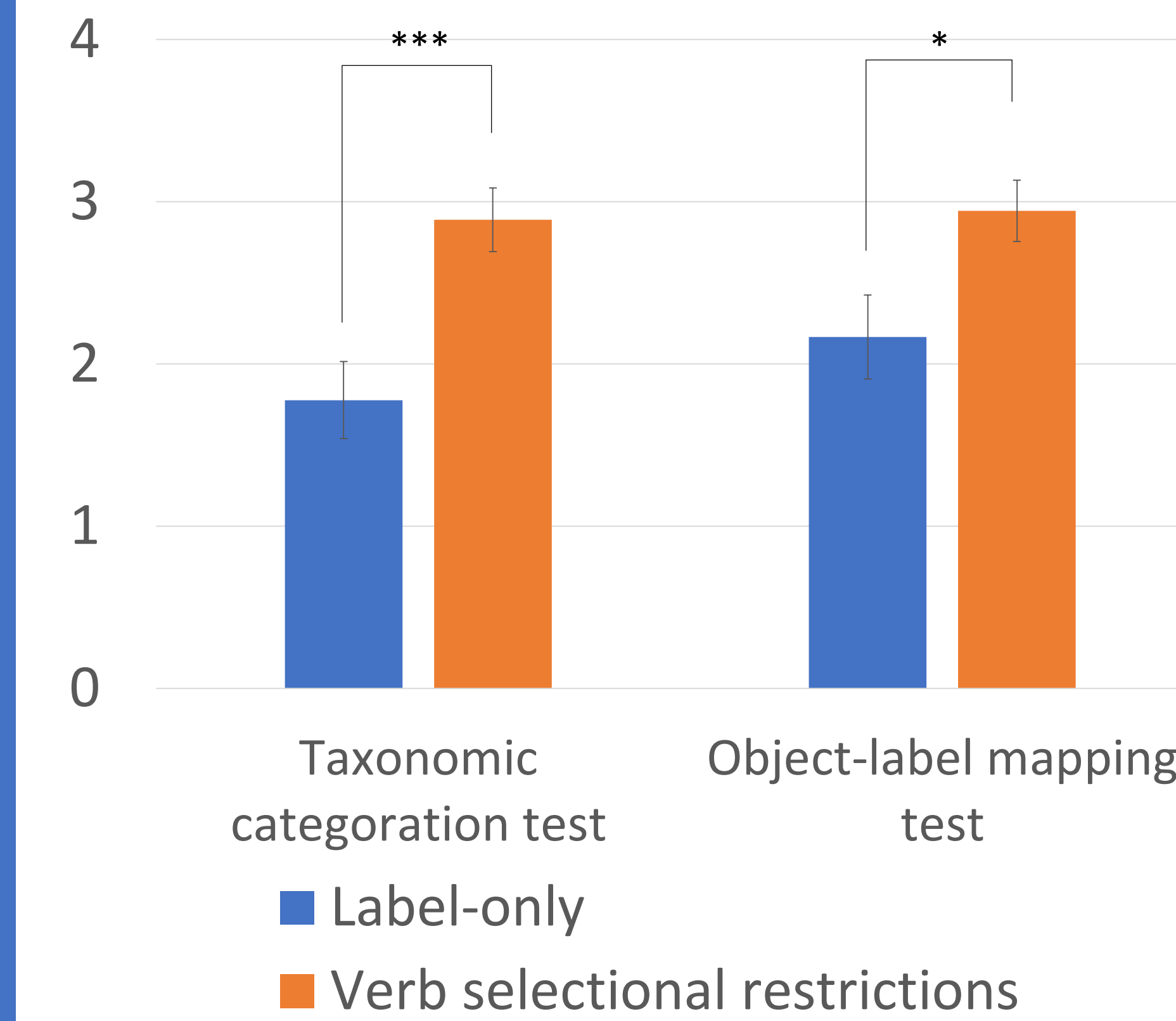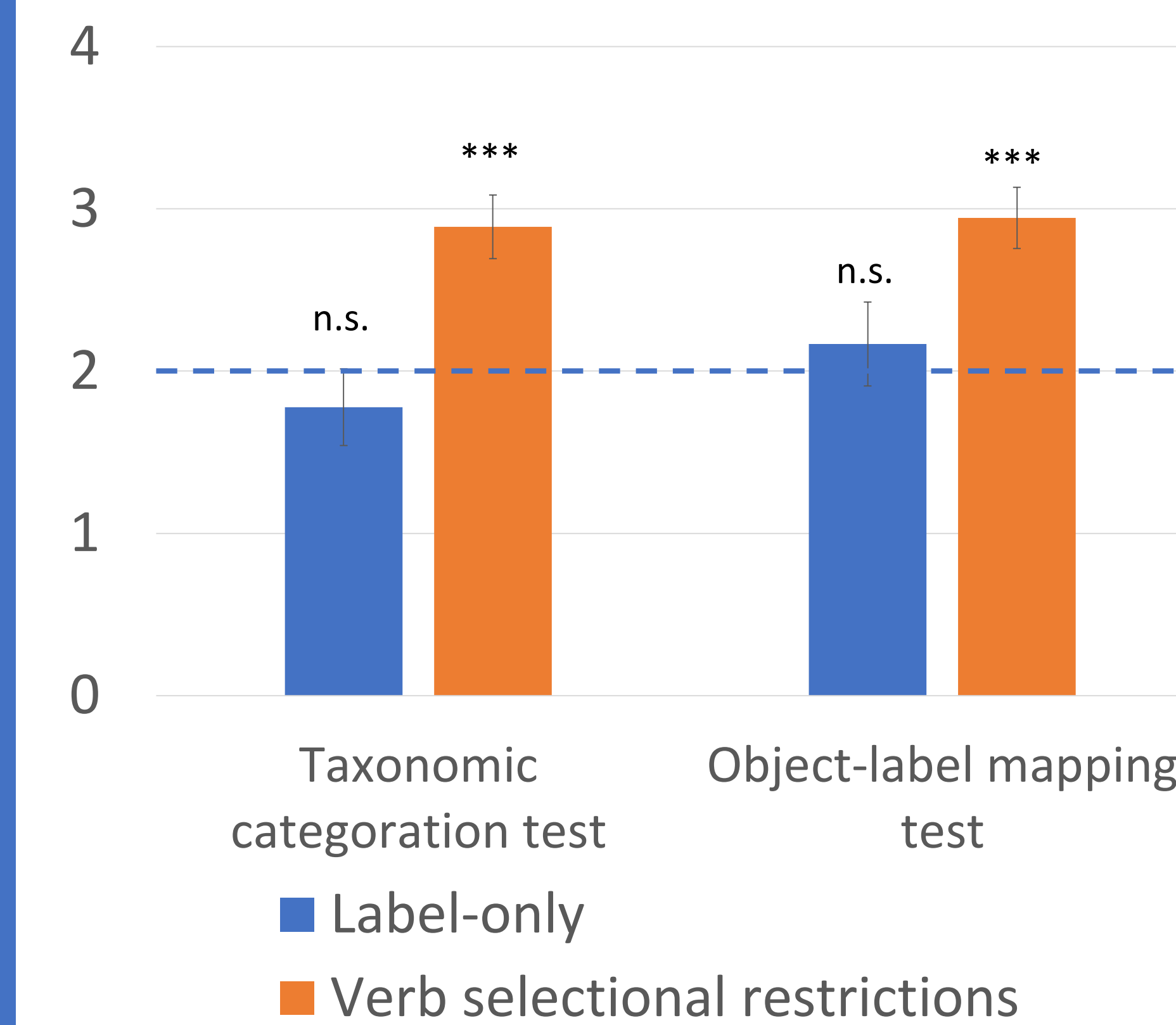
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