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Analogical reasoning and the nature of context: a research note.

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Recent theorising about children's reasoning has tended to move towards a "contextualist" view of cognition and away from the idea of an overall, context-free, mechanism, varying in efficiency, which is the presupposition underlying traditional standardised reasoning tests. An earlier study suggesting improved reasoning performance among children on socio-cognitively meaningful versions of Raven's Matrices tended to support this shift. The main purpose of the study reported here was to observe whether a similar improvement would be found with contextually-based analogical reasoning problems as well. Ten analogy items (abstract geometric figures) from a standardised test were administered to 11-year-olds together with 10 structurally-equivalent knowledge-based items. The results reflected improved performance on the latter, overall, and additional analyses led to further suggestions about the nature of the "contextual advantage" and the origins of item difficulty. (orig.)

Classification: C33

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