



The Relationship between Body-Related Vocabulary and Bodily Experience and Mental Body Image in Children

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Abstract

Children's bodily awareness and the mental representation of their own bodies are essential for cognitive and emotional development. However, the interaction between body-related vocabulary and body schema is less explored. This study examines how Persian-speaking children's use of body-related terms reflects and shapes their embodied experiences and mental body image. Thirty Persian-speaking children aged 6–8 participated in three tasks: (1) vocabulary elicitation with body-part picture cards, (2) body outline drawings, and (3) semi-structured interviews. Vocabulary use was coded for diversity and figurative expressions. Drawings were scored for anatomical accuracy and detail. Data were analyzed with descriptive statistics and thematic analysis. Children with richer body-related vocabulary, including internal organs and idiomatic expressions, produced more accurate and detailed body drawings. They demonstrated better spatial awareness of bodily structures and described internal processes such as digestion or emotion localization. Thematic analysis revealed links between emotional vocabulary and metaphorical body expressions. Findings suggest that language actively shapes children's body schema and mental imagery. Richer body-related vocabulary is associated with more refined bodily models, with implications for health education, emotional learning, and clinical interventions.

Keywords: Body-related vocabulary, Body schema, Children, Embodied cognition, Cognitive linguistics

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