

COGNITION AND PERCEPTION IN
THE LINGUISTIC ENCODING OF SPACE IN CHILD MANDARIN

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the linguistic encoding of space in Mandarin-speaking children based on a corpus study and a series of experimental tasks. It is shown that cognitive development plays a significant role in the development of spatial language. The acquisition of *pang* 'side' before *you* 'right' is accounted for by the cognitive complexity of the localizers. Cognitive egocentricity biased children under 4;0 towards

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the aligned strategy in interpreting *qian* ‘front’ and *hou* ‘back’, and caused 6-year-olds to rely on the viewer-centered frame of reference in interpreting *zuo* ‘left’ and *you* ‘right’ when the reference entity has inherent orientation. Our findings show that young children are sensitive to the Figure-Ground asymmetry, a cognitive constraint, and perceptual cues influence children’s choice of reference strategies.

KEYWORDS

Child spatial language Cognition Perception Egocentricity
Frame of reference Reference strategy

认知与知觉在普通话儿童空间编码中的作用

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提要

基于语料库研究和一系列实验,本文探讨汉语普通话儿童的空间编码情况。我们发现认知发展在空间语言习得中起到重要作用。方位词内在的认知难度可以解释为什么儿童先习得“旁”后习得“右”。因为受认知上的“自我中心”影响,四岁以下的儿童会倾向用顺向策略来解读“前”和“后”;当参照物没有内在方向时,六岁儿童主要依靠以视者为中心的参照系统来理解“左”和“右”。我们还发现儿童对目标物-参照物非对称性很早就非常敏感,证实这是一个认知上的普遍制约。知觉上的线索也会影响儿童对参照策略的选择。

关键词

儿童空间语言 认知 知觉 自我中心 参照系统 参照策略