A B S T R A C T

Recent studies have shown that language processing is grounded in actions. Multiple independent research findings indicate that children with specific language impairment (SLI) show subtle difficulties beyond the language domain. Uncertainties remain on possible association between body-mediated, non-linguistic expression of verbs and early manifestation of SLI during verb acquisition. The present study was conducted to determine whether verb production through non-linguistic modalities is impaired in children with SLI. Children with SLI (mean age 41 months) and typically developing children (mean age 40 months) were asked to recognize target verbs while viewing video clips showing the action associated with the verb (verb-recognition task) and to enact the action corresponding to the verb (verb-enacting task). Children with SLI performed more poorly than control children in both tasks. The present study demonstrates that early language impairment emerges at the bodily level. These findings are consistent with the embodied theories of cognition and underscore the role of action-based representations during language development.

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