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Investigating the Effect of Experience on Concrete and Abstract Word Processing

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Abstract: As shown in previous studies, semantic processing of words is mainly affected by frequency, context and concreteness. Recently sensory, motor and emotional components are also examined to explain the concreteness effect within the embodiment framework. Concreteness effect, which adopts the processing advantages of concrete words over abstract ones, is supported by studies, which show better remembering, faster processing and faster recognizing performances for concrete words. In this study, concreteness effect was examined via two experiments on experts and controls in which verbal fluency and lexical decision tasks were employed. Lawyers were considered as an expert group with their intense deal with abstract concepts. A novice lawyer group and age-matched participants other than lawyers were used as control groups. Results showed that concreteness effect disappeared in the expert group as a matter of expert's verbal experience.