

Children's Flexibility in Using Spatial Language and its Relation to Spatial Skills

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Abstract: Spatial language has been shown to be an important predictor of spatial development. However, little is known about the underlying mechanisms through which language facilitates spatial development. The current study examines how the selectivity and flexibility by which preschool aged children use spatial language is related to their spatial skills. Children were asked to describe the location of a target object when properties of the referent objects changed (manipulating availability of size, color, and location information) and when the target object changed positions relative to the referent objects. Children were also administered a battery of spatial tasks and vocabulary assessments (through parental questionnaire and PPVT) to capture experience and skill level in both domains. The results of this on-going investigation are indicating that the selectivity and flexibility by which children use language to describe spatial scenes is associated with children's performance in spatial tasks beyond their knowledge of spatial words.