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Does encouraging gesture use help us connect remote associations?: The role of mental imagery

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Abstract

Previous research has shown that gestures help people think and solve problems more successfully. Recent studies have also found that encouraging gesture use helps generating new creative ideas and enhances verbal improvisation. Moreover, fluid arm movements have been associated with improving the ability to connect remote associates. Research is still limited with emphasis on divergent thinking and the mechanisms behind the gesture-creativity interplay are not clear. This study examined whether encouraging gesture use could enhance the ability to connect both verbal and visual remote associates of young adults ($N = 90$) and hypothesised that mental imagery skills could facilitate that relationship. Our preliminary results showed that encouraging gestures did not improve remote association scores, however, mental imagery ability was a significant predictor of verbal remote associates' scores when gestures were encouraged. We suggest that individuals who have higher mental imagery skills might benefit more from gestures for visualising verbal information.