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Concrete and Abstract Word Processing in Early Language Acquisition

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Cognitive processes arise from the interaction of biological, psychological, and environmental factors. This research examines how these processes unfold in language acquisition. We hypothesize that access to mental representations is abstract, regardless of conceptual type, and investigate differences in access and processing of concrete and abstract items and lexical access accuracy. Stimulus selection involved (i) a Brazilian Portuguese CDI readaptation completed by 56 caregivers of children aged 24–30 months and (ii) concreteness/abstractness ratings provided by 445 adult native speakers. We conducted an online eye-tracking control experiment using the Lookit platform with 53 adults and a child experiment with 52 children aged 24–30 months. Results show that adults and children differ in how they access and process these words, indicating that conceptual nature modulates lexical access. These findings offer comparative parameters for research on populations at risk for neurodevelopmental disorders.