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Spatial cognition in children. II. Visuospatial and constructional skills in developmental reading disability

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Abstract

Cognitive models for developmental dyslexia are nowadays centered on the hypothesis of a specific deficit within the phonologic module of the language system. To ascertain whether defects of spatial cognition are associated with developmental reading disability, we investigated a sample of 43 school children (aged 8–9 years) found to be reading impaired during a wide screening survey for developmental dyslexia in the province of Naples, Italy. After one year all children were tested again and only 9/43 still presented reading impairment, while the remaining had achieved a variable range of spontaneous recovery. A detailed analysis was performed on all children to characterize their cognitive performances using on one hand classical conventional tests for constructional praxis, visuospatial cognition, and visuospatial memory and on the other a specific

neuropsychological battery for constructional disorders. The results of our study demonstrated that children with long-lasting reading impairment exhibited normal performances on spatial cognition tasks. Moreover, one single child was found with relevant visuospatial deficits pointing to the possible existence of a visuospatial subtype for developmental dyslexia.



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Keywords

Developmental dyslexia; Visuospatial disorders; Constructional disorders; Spatial cognition

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¹ Dr A.F. Crisanti collaborated in this study while preparing for Ph.D. thesis at the University of Bologna, Italy.

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