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Where are my hands? The role of hand position in action imagery of typing

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In action imagery (AI), the actual position may diverge to different degrees from the imagined body position. We investigated the role of the hand position during imagined typing and analyzed typing durations and attentional focus. In three experiments, participants performed an execution condition, an imagination condition in which the hands were lying flat next to the keyboard, and a further imagination condition in which the hands were either next to the keyboard with clenched fists (Exp. 1), lying flat on the sides of the screen (Exp. 2), or on the back of the participant (Exp. 3). Imagination with hands on the sides of screen was significantly shorter than execution and imagination with hands on participant's back was significantly longer than imagination with hands next to the keyboard. In all experiments, systematic differences between conditions were observed in attentional focus, e.g., participants paid more attention to the movement of fingers in most imagination conditions than in execution conditions. In conclusion, the data provide evidence that incongruence between actual body position and imagined body position changes the content of AI.

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