

THE “BOUBA-KIKI” EFFECT ON VISUALIZING FACES

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Abstract

The “Bouba-Kiki” effect is based on how words correspond to shapes visually (Sidhu & Pexman, 2017). This phenomenon is based on these words containing rounded letters or spikey letters as well as the spoken sounds associated with these words (Fort et al., 2015). Other studies demonstrate the Bouba-Kiki effect can be observed by the perception of physical appearance resembling a name. The hypothesis for this study stated that faces analyzed as primarily round will be assigned the rounded name (Bouba), while the faces that are analyzed as elongated with the spikey name (Kiki). This research focused on how names are associated with facial structure and comprised of a slideshow containing 18 artificially generated and analyzed faces (9 male & 9 female; 3 round, 3 elongated, & 3 mixed features). Individually tested participants (23 female/1 male) were provided an answer sheet to select one name out of the three options (Bouba, Kiki, Bouki [mixed feature name]) for each of the 18 faces. The frequency of names associated with the faces by gender results were analyzed through the Chi-Squared approach. Although the hypothesis was not supported, the results did suggest that the name choice was related to individuals’ perception of the face displayed. Specifically, participants significantly preferred the name Bouki for round, female faces, Kiki for the mixed feature faces, and disliked Kiki for elongated, male faces. This research could be a catalyst for future investigations on the social analysis of faces, with expansion on data size, different names used, and more male participants. ■

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