

Linguistic and Communicative Cross-modality: Improving and Expanding the Methodology

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There has recently been a resurgence of research in cross-modality: the study of sensory associations among non-synaesthetes. Earlier work in this field actually focused on metaphor in particular (Marks, Hammeal & Bornstein, 1987), and work in semantics also focused on the phenomenon of synaesthetic or sensory metaphors (Williams, 1976). However, most experimental work in linguistic cross-modality has lacked either linguistic focus (failing to isolate phonological features), or rigorous experimental procedure and control traditionally used in psychology.

I will present preliminary data establishing cross-modal trends between vowel sounds and shape. While results are more nuanced than traditional forced choice outcomes, they shed light on specific sensory-phonological correspondences, rather than giving very general trends which provide as many questions as they do answers. I will argue that these new approaches are necessary in order to get a full picture of linguistic cross-modal phenomenon, and that we must continue to pursue new ways of looking at cross-modality, particularly as it relates to communication.

Marks, L.E., Hammeal, R.J. & Bornstein, M.H. (1987). Perceiving Similarity and Comprehending Metaphor. *Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development*, 215(52), No. 1.

Williams, J.M. (1976). Synaesthetic adjectives: a possible law of semantic change. *Language*, 52:2, 461-478.