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The facial feedback hypothesis and automatic mimicry in perception of sung emotion

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THE FACIAL FEEDBACK HYPOTHESIS AND AUTOMATIC MIMICRY IN
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B.A., Specialized Honours, Psychology, York University, 2008

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By Lisa Chan

For Ryerson University, Master of Arts, Psychology, 2010

Abstract

Facial mimicry in response to emotional and neutral singing was tested in the context of an emotion judgment task. Participants were tested in two conditions, Perception (n= 16) and Imagery (n=21). Participants were presented with video clips showing a singer expressing happy, neutral and sad emotions, and were asked to identify the expressed emotions, as well as rate their intensity. Participants in the Perception group were asked to simply watch the video clips, while participants in the Imagery group were also asked to imagine imitating the song fragment after watching the model singer. Facial electromyography was used to monitor activity in the corrugator supercilii and zygomaticus major muscles. Results showed more corrugator muscle activity for sad than happy trials, and more zygomaticus activity for happy than sad trials. No differences were found between conditions, suggesting that mimicry is an automatic process, not requiring encouragement prompted by imagery.

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