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Evidence for the Verbal Mediation of Recognition Memory :

A fabricated sample research review

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Abstract

Three studies were examined to determine whether facial recognition memory is related to verbal mediation in children. Although the results varied, taken together they implied that language may facilitate facial recognition performance unless too much irrelevant verbal processing is interjected between exposure and deep recognition tasks.

Evidence for the verbal mediation of recognition memory

Is facial recognition memory related to verbal mediation? There has been some suggestion in the literature that one's ability to recognize faces is a function of verbal encoding—i.e., processing the verbal description of facial characteristics while processing the visual input. Three studies examined this contention in children.

Jones (1998) recruited 60 children ranging in age from eight to ten years. Half of the children received practice trials naming the most prominent feature of a series of faces shown to them on flash cards; and half were asked simply to watch as those same faces were presented. After these familiarization trials, all of the children were exposed to a series of faces for 2 seconds, each followed by a series of random letters and then an array of 12 similar faces, presented one at a time and then all together. The children were asked to identify which of any of the array of 12 had been the face they saw originally. Surprisingly, children in the verbal labeling condition correctly identified a significantly *lower* proportion of the target faces compared with children who had not received instruction to verbalize.

On the other hand, Smith (2000) presented pictures of characters in brief narratives to 72 preschoolers. In half of the narratives, the target character was named in the narrative and in the other half the target was referred to simply as *he* or *she.* The experimenters returned the following day to present a series of randomly organized faces drawn in the same style as the target and other characters in the narratives and ask the children to indicate whether or not the character had been pictured in their stories. Children without the name performed at chance (51% correct) but children who had seen the same face associated with a name performed significantly better (67% correct).

Using slightly different methods, Brown (2001) was able to show evidence for multiple recognition or memory systems at work. She repeated the design used by Jones (1998) with 30 nine-year-old children but added cardiac monitoring to her dependent measures. In fact, she found that children in the naming condition did not differ from children in the silent condition with respect to the number of correctly identified faces. However children who verbalized showed significant decreases from baseline heart rate when they saw a target face regardless of whether they correctly identified it or not, suggesting increased attention to targets. Children in the silent condition showed no heart rate changes to incorrectly identified faces, only decelerations to faces that they identified correctly.

Taken together these studies are not as discrepant as they appear at first blush. Although Brown (2001) failed to replicate Jones's (1998) finding of fewer identifications from verbalizing, Brown's sample was only half the size of Jones's resulting in less power to find significance. The fact that children in Brown's sample showed heart rate adjustments when looking at a face they had seen before suggests that they attended more closely to those faces and therefore did have some trace recognition although it was inaccessible to them at a conscious level. It is possible that introduction of the reading distraction was significant enough to interfere with these children's processing—especially since reading is such a salient school activity at these ages. This explanation is consistent with Smith's results suggesting that a verbal label facilitated recognition memory in the absence of the reading distraction task. Hence, one may conclude that language may mediate facial recognition performance, facilitating recognition but also

having the potential to interfere with accessing that deep recognition if too much irrelevant verbal processing is interjected between exposure and recognition.

References

Brown, G. (2001). Have you seen me before? *Journal of Child Memory, 31*, 3-11.

Jones, K.V. (1998). Verbal processing and facial recognition memory in children. *Journal of the Child, 27*, 489-511.

Smith, H. (2000). Naming and facial recognition in young children. *International Journal of Child Development and Cognitive Processes, 10*, 289-301.

Notes on this sample review

This mock research review had three major components:

1. Introduction of the problem and research question to be addressed.
2. Description of the methods and results of each of three empirical studies
3. Integration and synthesis of the three with respect to the initial question.

There are no direct quotes. It is in my own words.

It is shorter than yours will be—your studies will involve more complex methods and more information on exactly who the participants are and how their status (i.e., with or without a particular disorder).

Be sure to format using APA style, including title page, abstract, body of your review, and references. Your title page is a separate page, as is your abstract. References follow immediately after the text. Your title page is page 1 and pagination follows consecutively (title = 1, abstract = 2, text = 3+). In the sample above, horizontal lines indicate page breaks.

Be sure to double space and to use running heads and page numbers (in MSWord, use View→Headers and Footers→Type in info; Insert page number (use tool bar).

Remember that the abstract summarizes what you have done in your paper in 100 words or less. It can probably be done well in two or three sentences. Be concise.

A last page of notes like this will not be part of your research review.
References will be your last page.