Effects of Voiced Initial Consonants in Japanese Sound-Symbolic Words: Experiment 3

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Abstract

Previous studies have hypothesized that Japanese sound-symbolic words with voiced initial consonants (SSWV; e.g., boroboro) rather than those with voiceless initial consonants (SSWVL; e.g., horohoro) or semi-voiced initial consonants (SSWSV; e.g., poroporo) induce stronger evaluations of the quality of psycholinguistic features. To investigate this hypothesis, we asked 36 Japanese participants to evaluate 13 psycholinguistic features (familiarity, visual imagery, auditory imagery, haptic imagery, arousal, preference, disgust, hardness, softness, heaviness, lightness, fastness, and slowness) with SSWV, SSWVL, and SSWSV using 5-point semantic differential scales. All the initial consonants involved h (f; SSWVL), p (SSWSV), or b (SSWV). The experimental results showed that SSWV included higher levels of visual imagery, auditory imagery, haptic imagery, arousal, disgust, hardness, and heaviness over SSWVL or SSWSV (ps ¡ .05). Taken together, these findings suggest that SSWV induces psychological and physical quality evaluations more than SSWVL and SSWSV.