

Lip-read me now, hear me better later

12 April 2007

Experience hearing a person's voice allows us to more easily hear what they are saying. Now research by UC Riverside psychology Professor Lawrence D. Rosenblum and graduate students Rachel M. Miller and Kauyumari Sanchez has shown that experience seeing a person's face also makes it easier to hear them.

Rosenblum's paper, "Lip-Read Me Now, Hear Me Better Later: Crossmodal Transfer of Talker Familiarity Effects," will appear in the May issue of the journal *Psychological Science*, published by the Association for Psychological Science.

Sixty college undergraduates were asked to lip-read sentences from a silent videotape of a talker's face. These subjects all had normal hearing and vision and had no formal lip reading experience.

After an hour of lip reading, the students were asked to listen to sentences heard against a background of noise and to identify as many words as they could. Half of the students heard sentences from the same talker they had just lip-read, while the other half heard sentences by a new talker. The undergraduates who lip-read and heard speech from the same talker were better at identifying the noisy sentences than those who lip-read from one talker and heard speech from another.

These findings suggest that when we watch a person speak, we become familiar with characteristics of their speaking style which also are present in the sound of their speech. This allows talker familiarity to be transferred from lip reading to listening, thereby making a talker easier to hear. These results have implications for individuals with hearing impairments as well as for brain lesion patients, Rosenblum said.

Source: Association for Psychological Science

APA citation: Lip-read me now, hear me better later (2007, April 12) retrieved 15 November 2019 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2007-04-lip-read.html>

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