# CROSS-CULTURAL EFFECTS OF ICONICITY AND AUTISTIC TRAITS IN WORD LEARNING

**ASHA CE APPROVED PROVIDER**

Pennsylvania Speech-Language-Hearing Association

Intermediate Level

.1 ASHA CEUs

**VIJAYACHANDRA RAMACHANDRA PHD, KAIRI SUGIMOTO M.S., KELLY ZISKIND M.S., ARK VERMA PHD, IRFAN AHMAD MASTER'S IN NUCLEAR SCIENCE AND ENGINEERING, MAHAYANA GODOY PHD, AND KATSUMI WATANABE PHD**

## Learning Objectives:

- Describe the bouba-kiki phenomenon and the benefits of iconicity on word learning
- Discuss the findings of the 'bouba-kiki' effect in individuals with autism spectrum disorders
- Discuss the benefits of using iconic words in the treatment of individuals with autism and other speech and language disorders

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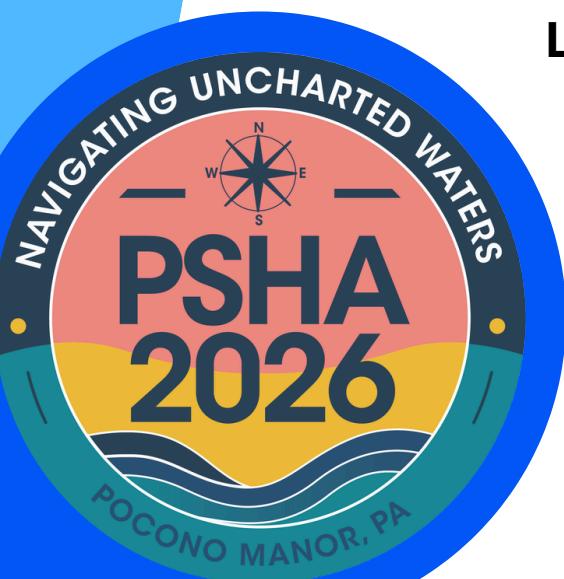
# Course Abstract

This study examined how iconicity and autistic traits influence a novel word learning task. A total of 1,481 healthy adults aged 18 to 40 from four countries—Brazil (N=261), India (N=416), Japan (N=493), and the USA (N=311) completed a bouba–kiki-based word learning task, viewing novel images paired with either iconic (congruent) or arbitrary (incongruent) names. Word recognition was tested using a three-alternative forced-choice method, and autistic traits were measured with the autism spectrum quotient (AQ). Results showed a consistent advantage of iconicity across all countries, with better performance in the congruent condition. Although a linear mixed model found no overall significant effect of AQ on bouba–kiki scores, a country-specific analysis revealed a weak yet significant positive correlation between AQ scores and bouba–kiki performance among Japanese participants. This should be interpreted with caution and requires further investigation. Overall, the findings support the universality of the bouba–kiki effect in word learning across both Western and Eastern cultures. However, the relationship between autistic traits and iconicity varies by country and may be influenced by cultural factors. The implications of these findings for speech-language pathologists will also be discussed.

## Speaker Bio

Vijayachandra Ramachandra is a professor in the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders at Marywood University. He also serves as the director of the Communication and Cognition Lab at the university.

Kairi Sugimoto is a doctoral student in the School of Fundamental Science and Engineering at Waseda University, Japan.

Kelly Ziskind is a Clinical Fellow in Speech-Language Pathology at Theracare

Ark Verma is an Associate Professor of Psychology with the Department of Cognitive Science at the Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur, India

Irfan Ahmad is a doctoral student in the Department of Cognitive Science at the Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur, India

Mahayana Godoy is a professor in Linguistics at the Federal University of Rio Grande do Norte in Brazil

Katsumi Watanabe is a professor in the School of Fundamental Science and Engineering at Waseda University, Japan.

## Speaker Disclosures

No author of this presentation has any relevant relationships to disclose.