



**Decoding Uncanny Valley make-up, TikTok's creepiest beauty trend**

*Something unsettling is taking place on our faces*

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By Hatti Rex

Something unsettling **is happening** across BeautyTok. The monumental rise of AI-generated content **has collided** with the tail-end of this year's spooky Halloween transformations for an unnerving TikTok beauty trend that's leaving viewers feeling uncomfortable – and not always for the reason **you'd think**. The #uncannyvalleymakeup hashtag has quickly risen to 146 million views, with beauty creators clunkily using make-up to appear robotic, doll-like and not-quite-human. Each video **is soundtracked** by the same eerie and off-kilter choral tune, taken from the intro of "Brutus" by rapper The Buttrass. It's not really something you want popping onto your explore page during a late-night scroll.

Techniques to create this uncanny look vary from person to person, but will often include blocking out large portions of the eyebrow with concealer before filling in the hair using a darker-than-natural colour, as well as contouring that often feels very theatrical. Eyes are made to seem smaller and cartoonish by using eyeliner that focuses on the centre of both lids [...].

Dr Carl Strathearn, a researcher in Humanoid Robotics and Artificial Intelligence, says that humans have been trying to achieve this 'uncanniness' through make-up for years. "Traditionally Geishas were used as an example of the uncanny valley effect in make-up, as the objective of [their look] was to recreate the tonality of porcelain ceramics [...]," he says. "The Barbie look may be a modern example of this. [It is a way of] using make-up to create a plastic-like light reflective skin complexion, or changing the contours of the face to emulate smooth doll-like features."

The uncanny valley hypothesis, from which this beauty trend takes its name, was coined in 1970 in an influential essay by Japanese professor of robotics Masahiro Mori. In it, he posits that we are inclined to feel 'cold, eerie feelings' towards a robot or non-human if they become too human-like. You may freak out, for example, while watching a clip of Sophia the Robot, the live-action *Cats* musical remake, or The Polar Express. Mori's theory was also supported by [a] 2019 study, which identified the areas of the brain that reject and accept these human-like artificial entities.

[...] [T]he Uncanny Valley effect on TikTok has been reversed: (\*).....  
.....  
.....  
.....



**1. Read the text to learn more about “the uncanny valley effect.”**

**2. Look at the structures highlighted in the first paragraph.**

What do they have in common? They all use auxiliaries (réviser les conjugaisons de “Be” + Have”, s’assurer de pouvoir les conjuguer aux différents temps et personnes).

**Les auxiliaires modaux ne se conjuguent pas!**

How is each of them called? How are they constructed? When should you use them?

a. **is happening** Present Be + -ing

Subject + Be + Verb-ing

**Le procès est en cours, n’est pas fini > le procès est inaccompli au moment où l’on parle**

b. **has collided** Present Perfect

Subject + Have + Past participle

(regular past participle: Verb+-ed)

**Temps du présent > on rattache le procès au présent > l’action commencée dans le passé est toujours en cours, on fait un bilan ou on constate les effets de l’action passée dans le présent**

c. **you’d think** Modal + Verb in the infinitive

(here: “you would think”)

**La valeur dépend du modal choisi (futur, volonté, possibilité, probabilité, conseil etc).**

d. **is soundtracked** Passive voice

Subject + Be (conjugué au bon temps et à la bonne personne) + Past participle

**Le sujet mis en avant, contrairement à la voix active, est celui qui subit l’action.**

**Voix passive:** Each video is soundtracked by the same tune.

**Voix active:** The same tune soundtracks each video.

**3. Fill in the blanks of the following sentences using the appropriate structure from the four above.**

a. Occasionally there’s a synthetic wig **involved / that is involved** (to involve), too.

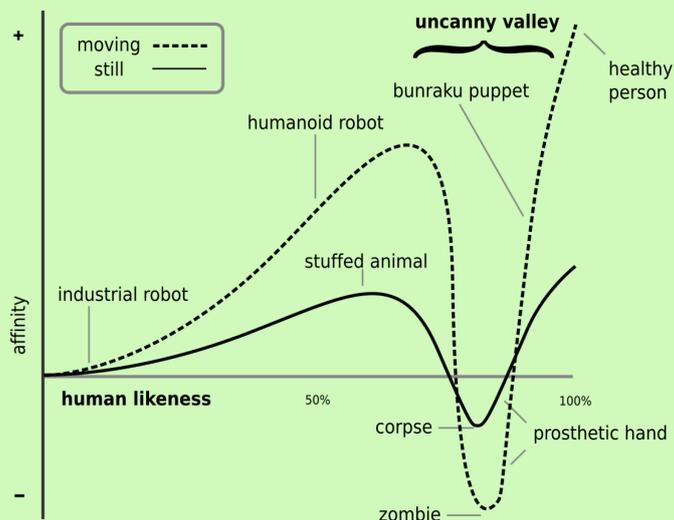
b. It’s not just make-up: there’s also an uncanny valley make-up-inspired filter so those who aren’t handy with a make-up brush **can get involved** (to involve).

c. It quickly became pretty apparent that not many people **doing / who were doing** (to do) the trend even understood what ‘uncanny valley’ means.

d. Even from a grammatical standpoint, the trend often falls flat. ‘Turning myself into uncanny valley’ makes it more obvious that some creators **are joining** (to join) in without really understanding what they **are getting** (to get) themselves into.

**4. Summarize the differences between the roboticist’s original theory and the make-up trend by filling in the expert’s explanation directly in the text (\*). Try to use the phrase “instead of:”**

(\* **Dr Dennis Küster says:** “The Uncanny Valley Effect involves looking at an entity, usually some kind of robot, that may appear to be almost human at first glance but then you look a little closer and discover that it is actually *not* human. If a human is using make-up to look less human, or less ‘alive’, then the later parts of this perceptual process differ because the result is the opposite. **Instead of creating** an ‘almost human’ look, they were treating it as though it were synonymous with anything creepy or weird, which isn’t quite accurate.”



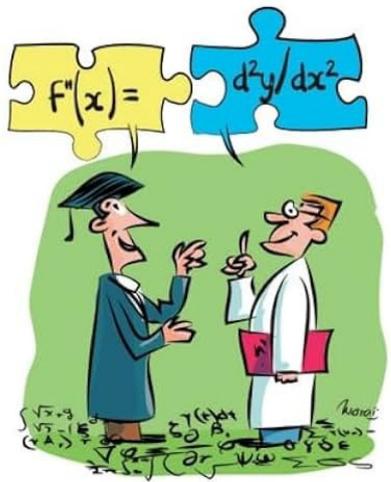


**Appendix: Additional vocabulary**

Marc Défourneaux

# Do You Speak Science?

Comprendre et communiquer en anglais scientifique



sens de variation $\Leftrightarrow$ direction of variation	
$x \nearrow \searrow$	<p>augmenter/[s'ac]croître, faire croître <math>\Leftrightarrow</math> to increase (<math>\neq</math> to grow)</p> <p>décroître, faire décroître <math>\Leftrightarrow</math> to decrease</p> <p>croissance/augmentation <math>\Leftrightarrow</math> increase</p> <p>décroissance/diminution <math>\Leftrightarrow</math> decrease</p> <p>strictement [dé]croissant <math>\Leftrightarrow</math> strictly [increasing, decreasing]</p> <p>agrandir, diminuer, réduire, abaisser <math>\Leftrightarrow</math> to enhance, to diminish/lessen, to reduce, to lower</p>
	<p>variation monotone <math>\Leftrightarrow</math> monotonic (<math>\neq</math> monotonous) variation</p> <p>passer par un [maximum, minimum] <math>\Leftrightarrow</math> to go through a [maximum, minimum]</p>
taux/vitesse de variation $\Leftrightarrow$ rate of variation	
	<p>lent, progressif, rapide <math>\Leftrightarrow</math> slow, progressive, rapid</p> <p>pente [faible, douce, forte, raide] <math>\Leftrightarrow</math> [smooth, gentle, strong, steep] slope</p> <p>changement radical de [valeur, ...] <math>\Leftrightarrow</math> sharp/dramatic change in [value, ...]</p> <p>montée soudaine <math>\Leftrightarrow</math> surge</p>
	<p>les deux courbes se coupent en I <math>\Leftrightarrow</math> the two (<math>\neq</math> both) curves intersect at I</p> <p>I = point d'intersection <math>\Leftrightarrow</math> intersection point (or) intercept</p> <p>B = point d'intersection avec l'axe des y <math>\Leftrightarrow</math> y-intercept</p>
	<p>les deux courbes [confluent, se rejoignent] en F <math>\Leftrightarrow</math> the two curves (<math>\neq</math> both curves) [merge, join up] at F</p> <p>courbes concourantes (<math>\neq</math> concurrentes) <math>\Leftrightarrow</math> concurrent (<math>\neq</math> competing) curves</p>
	<p>A, B passer par un [maximum en A, minimum en B] <math>\Leftrightarrow</math> to go through a [maximum at A, minimum at B]</p> <p>I point d'inflexion <math>\Leftrightarrow</math> inflexion/inflection (Br/Am) point</p> <p>P point de rebroussement <math>\Leftrightarrow</math> cusp</p> <p>sommet, pic <math>\Leftrightarrow</math> apex/vertex, peak</p> <p>PP' [ligne de] crête, arête <math>\Leftrightarrow</math> crest [line], ridge</p> <p>A', B' sommet, fond/creux <math>\Leftrightarrow</math> top, trough <span style="float: right;">pr: trough (trɒf)</span></p> <p>S ensellement, col <math>\Leftrightarrow</math> saddle point, pass</p>