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Effect of gazing at the camera during a video link on recall

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Abstract

The impact of looking into the camera during a presentation over a video link (resulting in the perception of mutual gaze) on information recall was investigated. In a face-to-face context mutual gaze has been shown to facilitate the encoding and subsequent recall of information [Fry, R., Smith, G.F., 1975. The effects of feedback and eye contact on performance of a digit-coding task. *J. Soc. Psychol.* 96, 145-146; Otteson, J.D., Otteson, C.R., 1980. Effect of teacher's gaze on children's story recall. *Percept. Motor Skill.* 50, 35-42; Sherwood, J.V., 1988. Facilitative effects of gaze upon learning. *Percept. Motor Skill.* 64 (3 Part 2), 1275-1278]. One explanation for these findings is that gaze acts as an arousal stimulus, which increases attentional focus and therefore enhances memory [Kelley, D.H., Gorham, J., 1988. Effects of immediacy on recall of information. *Commun. Edu.* 37(3), 198-207]. Two studies were conducted in order to test whether gazing at the camera during video-mediated presentations resulted in similar benefits as mutual gaze in a face-to-face context. In study 1 a confederate presented information about two fictitious soap products. In one condition, the confederate gazed at the camera for 30% of the presentation, therefore giving the participants the impression that he was gazing in their direction. In the other condition the confederate did not gaze at the camera. Participants viewed the sales presentations from both conditions. In the condition where gaze was directed at the camera, participants recalled significantly more information about the sales presentation. Study 2 employed the same pre-recorded sales presentations used in study 1, however they were delivered to the participants under audio-only conditions (therefore, the image was switched off). Results from study 2 indicated no recall differences between the two conditions. Findings from these studies would seem to indicate that the perception of gaze aversion over a video link (a consequence of the salesman not looking into the camera) has a negative impact on information recall. This has practical implications for video-mediated presentations. In a distance learning environment lecturers could be advised to look into the camera in order to promote more efficient learning in students.

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