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» Journal Abstract

Influence of environmental context on motor imagery quality: an autonomic nervous system study

A Guillot, C Collet, A Dittmar

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This study was devised to evaluate the effect of the environmental information context on mental representation of a complex motor skill. Regional and national table tennis players were asked to perform a forehand topspin shot after an experimenter had served; during imagery sessions, they had to represent mentally the same sequence: 1) neutral imagery was conducted without information provided by reference to table-tennis, 2) context imagery included influences of the appropriate environmental context, wearing sports clothes, handling the table tennis paddle, hearing ball rebounds. Results evidenced that subjects had greater difficulty in building up a mental representation of the sequence in a neutral environment than with context imagery: longer and higher neurovegetative responses, closer to those recorded during actual movement, were observed in the context imagery modality than in the neutral imagery modality. Environmental context in which mental imagery of movement is performed could thus facilitate a subject's ability to build up mental simulation of a motor act.

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