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The Effects of Anxiety on Cognitive Processing in English Language Learning

Zaved Ahmed Khan

Abstract

Language anxiety is a prevalent phenomenon in second language learning. This experiment examines the arousal of anxiety caused by the introduction of a video camera at various points in a vocabulary learning task. Two hundred sixteen students of 1st-year university English language course were randomly assigned to one of four groups: (a) one group who had anxiety aroused during their initial exposure to the stimuli, (b) a second group who had anxiety aroused when they began to learn the meanings of the words, (c) a third group who had anxiety aroused when they were asked to produce the English word (when prompted with the Hindi), and (d) a control group who did not experience anxiety arousal. Significant increases in state anxiety were reported in all three groups when the video camera was introduced, and concomitant deficits in vocabulary acquisition were observed. It is concluded that the stage at which anxiety arises has implications for any remedial action taken to reduce the effects of language anxiety.

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