COGNITIVE LOAD AND TIME BASED FORGETTING

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ABSTRACT

Recently, various researchers have claimed that time does not play a direct role in short-term forgetting. Instead, they claim that time is only related to forgetting because it is correlated with other factors that cause forgetting. Although the case against absolute time-based forgetting is strong, we believe this view to be incomplete. In 2 experiments, we show that substantial forgetting occurs due to the passage of time in at least one situation. On each trial, an array of novel characters was followed by a post-perceptual mask, a variable retention interval, and a probe item to be judged changed or unchanged from the array. There was a pronounced effect of the retention interval duration and, independent of it, an effect of the cognitive load or proportion of the interval consumed by an acoustic digit processing task. The results demonstrate that both cognitive load and absolute length of retention play important roles in the loss of information during short-term retention in the present procedure.