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When we feel watched: Effects of presenting the teacher's face on students' monitors during online classes

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic has necessitated online lessons. To investigate the differences of the cognitive processes in face-to-face and online situations, we conducted two mock classes using Zoom by manipulating the speaker's and students' video cameras (on/off). Unlike the conditions when the students' cameras were turned off, when they were on (i.e., the speaker could watch the participants and they knew it), the relaxation score declined but only when the speaker's camera was on. No effect was found on the students' camera (on/off) when the speaker's camera was off. Furthermore, the effect of the speaker's camera (on/off) occurred when the students' cameras were on; the relaxation score was higher when the speaker's camera was off. These results indicate that students do not feel that the speaker is watching them when the speaker's face is not visible on their monitors—even if they know that their video cameras are on.