

“Effect of Unfinished Task on Memory”(Zeigarnik Effect)

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ABSTRACT

The Zeigarnik effect occurs when an activity that has been interrupted may be more readily recalled. It postulates that people remember unfinished or interrupted tasks better than completed tasks. In Gestalt psychology, the Zeigarnik effect has been used to demonstrate the general presence of Gestalt phenomena, not just appearing as perceptual effects, but also present in cognition.

KEYWORDS:- Finished task, Memory, Unfinished task, Zeigarnik effect.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Lewin says, when individual works to attain a goal he is in a state of tension. When goal is attained the tension is released. But unless and until he reaches the goal the state of tension continues which makes him remember his goal. As the goal is attained tension exists more and the individual forgets about it. Zeigarnik was a close associate of Lewin and she concluded on the basis of research on Lewin's tension system that unfinished task is better remembered than the finished ones because tension does not allow the person to forget the unfinished task. This research of Zeigarnik was called as “Zeigarnik phenomenon” or “Zeigarnik effect”. According to this unfinished task is retained better than the finished ones.

The purpose of experiment as to verify whether tension of unfinished task results in its better remembrance or not than the finished task.

II. METHOD OF THE STUDY

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY :- Purpose of the study is to analyze effect of unfinished task on memory.

HYPOTHESIS :- Hypothesis of this study is that unfinished task are better remembered than finished task.

MATERIAL :- 20 cancellation sheets, Pencil, Stop watch, Screen.

DESIGN :-

CONDITIONS	NATURE OF TASK	TASK	NO. OF TRIALS	SEQUENCE OF TASK PRESENTATION	RECALL
Controlled	Finished	Cancellation of pair of letters	10	Random	Recall of both finished and unfinished task
Experimental	Unfinished	Cancellation of pair of letters	10		

PROCEDURE :- First the arrangements were made for the conduction of experiment.

ARRANGEMENT OF EXPERIMENT :-

20 cancellation sheets were kept ready on the table. Half of the cancellation sheets were given the symbol F (finished) and half UF (unfinished) at its back. Then a pair of letter like PR, FB, GK etc. were written at the top of each sheet. A screen was kept between the Subject and Experimenter to avoid the view of data and other materials. The Subject was seated on a stool and following instructions were given.

INSTRUCTIONS :-

"These are cancellation sheets on which English alphabets are printed in a random order. At the top of each sheet two letters are written. You look at these combination and cancel then wherever you find them in the sheet. You have to do it in a perfect manner as quickly as possible. If you leave any of these two or cancel other letter than these two, it will be counted as error. You have definite time for each sheet. I will take the sheets irrespective of you have finished it or not after the defined time. Before each trial a ready signal will be given. You get alert and as soon as I say start you start cancelling the letters. Be very quick and alert in your task."

ACTUAL CONDUCTION OF EXPERIMENT :-

According to the plan of the experiment 20 cancellation sheets were taken at the top of which pair of letters was written before hand. Two trials of finished task were taken. The Subject was given the cancellation sheet and she cancelled the letters till she reached the end of sheet. Then three trials of unfinished task were taken. In this the S was asked to cancel the letters and before she finished it, the sheet was taken from her telling that time is over' and now she cannot move further with the sheet. In the next trial in similar manner, when last four lines were left to be cancelled it was taken from her and she was given the fifth sheet. Each sheet constituted a trial. Likewise 15 more trials were taken randomly for unfinished and finished task. Although the time was not being noted but in each trial as the E said 'start' she also switched on the stop watch so that S get an impression that time is being monitored by the E. In the UF task, the S was interrupted by telling that time is over' and now you return the sheet. While saying so E switched off the stop watch to give an impression that defined period of time was over. After the completion of 20 trials, the S was asked to recall the pair of letters of all twenty sheets which she had cancelled. The recalled letters were noted down in the raw data table. An introspective report was given by the S after which experiment was stopped.

III. RESULT :-

Sl. NO.	PAIR OF THE LETTERS	F/UF	RECALL OF PAIRED LETTERS	F/UF	RIGHT/WRONG
1.	GK	UF	PR	UF	Right
2.	FB	F	MQ	F	Right
3.	TL	F	YM	F	Right
4.	PR	UF	VF	UF	Right
5.	MQ	F	KZ	F	Right
6.	CH	UF	GK	UF	Right
7.	WC	UF	TL	F	Right
8.	ZF	F	CH	UF	Right
9.	LS	UF	NT	UF	Right
10.	YM	F	LS	UF	Right
11.	RT	F	WC	UF	Right
12.	PC	UF	RC	-	Wrong
13.	VF	UF	HR	-	Wrong
14.	DQ	F	NP	-	Wrong
15.	XW	UF	QZ	-	Wrong
16.	RH	F	BD	UF	Right
17.	KZ	F	-	-	No recall
18.	NT	UF	-	-	No recall
19.	BD	UF	-	-	No recall
20.	PY	F	-	-	No recall

INTROSPECTIVE REPORT :-

"To cancel the letters was not a difficult job. But to give the sheet without completion was really very difficult for me. I used to get tensed when experimenter pointed that he will take the sheet incomplete as the time for that sheet is over. I tried my level best to complete the task quickly but every now and then I failed to do so and had to return the sheet without completing the cancellation of letters. This did not make me happy. When the completed sheet was taken within the required time then I felt very happy and easy and there was no tension.

RESULT :-

Table showing the % of correct and failed recall, their difference and ratio

CONDITIONS	% OF CORRECT RECALL	% OF WRONG OR FAILED RECALL	DIFFERENCE BETWEEN % OF CORRECT RECALL OF UF & F TASK	RATIO OF UF & TASK UF/F
Controlled (F task)	40%	60%	80 - 40 = 40%	8/4 = 2
Experimental (UF task)	80%	20%		

IV. DISCUSSION :-

The result table shows hypothesis is proved that unfinished task is better remembered than finished task. Out of 20 items the S has correctly recalled 12 items and remaining 8 were either wrongly recalled or not recalled. Out of 12 correctly recalled item, result table shows 8 items are from unfinished task and only 4 items are from finished task. Thus, S was able to recall 8 items from unfinished task and only 4 items from the finished task. This proves the hypothesis that unfinished task creates tension in the organism and as a result he is not able to forget the material, But in case task is finished there is no state of tension and S forgets about the material; hence percent of incorrect/failed recall is more in finished task.

The percent correct recall in unfinished task is 80% and finished task and 40% respectively. The difference in percentage between two tasks is 40% which proves that due to task incompleteness there was 40% more remembrance or memory in experimental condition. This goes in favour of Zeigarnik phenomenon. Hence the increase in 40% of memory proves Zeigarnik effect.

The ratio of UF and F task is 2 which proves that in comparison to finished task the performance has been doubled in unfinished task and it is surely due to tension of incomplete task that subject has retained more item from UF task.

V. CONCLUSION :-

1. The effect of Zeigarnik phenomenon has occurred in this experiment.
3. The unfinished task is better retained.
4. Introspective report also supports the hypothesis.
5. The need-tension theory of Kurt Lewin also gets support through this experiment.

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