Right movies on the right seat: laterality and seat choice

Science, Biology

The goal of this study was to determine how choosing a seat is affected by motivation and hemispheric laterality. Studies have attempted to display the relationship between hemispheric laterality and choosing a seat, but there has been some disagreements and flaws in these studies. So far, it has been shown in multiple studies that there is a right side bias for seat choice when there is a primary focal point (stage/screen), but it is unclear if this is the result of expecting hemispheric laterality, as other situations without a focal point have shown the same bias (the rotating restaurant from article 2). However, it has also been shown that people unconsciously have a lateral bias (preference of one side of the body) for certain activities/actions (people tend to show the left side of the face when told to portray emotion, and the right when told to avoid portraying emotion), which means that some decisions are definitely, but unconsciously, related to hemispheric laterality.

The researchers decided that in order to clearly demonstrate the effect of this lateral bias on the right-seat bias, they would have to find out if the right-seat bias is influenced by positive or negative motivations, as this would challenge the claim that the bias is due to a more general right-side bias of right-handers (article 2), and would suggest that when properly motivated, people will subconsciously use the “ best hemisphere” for the task. They hypothesised that for right handed participants (because they show more hemispheric lateralization), if positively motivated, would have a right seat bias, and that the bias would disappear for negatively motivated participants. For left handed participants, they hypothesised that there would be no correlation. To test this, two experiments were performed. In the first experiment, all participants (200 students) were told that the movie

was highly recommended by everyone (positive motivation) and half of them were subsequently told that the movie was very depressing and they would rather avoid seeing it (negative motivation). They were to choose a seat in the same manner as in Karev’s experiment (diagram of a cinema with theater on top and middle seats taken). As predicted, for right handed participants, there was a right seat bias when positively motivated which disappeared for the negatively motivated group.

Also as predicted, for left handed participants, there was no right seat bias and this was not affected by positive or negative motivation. The second experiment was the same as the first, only this time the information about the negative emotional contents of the movie were given to the positively motivated group, and not the negative motivation group. This was to prove that if positively motivated, the participants (right handed) would still choose the “ best hemisphere” for experiencing negative emotion. The hypothesis was the same as the first experiment, and so were the results. This study successfully challenged the claim that the right seat bias was due to a right page bias from right handers, because the right seat bias disappeared when negatively motivated. Therefore, the study strengthened the hypothesis that if sufficiently motivated, hemispheric lateralization will play a role in choosing a seat for more hemispherically lateralled individuals (i. e right handers).