



Does Talking about Emotion Help Eyewitness Memory? The Role of Emotional and Factual Retelling in Memory Accuracy

Kartini Abdul Ghani^{1*}

Lau Choon Ning²

^{1,2}Universiti Malaysia Sarawak, 94300 Kota Samarahan, Sarawak, Malaysia

ABSTRACT

Eyewitnesses typically talk about the traumatic events that they have experienced based on their memory. This research aimed to investigate differences between emotional and factual retelling of eyewitness in terms of memory accuracy and error. Participants watched a traumatic robbery video and were instructed to recall the events in detail. Participants were divided into three retelling conditions where they: a) discussed the robbery in a factual way, b) focused on discussing their emotional response, and c) performed unrelated tasks. Results showed that eyewitnesses who talked about their emotion recalled less detailed memories and made more errors in free recall while eyewitnesses who focused on factual detail seem to be able to maintain their memory accuracy of the event.

Keywords: eyewitness memory; emotional retelling; factual retelling; memory accuracy; memory error

INTRODUCTION

Recently, there is an alarming rise of criminal acts in our society. Armed robbery, murder case and rape case are just a few examples which can happen to anyone anywhere. When

a crime happens, an eyewitness testimony plays an important role to provide information about the crime. It is common when someone witnessed a crime, he or she will be interviewed especially by law enforcers to gather detailed information about the traumatic event. Eyewitness memory is an example of the memory recall that enables eyewitness to think back to the event that had happened in the past. There were numerous studies with regards to eyewitness memory conducted in western countries,

ARTICLE INFO

E-mail address:
gkartini@unimas.my (Kartini Abdul Ghani)
*Corresponding author

ISSN: 2462-1153

© Faculty of Cognitive Sciences and Human Development, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS)