
Investigation Of Episodic Memory

This study aims to investigate episodic memory, this is where an individual can give an account on an event or past experiences.

One theory that was used to test episodic memory was the Loftus and Palmer (1974) study 1. This study involved 45 people who were shown several clips of different traffic incidents and were asked to give their account on it as though they were eyewitnesses at the scene where the incident that took place. They were all asked the same question and were each asked to estimate the speed of two vehicles. They were given 5 different verbs to describe the incident, About how fast were the cars going when they (smashed/collided/ bumped/ hit/ contacted) each other? (Loftus and Palmer 1974). This theory shows that language can make a difference in the memory and each verb that was used resulted in different answers for the speed limits, which varied from mild to more intense. The Loftus and Palmer (1974) study 2 is a similar test to study 1. This involved 150 participants who were shown a video of two vehicles crashing into each other. They were then split up into 3 groups, 50 people were asked the same question "About how fast were the vehicles were going when they hit each other? (Loftus and Plamer1974) the other 50 were asked the same question but the independent variable change from hit to smashed and the other 50 were not asked anything at all. To test this theory further, A week later all three groups were asked the same question "did you see any broken glass?" (Loftus and Palmer 1974). Some participants of each group had answered no, and some others had answered yes when in fact there was not any glass broken during the incident. This study also showed that the questions were answered differently based on the different verbs that were used and how they can interfere with what is remembered, as some words may sound a bit more extreme than others. This can result in participants constructing a mental image of a collision and go with how they perceive it. With each verb that is used, participants may imagine a picture of what two vehicles colliding together would look like and assume that there may have been broken glass, and this has now become a memory.

In conclusion, eye witnessed testimonies rely upon episodic memory to give a detailed account. Studies have shown that these memories can be manipulated and constructed by assumptions, expectations and imagination. It can be influenced by verbs that are used when trying to remember an event as the independent variable changes, so can the memory of the past events.