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Think Outside The Box

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Retrieval of Memories

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Retrieval of memories simply refers to recollections of past experiences or information. It is considered to be one of the three core processes of human memory along with storage and encoding.

Memories that cannot be retrieved cannot be used. It is an important aspect of everyday life as basic things like remembering where you parked your vehicle, are related to memory retrieval. We will look at two different types of memory retrieval:

- Recall divided into subcategories: free, cued and serial
- Recognition divided into subcategories: recollection and familiarity

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Quiz: Psychology 101 Part 2

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Recall

Free Recall

This is the process where an individual is asked to recall a list of data he or she was given in any order. This process shows up instances of primacy and recency effects in the retrieval of memories. Primacy effects refer to occasions when data from the beginning of the list are recalled more frequently. Recency effects describe an individual's tendency to remember data from the end of the list.

Cued Recall

This occurs when cues are used to aid the retrieval of memories [1]. A cue is a trigger, a subconscious reminder such as a song, taste or state of mind. Cued recall tests involve asking the person to remember a list of data in a particular order or a certain item from it. The purpose of cues is to enable the person to remember items they would have forgotten without the trigger.

Serial Recall

This involves remembering the list in the exact order in which it was written or said out loud. This allows us to form sentences. If our brain had no serial recall ability, we would be unable to speak proper sentences. Serial recall also helps with retrieval of memories as it enables us to remember what happened in our lives with a certain degree of order.

Recognition

This is the ability to remember events or information that has previously been learned or encountered. When it comes to retrieval of memories, recognition happens when the stimulus is a match for the memory content. Recognition will not happen if there is a mismatch.

Recollection is the process of remembering specific details of an experience after it occurs again. This is very apparent in multiple choice quizzes where the student is confronted with several choices, only one of which is the correct answer. If the student has studied, recollection will enable him/her to choose correctly.

Familiarity on the other hand only requires basic knowledge that the stimulus was encountered before. Unlike recollection which takes effort on the person's part, familiarity occurs automatically.

Tip of the Tongue

The frustrating 'tip of the tongue' experience involves a person believing that certain information is stored in his/her memory but cannot retrieve it. The phrase comes from the French phrase 'Presque vu' which means 'almost seen'. It involves great difficulty with the retrieval of memories which are common such as a phrase that is seemingly well known to the person. During the 'tip of the tongue' experience, people feel that although the word or phrase is not quite there, it is virtually on the tip of the tongue. Occasionally, people know the first letter or even syllable but are unable to complete the word.

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Links

[1] http://psychology.about.com/od/cognitivepsychology/a/memory_retrival.htm