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To cite this version:

Pierre-Yves Jonin, Audrey Noël, Gabriel Besson, Sophie Muratot, Serge Belliard, et al.. Retrieval practice based on recognition memory: testing the retrieval effort hypothesis. UC Irvine International Conference on Learning and Memory, Apr 2018, Irvine, United States. 2018. inserm-01939069

HAL Id: inserm-01939069
https://www.hal.inserm.fr/inserm-01939069
Submitted on 29 Nov 2018

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Retrieval Practice Based On Recognition Memory: Testing the Retrieval Effort Hypothesis

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Abstract:
Previous research has provided evidence for a retrieval practice effect based on recognition memory. However, a contribution of controlled recollective processes cannot be ruled out, which is addressed in experiment 2.

1. Experiment 1: recognition memory vs. restudying

- Between-subjects design, N = 76
- Recognition memory vs. typical Old/New task
- Matching for Age, Education, FSIQ, Verbal Memory

Manipulation of the intervening tasks:
- 2 successive study-test trials
- Study + Test group
- 2 successive test trials

Main outcome: Performance at final test (25 min. delay)

Results 1

- Before final test, study duration was on average 11 minutes in the « Study-Test » group, 7.4 minutes in the « Study » group and only 6.3 minutes in the « Test » group

- Still, « Study-Test » & « Test » conditions yielded better long-term memory (A,B), without increase in False Alarms (C), and « Test » condition led to better 25 minutes retention (D)

Discussion

- Experiment 1 shows that the retrieval practice effect can be observed when retrieval is based on recognition memory rather than recall. Thus, learning does occur during recognition testing
- Importantly, both experiments show that the benefits of memory retrieval based on recognition memory are immune to negative side effects like extra false alarms
- When retrieval is constrained to fast and automatic processes (around 320 ms), this being mostly familiarity-based, the generation of elaborative retrieval cues and/or effortful (controlled) processing are quite unlikely. Even then, extensive restudying does not outreach retrieval practice. Repeated automatic retrieval yields similar learning levels than extensive restudying, up to a 6 months delay
- Familiarity-based recognition memory can support a retrieval practice effect, and resists to a 6 months delay similarly to restudying, thus challenging a core prediction of the « Retrieval Effort Hypothesis »

References

(3) Py & Besson (2000) Testing the retrieval effort hypothesis: Does greater difficulty correctly recalling information lead to higher levels of memory? Journal of Memory and Language, 40, 437-447

3. Experiment 2: familiarity practice vs. restudying

- Probing familiarity-based recognition memory: The «Speed and Accuracy Boosting procedure » (SAB) is a speeded Old/New memory test providing a direct estimate of familiarity-based recognition memory (S).

4. Results 2

- Still, repeated testing proved as beneficial as restudying for short- (A) and long-term (B) retention
- This did not came with an extra false alarms cost (C&D)

Time spent studying does not drive learning efficiency. Instead, Experiment 2 provides unique evidence that learning occurs through repeated familiarity-based retrieval, i.e. even when retrieval is automatic.