Memory and Narratives Rereading before and after One Week

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Abstract : As people read through event-based narratives, they construct an event model that captures information about the characters, goals, location, time, and causality. For many reasons, memory for such narratives is represented at different levels, namely, the surface form, textbase, and event model levels. Rereading has been shown to decrease surface form memory, while, at the same time, increasing textbase and event model memories. More generally, distributed practice has consistently shown memory benefits over massed practice for different types of materials, including texts. However, little research has investigated distributed practice of narratives at different inter-study intervals and these effects on these three levels of memory. Recent work in our lab has indicated that there may be dramatic changes in patterns of forgetting around one week, which may affect the three levels of memory. The present experiment aimed to determine the effects of rereading on the three levels of memory as a factor of whether the texts were reread before versus after one week. Participants (N = 42) read a set of stories, re-read them either before or after one week (with an inter-study interval of three days, seven days, or fourteen days), and then took a recognition test, from which the three levels of representation were derived. Signal detection results from this study reveal that differential patterns at the three levels as a factor of whether the narratives were re-read prior to one week or after one week. In particular, an ANOVA revealed that surface form memory was lower (p = .08) while textbase (p = .02) and event model memory (p = .04) were greater if narratives were re-read 14 days later compared to memory when narratives were re-read 3 days later. These results have implications for what type of memory benefits from distributed practice at various inter-study intervals.

Keywords : memory, event cognition, distributed practice, consolidation

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