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THE TIP - OF-THE-TONGUE PHENOMENON

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Abstract. Human communication either spoken or written, consisting of the use of words in a structured and conventional way, is an incredibly complex process. A speaker has to search for words in order to express his/her thoughts. Although, being aware that a word does not guarantee its access. The psychologists works reveal that the TOT phenomenon is usually an involuntary effect, moreover most people have experienced this occurrence many times in their lives. They are somehow able to bring back into their minds words of similar meaning and sounds, but not the desired one. The so called lexical recapture constitutes a search for a longed for word in a human's memory storage.

Keywords: *awareness, lethologica, lexical recapture, memory access, metacognition, presque vu, phenomenon, token.*

Introduction

Has anybody ever experienced the fact of knowing the exact answer or being aware of a word and not being able to answer or to access it? It turns out that many of us find themselves struggling to “fish” the correct word or the correct answer. The worst part is that we know everything about the word: the meaning, origin, translation, sometimes even the number of syllables or the first letter yet it sometimes might be misleading.

This is that outrage that we are all familiar with, and it happens to be that this common state actually has a name. It is known as the tip of the tongue phenomenon or lethologica (Greek-lethe “forgetfulness”+ logos “word”= the words forgetfulness) also a French loan term has been adopted for this issue named *Presque vu* which stands for “almost seen”. This flawlessly describes the sensation where one can almost, but not quite, retrieve the exact memory [2].

Psychologists define this phenomenon as a feeling that accompanies the temporary inability to access the necessary information from the memory. The tip of the tongue (TOT) is indeed a common expression to describe the sudden, temporary cognition disconnection and vocalization [1].

The frustrating feeling of the elusive word that seems to be just outside of your mental reach is a common one. The phenomenon is universal. Surveys suggest that around 90 percent of speakers of different age (the frequency increases with age), languages from all over the world report experiencing moments where memories seem momentarily inaccessible. It is so common that most languages have given it a term: for instance,

Koreans say is "sparkling at the end of my tongue", while Estonians describe the missing word as being "at the head of the tongue."

The tip-of-the-tongue situation occurs to be a kind of metacognition. Metacognition is the knowledge and thoughts about one's own cognitive processes, as well as control of those cognitive processes [2]. People know enough about their memory to be aware when this circumstance takes place.

Another term allied to this fact is the feeling of awareness, which is about whether you could correctly recognize the desired token or answer to the question. This effect is of more conscious meaning whether one could recognize the word or answer if it was given several options.

The occurrence of TOT state

The tip-of-the-tongue or 'TOT' phenomenon is now well-documented in psychology. It is a very common example of what Daniel L. Schacter calls 'blocking', one of the seven sins of memory (Schacter, 1999). It is the subjective experience that the memory is right there and yet for some reason you can not quite access it [3].

In a series of six studies, Humphreys an associate professor at McMaster University in Ontario, Canada, and Maria D'Angelo, a postdoctoral fellow at Rotman Research Institute, studied why we experience tip-of-the-tongue (TOT) over and over again—and how we can prevent it. The most common reason for why this phenomenon occurs is a replenishing process gone amiss. We think of something, the brain assigns words to represent these abstract ideas, and we speak what is on our minds. Apart from this process is so complex all kinds of things can go wrong, including the tip of the tongue moments [6].

Interpreting thoughts into words is a complex process—one that we take for granted because it usually happens effortlessly. The brain translates thoughts from abstract concepts into words and then attaches them to the appropriate sounds. So, we speak. In TOT states, this process gets interrupted. "Word retrieval normally goes smoothly and easily, but in this case the system breaks down and you get stuck partway through," Humphreys says [6].

Solutions and preventions

Researchers believe that a number of factors may play a role, even though the exact processes are not entirely elucidated. Tip-of-the-tongue situations are more likely to happen when people are overwhelmed, for instance, whilst other features of memory such as how well the information was encoded and the presence of any interfering memories can also have an influence.

Some researchers have found that tip-of-the-tongue states may play an adaptive role in the memory and learning process. Some studies have proved that the more time people spend attending to a tip-of-the-tongue experience, the better their learning and memory will be in the future. This suggests that these moments might result in the stronger encoding of the memory, thus making retrieval easier in the future [5].

However, other researchers have observed that spending time trying to recall information that seems to be on the tip-of-your -tongue may actually be problematic. While it may be tempting to spend some time struggling to find the answer, Humphreys suggests that the more time you spend trying to remember a word on the tip of your tongue, the more likely that you will struggle with the word again in the future. Furthermore the TOT

state is possibly a result of implicit learning, which involves the learning of complex information in inferred ways without any awareness that it has been learned [6].

Applicability

The study has indispensable applications for students and educators. During the next study session, it would be useful to focus on looking up the correct answers rather than trying to recall the information. For teachers, the study indicates that it is more beneficial to provide students with the right answer rather than letting them struggle to recall it on their own. The good news is that while tip-of-the-tongue states are often learned and tend to reoccur, the incorrect learning can be correct either through resolving the problem spontaneously or by using triggers for information retrieval. If you have ever had that elusive, often when you were not even trying to think of it, then you have experienced the spontaneous resolution of *lethologica* [4].

Conclusion

The tip-of-the-tongue phenomenon can be an exasperation, but it might be reassuring to know that it is not necessarily a sign that your memory is failing. Such experiences are common and occur, in most cases, merely as a source of frustration. Definitely, it can sometimes be more serious if you experience such moments during an important exam or in the middle of a public presentation. Studies on blocking have shown that around half of the time we will become 'unblocked' after about a minute. The rest of the time it may take days to recover the memory as a result the roots of the tip-of-the-tongue phenomenon may be multidimensional and linked to different causes.

Metacognitive explanations suggest that tip-of-the-tongue states serve as a sort of alarm. Like a warning signal that can alert you to a potential problem that needs to be dealt with.

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