

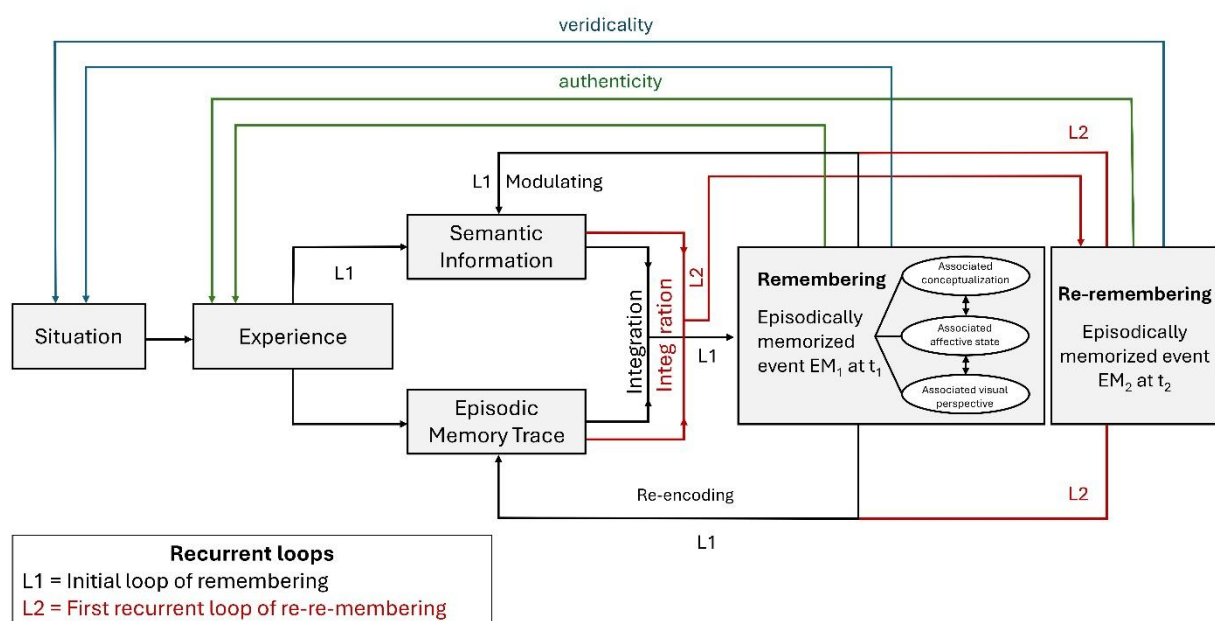
What does it involve to re-remember an event? Functionalizing re-remembering

Abstract

Our memories not only occur, they also reoccur: we *re-remember*. What is the standard according to which an episodic recall can be classified as a re-remembering of a former episodic memory? What is the essence of re-remembering? We argue that standards of re-remembering depend on the functional roles of episodic memory with the well-established functional trias of enabling improved orientation in the world in present and future, of fostering social understanding and interaction as well as of keeping and enhancing a positive self. Focusing on these three (non-exhaustive) roles allows us to establish the main claim: Whether a case of episodic recall is a case of re-remembering an event depends on the explanatory interest which is mainly depending on the contextually indicated dominant functional role of the relevant recall in a situation. To work this out we describe prototypical situations in which a recall can be embedded, e.g. a legal situation, a social situation of shared narratives and a personal situation of transformative experiences. These situations are used to develop several standards of genuine re-remembering which can lead to different evaluations of the same type of recall. Thus, we on the basis of a functionalizing perspective of episodic memory we propose a context-dependent account of re-remembering such that a situation typically determines a dominant functional role and thereby the relevant explanatory interest connected to the episodic recall.

To develop this in detail, we propose a constructive account of episodic memory with the core claim that episodic memory is the product of scenario construction which starts with a sensory input which triggers a memory trace. Then the memory trace is enrichment by semantic information (semantic memory) to result in a full vivid recall of a scenario. And re-remembering an episode is relying on the same process again (see fig. 1). Furthermore, we propose to distinguish four dimensions of the recall of an episodic event and typical implementing features of each event. On this basis we develop different standards of evaluating whether a recall is an adequate case of re-remembering a past event or not (see fig. 2). To make this more precise, we describe three standards of evaluation (see below: after the pictures).

Figure 1. Episodic re-remembering.



We propose to distinguish the following *four dimensions*, namely the representational vehicle, the representational format, the situational content and the experiential content—which we can rely on as being

relevant to determine in a certain context whether re-remembering occurs or not, with each of these dimensions having a variety of implementing features.

Dimensions	Implementing features
Representational vehicle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> types of neural correlates (typical brain processing areas)
Representational format	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> unimodal perceptual multimodal (abstract) amodal linguistic (conceptual/propositional)
Situational content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a description of a type of situation – involving specific objects, properties, activities, etc.
Experiential content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> richness of the experience visual perspective spatio-temporal resolution intensity of bodily feelings emotional involvement agential involvement subjective conceptualizations level of centrality for one's self-identity

Figure 2. Characterization of the episodic recall of an event with its dimensions and their implementing features

On this basis we describe three standards of evaluation. In line with the literature, we presuppose that there are three such functional roles of episodic recall, namely the *directive function* to foster adequate acting in the world and planning future action, the *social function* to improve the understanding and prediction of others, and the *self-function* to keep and enhance a positive and coherent self-understanding (Bluck et al., 2005). On this basis, we can outline three corresponding prototypical contexts of recall and develop them into three standards of genuine re-remembering illustrated by typical cases;

- (i) **The legal context of a testimony aiming at veridically describing the world:** A witness is supposed to deliver veridical information about a past event, e.g. a car accident, anchored in the experience of the event for the sake of the first-handedness and reliability of information. We are then interested in a veridical description of the actual event and its components from an ideally objective perspective.
- (1) The standard of informative veridicality:** An episodic recall EM2 (at t_2) is a case of re-remembering *concerning informative veridicality* with respect to an episodic recall EM1 iff: (i) both EM2 and EM1 are based on the same neural vehicle which is anchored in the relevant past event e ; (ii) EM2 and EM1 involve representations of a similar type of situation including objects and properties to a sufficient degree of similarity; (iii) these representations overlap sufficiently with the actual components of e .
- (ii) **The social context of a shared memory-based narrative aiming at understanding others:** Two colleagues have participated in a faculty meeting and agree afterwards upon a description of the relevant aspects of their episodic memories of the event. These shared narratives can be understood as sharing their situational content and it is a good indicator of their shared cognitive and behavioural dispositions concerning the relevant aspects of the event. This makes their behaviour predictable and understandable for each other.
- (2) The standard of intersubjectively shared narratives:** An episodic recall EM2 is a case of re-remembering *concerning intersubjectively shared narratives* with respect to an

episodic recall EM1 iff: (i) both EM2 and EM1 are available in a narrative format of representation; (ii) the narrative contents of EM1 and EM2 are sufficiently overlapping as far as the situational content is concerned; (iii) ideally their content are also sufficiently overlapping in experiential content as far as the fine-grained conceptualization expressed in the shared narrative is concerned.

(iii) ***The personal context of aiming at keeping or enhancing a (normally) positive self-image:*** A father remembers the first family holiday on the Atlantic coast which became a regular, annual holiday at the same campsite for ten years. Due to the repeated visits, re-remembering this first holiday may involve many mistakes due to the integration of objects, properties etc. from later iterations, while a minimal reference remains to the relevant spatiotemporal unit, the campsite on the first holiday. What matters to the father is only that all his recalls are integrated with this unit, and most importantly, that the same experiential features are activated, like the richness of the bodily, emotional and agential experience, together with a sense of the high level of relevance for his self-identity.

(3) *The standard of experiential constancy:* An episodic recall EM2 (at t_2) is a case of re-remembering *with experiential constancy* with respect to an episodic recall EM1 iff (i) EM2 and EM1 involve representations of minimally similar situational content, typically overlapping spatiotemporal units, and most importantly (ii) EM2 and EM1 *share their experiential features to a high degree.*

To conclude: we have argued that whether a given episodic recall qualifies as a case of re-remembering depends on the contextually-relevant interest in a given situation and the relevant corresponding functional role activated by this interest.

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