

Cognitive Psychology – Notes from 26/03/04

Loftus & Palmer (1974) – Leading Questions

Experiment one

- Method: 45 students
7 film clips
5-30 seconds long each
A written account to be given by participants
5 groups of 9 students asked:
- a) How fast were the cars going when they HIT each other?
 - b) ...when they SMASHED INTO each other?
 - c) ...when they COLLIDED WITH each other?
 - d) ...when they BUMPED INTO each other?
 - e) ...when they CONTACTED?
- Findings: Those given the SMASHED verb gave the highest mean speed of the cars. Those given the CONTACTED verb gave the lowest mean speed of the cars.
- Conclusion: The subject is not sure of speed so the verb provided the answer. The verb changes memory representation

Experiment two

- Method: 150 students
Shown footage of multiple car pileups
3 groups of 50 students asked:
- a) How fast were the cars going when they HIT each other?
 - b) ... SMASHED INTO each other?
 - c) Control group – not asked a question here.
- One week later, all three groups were asked "Did you see any broken glass?".
- Findings: More students in the SMASHED group reported that they had seen broken glass even though there was none.