

ABSTRACT

Perhaps verbal memory is the most important kind of memory to the human race, given the heavy reliance of human thinking and communication on verbal symbols/language. And episodic memory (a kind of secondary memory which concerns temporally dated collections of specific personal events) is the kind of memory that is most vulnerable to age-related forgetting/decay. It seems meaningful for one to study ways to control age-related decay of verbal episodic memory, given that the aversive effect of the latter would be pervasive to the human race as a whole. Separate studies indicated that both children and elderly performed worse than adults in verbal episodic memory task, partly because of a common factor: The relative inefficiency in making use of mnemonic operations (e.g. organizational strategies). From such studies, a life-span developmental trend in verbal episodic memory seemed to emerge. In the present study (which involved both children, teenagers, adults and elderly [nineteen each] to perform verbal episodic memory task), we would like to see if such a trend really emerged. Moreover, in past studies, blocked presentation of stimuli was found to assist children, elderly and other age groups in overcoming mnemonic inefficiency, but at differential rate. But the findings were by no means consistent. In the presents study, we would like to confirm how useful it would be to achieve the said function. There were two groups of hypotheses. The first group concerned age-related difference and development in verbal episodic memory. We predicted that the performances in verbal episodic memory tasks progressed from children through teenager stage until reaching the peak at adult stage. Then it would start to decline until one reached the elderly stage. The second group of hypotheses concerned the effectiveness of organized list in assisting verbal memory performances. Based on previous findings, we predicted that

blocked presentation of stimuli would be effective in enhancing memory performances of various age groups, but at differential rate. While children, teenagers and adults would benefit at about the same rate, elderly might or might not benefit more from this memory cue.

Repeated measures ANOVA in which the between group factor was the age group (four groups) and the within group factors were the presentation conditions (random vs organized) and the trials of the memory test was used to analyse our findings. Our findings generally supported the first group of hypothesis: The developmental trend of verbal memory really emerged as expected. The second group of hypotheses were partially supported: The gain of children, teenagers and adults from the organized list might not necessarily be uniform. In addition, it was found that elderly might not necessarily benefit more from the memory cue. Other factors were involved (e.g. the psychological status of participants) to determine the meaningfulness of such a memory cue.