

“Oswald Assassinates Lincoln”: The Effect of Transportation on Misinformation

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Introduction

Do readers pick up more inaccurate information from fictional texts when they find themselves lost in the story?

Readers rely on information from fictional texts, even if that information contradicts well-known facts. (Marsh, Meade, & Roediger, 2003)

Reducing the plausibility of the overall story setting has been shown to be mildly effective in lowering rates of acquiring this *misinformation* from stories. (Rapp et al., 2014)

Individual differences in how readers emotionally and mentally engage with a text, via feelings of narrative transportation (Gerrig, 1993), could uniquely influence the information that they acquire from stories.

Hypothesis: As individuals become more transported into fictional texts they will be more vulnerable to picking up misinformation.

Method

Participants (N = 101, 77 females) were asked to read six stories, all plausible or all implausible, that contained target information. These target statements presented facts of varied (easy or hard) difficulty in accurate, neutral, or misleading frames.

For each story, participants rated how transported into the text they felt (Green & Brock, 2004) before completing an open-ended general knowledge test with questions about the target information they encountered. Answers on those 36 target items were coded for accuracy and presence of misinformation.

Target Statement Example:

“Can you believe we are in London? I am from a fairly impressive city myself, the capital of Illinois, Springfield, / XXXXX / Chicago, - but compared to this – that’s nothing!”

Fact framing:

Accurate: Springfield
Neutral: Left blank
Misleading: Chicago

Correct Answers

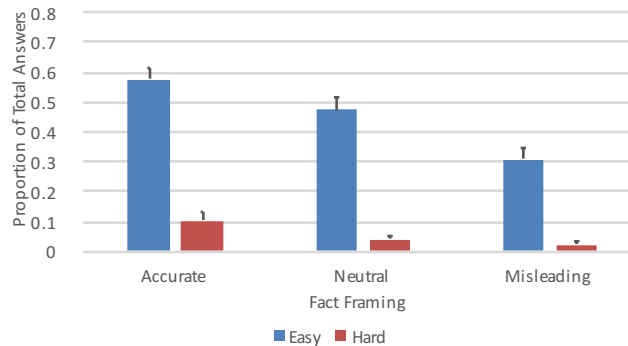


Figure 1: Correct Answers

Participants gave significantly more correct answers for easy questions than hard questions [$F(1,97) = 381.15$] and for accurate frames than neutral or misleading frames [$F(2,97) = 39.23$]. There were also significantly more correct answers for easy questions when the information was presented accurately in the text [$F(2,97) = 14.52$].

Misinformation Answers

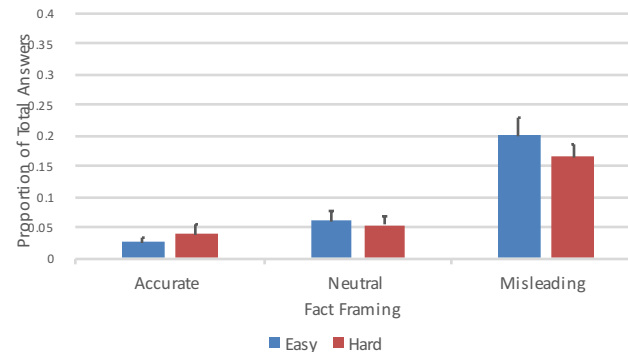


Figure 2: Misinformation Answers

Participants gave significantly more misinformation answers when they were presented with misleading information in the texts [$F(2,97) = 58.40$].

References

See presenter for full list of references.

Questions? Contact Alyssa Blair, ablair5@uic.edu

Results

A set of two ANCOVAs was used to look at the effect of transportation, question difficulty, story context, and fact framing on rates of correct and misinformed answers. All results reported were significant at $p < .001$.

Basic results are shown in Figures 1 & 2 and were consistent with previous literature except that no effect for story plausibility was found.

Figure 3 shows that increased transportation was associated with greater vulnerability to misleading statements.

Relationship between Transportation and Misinformation Answers

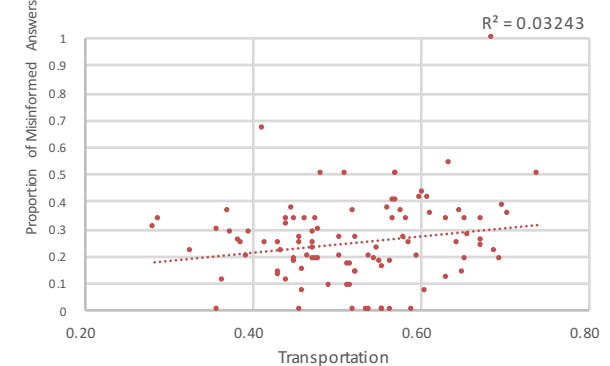


Figure 3: Transportation

As individuals reported more feelings of narrative transportation, they were significantly more likely to rely on misleading information from the stories [$F(2,97) = 4.11$].

Discussion

So do readers pick up more inaccurate information if they are lost in the story?

Results suggest that individuals who are prone to high levels of narrative transportation were more likely to rely on the misleading information that they encountered in the stories.

Future research should look more directly at how the combination of text features and reader characteristics influences the evaluation and acquisition of knowledge.