

Postscript: Distinctions between temporal context and short-term store

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Space does not allow us to make detailed rebuttals to Usher et al.'s criticisms of TCM-A's ability to account for dissociations between immediate and delayed recall nor explain how TCM could account for list discrimination experiments. We agree that future work will be needed to reach a satisfactory conclusion to these issues. Here we focus on their larger point that temporal context in TCM is best thought of as a new form of short-term store (STS). The designation STS carries with it connotations that are inconsistent with properties of temporal context that endow TCM with considerable explanatory power. We close with a proposal for a better way to reconcile Sederberg et al.'s (2008) TCM-A model and the Davelaar et al. (2005) model.

For the purposes of this discussion, we will focus on two properties of STS common to dual-store models (Atkinson & Shiffrin, 1968; Davelaar, et al., 2005; Raaijmakers & Shiffrin, 1980). Property 1: STS is a store or repository into which "items" are placed. Property 2: At the early stages of immediate free recall (IFR), the subject consciously "examines the contents of the store" to select items for recall. While there are other common properties, these assumptions are at the core of what is meant by STS in common usage.

Temporal context shares neither property. Whereas the information that enters STS is the same across multiple presentations of an item, the input to temporal context caused by an item changes across repetitions. In particular, a repeated item can recover the state of temporal context present when it was learned. Because the information entering temporal context caused by an item changes across repetitions, temporal context is not a store that holds (static) items, violating Property 1. In TCM, the subject never directly "examines the contents" of temporal context. Rather, the current state of temporal context is used to cue retrieval of items, violating Property 2. Because the entire state of context is used as a cue for retrieval in TCM, the presence of information caused by *other* items can determine the availability of an item. In retrieval from STS, an item is available to the extent that *it* is active in STS.

In TCM, the repetition of an item causes a change in the availability of other items--the definition of association. Taken together, Properties 1 & 2 prevent retrieval from STS from exhibiting associations between items. Properties 1 & 2 thus prevent STS from providing a complete description of immediate recency. Howard et al. (2007) studied IFR of lists in which an item from the middle of the list was repeated just before IFR was initiated. They found an advantage for *neighbors* of the initial presentation of the repeated item in the initiation of IFR. Because Properties 1 & 2 preclude associations between items in STS, this means that other processes are responsible for initiating IFR. The cost of parsimony incurred by adding a traditional STS to a theory buys the ability to describe effects in immediate recency. If STS is not sufficient to account for the initiation of IFR, then perhaps these benefits are not worth the cost. The effect observed by Howard et al. (2007) was a straightforward prediction of temporal context, and in particular the way it violates Properties 1 & 2.

Rather than temporal context, STS closely resembles the *accumulators* in TCM-A (Usher & McClelland, 2001). Both describe a set of coupled differential equations, with the same functional form, that keep track of an item-specific activation. The most salient difference is that the Sederberg et al. (2008) accumulators were silent during list presentation but meaningfully active during retrieval; in Davelaar et al. (2005), the situation is reversed. If this identification is made, the difference between the role of STS in the models amounts to our choice to keep the accumulators silent during list presentation to reflect the procedures of free recall experiments that attempt to focus subject's attention on only the currently-presented item (e.g. Howard, et al., 2007). Viewed in this light, our work suggests that although there is a memory store with the properties of STS, it is neither necessary nor sufficient to account for immediate nor delayed recency effects. Temporal context is able to account for episodically-formed associations, observed in both immediate and delayed recall, specifically because it violates core properties of STS. We conclude that it is not productive to equate temporal context with STS.

References

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