What is ELABORATIVE INTERROGATION?

KEY WORD: WHY
In brief...

- Elaborative interrogation means that students, when presented with facts, answer ‘why’ questions.

- Doing so encourages them to link new knowledge to existing knowledge.
In detail...

- Asking ‘why’ means students have to explain the relationship between the subject and predicate of a factual statement...
**Subject**: the person or thing a sentence is about

**Predicate**: the part of a sentence or clause containing a verb and stating something about the subject
**ELABORATIVE INTERROGATION**

**EXAMPLES**

**Subject:** the person or thing a sentence is about

- The witches
- The man
- Ada Lovelace
- π

**Predicate:** the part of a sentence or clause containing a verb and stating something about the subject

- plan to meet Macbeth after the battle.
- walked down the street.
- is often referred to as the first programmer.
- is an irrational number.

**NOTE:** These are all examples of factual information.

Elaborative interrogation is the best suited to the acquisition and embellishment of facts.
**ELABORATIVE INTERROGATION**

Means students ask...

**Subject**: the person or thing a sentence is about

**Predicate**: the part of a sentence or clause containing a verb and stating something about the subject

The witches plan to meet Macbeth after the battle.

**Why?**

**Elaborative interrogation**: clarifies the relationship between the subject and predicate

- ‘embellishing existing knowledge’

- ‘adding features to existing memory’ Weinstein et al (2018)

‘...elaborative interrogation produces superior factual learning because it activates relevant prior knowledge and fosters connections between this prior knowledge and the new facts.’ McDaniel & Donnelly (1996)

‘Improves organisation - makes knowledge more integrated ... with existing knowledge structures’ Weinstein et al (2018)
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**Subject**: the person or thing a sentence is about

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- Why?
Subject: the person or thing a sentence is about

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The witches

plan to meet Macbeth after the battle.

Why?

Elaborative interrogation: clarifies the relationship between the subject and predicate

Requires prior knowledge
‘elaborative-interrogation effects are often larger when ... prior knowledge is higher rather than lower’ Dunlosky et al. (2013)

Needs checking
‘It is important that students check their answers with their materials or with the teacher’ Weinstein et al (2018)
**ELABORATIVE INTERROGATION**

**Subject:** the person or thing a sentence is about

**Predicate:** the part of a sentence or clause containing a verb and stating something about the subject

**The witches**

**plan to meet Macbeth after the battle.**

**Why this...**

**Elaborative interrogation:** Even better if it prompts processing of similarities and differences between related information

Why might the witches plan to meet Macbeth after rather than before the battle?

‘most elaborative-interrogation prompts explicitly or implicitly invite processing of both similarities and differences between related entities (e.g., why a fact would be true of one province versus other provinces)’

Dunlosky et al. (2013)

‘preexisting knowledge enhances memory by facilitating distinctive processing’

Dunlosky et al. (2013)
ELABORATIVE INTERROGATION

‘is important that students check their answers with their materials or with the teacher; when the content generated through elaborative interrogation is poor, it can actually hurt learning (Clinton, Alibali, & Nathan, 2016).’ Weinstein et al (2018)

self-generated elaborations are more effective than provided elaborations

‘moderate utility’ Dunlosky et al. (2013)

easy to implement: insert ‘why...and why not...’ questions

effective in response to cued recall; less effective when not cued - O’Reilly et al (1998)

so can’t just rely on elaborative interrogation
ELABORATIVE INTERROGATION

Implementation example...

START WITH A FACT: Macbeth says life ‘is a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing.’

We could ask...

- Who says...? (Identify the agent)

- What does Macbeth say when...? (recall the fact)

But let’s use elaborative interrogation and embellish the fact:

**ELABORATIVE INTERROGATION:** Why does Macbeth say life ‘is a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing’?

**ELABORATIVE INTERROGATION:** Why would Banquo be unlikely to make a similar claim?
Your turn

- Why is it important for students to check answers when using elaborative interrogation?
- Why is elaborative interrogation less effective when students have low prior knowledge?
- Why might elaborative interrogation be a better way to add to existing memory compared to simple recall?
- Why should we be cautious about relying too heavily on elaborative interrogation?
- Why is it important for students to check answers when using elaborative interrogation?

- Why is elaborative interrogation less effective when students have low prior knowledge?

- Why might elaborative interrogation be a better way to add to existing memory compared to simple recall?

- Why should we be cautious about relying too heavily on elaborative interrogation?