



Recontextualisation Strategies

Epistemic Recontextualisation (ER) is a method designed to help make non-rational influences on how we engage with arguments and information more conscious and to use these influences to approach this engagement in a more open, constructive and charitable manner. ER assumes that emotions, motivations, (unreflected) beliefs and situational conditions (such as physical states or external circumstances) unconsciously affect the epistemic evaluation of arguments. ER does not seek to overcome these influences, but to deliberately make them useful for engaging with arguments and information.

The core of this method involves systematically transferring non-rational influences into different contexts or using such contexts as a heuristic to raise awareness of these influences (recontextualisation). Students are invited to think of contexts that contrast the reactions they have observed previously, identifying incongruencies in the way information is rejected or accepted and to deepen insights into their inner states and processes that influence their relationship with new information. The goal is to be able to replace habitual or affective reactions to arguments with new, consciously chosen perspectives (e.g., based on modesty, openness, benevolence, ...).

In the following, four different recontextualisation strategies – the polarisation strategy, thematic recontextualisation, self-reference, and dialogic comparison – will be presented and applied to a specific example: a student has watched a movie in which it is argued that beef production does not require large amounts of water. The student has rejected this idea and identified the perceived lack of credibility of the video's author because of their affiliation with the animal-based food industry as the central criterion for their rejection.

1. Polarisation strategy

This strategy involves comparing one's reactions to evidence defending the opposite point of view.

The student might inquire into their reactions when engaging with evidence emphasising the negative impact of cows on water. Through this process, the student might find out they are willing to accept such claims, even though the author is affiliated with animal-rights movements.

2. Thematic recontextualisation

The same type of statements is reflected in different thematic contexts and one's reactions compared to those prompted in the original context. This approach helps to



reveal possible inconsistencies in the epistemic criteria used across different thematic discussions.

The student might imagine the following contexts: If a politician from a green party makes a statement about climate change, would I question their credibility because of their party affiliation? If an OXFAM employee provides information about social injustice, would I reject the information because of their affiliation with the NGO?

3. Self-reference

This strategy aims to reflect one's reactions and criteria in light of one's statements and ways of expressing them.

Self-reference might reveal that the student is active in the Plant-Based-University movement themselves. To what extent does it affect their credibility? Should others stop listening to them because of this affiliation?

4. Dialogical comparison

Personal reactions, beliefs and epistemic criteria are contrasted in dialogue with those of another person.

Dialogic comparison might reveal that peers do not consider an affiliation with the meat industry relevant for evaluating the quality of the provided information.