This paper focuses on the human brain as a cognitive system, as it is susceptible to making assumptions. An assumption is something one accepts as true without proof. This essay outlines three situations where the brain makes assumption which are during social interactions, trivial decision making and, long term memory recall, and how they may result in misinformation.

Humans often make assumptions in extracting meaning from social interactions based on various social queues. Social queues are not explicitly taught, but are learned through experience. For example, you run into a friend, who is usually outgoing, but today you notice that he seems unusually quiet and inattentive. You assume he is having a bad day, and probably wants to be alone, so you quickly say your goodbyes. However, you later find out that he was just running late to class. Using different factors, we can make general assumptions about people, but sometimes these assumptions can be incorrect.

Trivial decision making may also lead to making assumptions. We use assumption in trivial tasks because committing mental energy into every decision making would leave us mentally exhausted. For example, you are grocery shopping and remember learning about GMOs. Noticing the organic-labeled products, you assume that it must be healthier than its non-organic equivalent based off common ideologies that unprocessed foods are better. However, this assumption may not necessarily be true as it is often the case that GMO foods are exactly the same as their organic counterparts. Making assumptions can help ease everyday tasks, but it is not always correct.

Humans may rely on assumptions when trying to recall long-term memory. However, this is another situation where making assumptions may cause error. For example, in Ulric Neisser’s Challenger study, he asked his students to record their memories of the explosion, and re-analyzed their answers 2 years later. His findings showed that most students were unable to correctly recall their memory (Law, 2011). A student assumed she was in her dormitory, but her initial account showed that she was attending a class. Her mistake is understandable given the general assumption of the lifestyle of a student. When humans try to recall memories, they sometimes cannot remember certain details, and assumptions helps fill in those gaps in recollection.

In conclusion, the human brain is a cognitive system that uses assumption in social situations, trivial decision making, and memory recollection.

References