

FORGETTING IN LTM - Interference

This is where forgetting occurs as a result of similar memories interfering with and disrupting each other.

It can be proactive or retroactive. [Older memories interfere with newer ones or new memories interfere with older ones]

THERE IS A LOT OF RESEARCH TO SUPPORT THIS THEORY.

McGeoch and McDonald (1931)

To investigate whether interference effects forgetting in the LTM

Participants learnt a list of adjectives until they could recall them perfectly. Some of the participants then spent 10 minutes resting while the others learned new material. The new material varied in similarity to the original test.

The more similar the new material to the original, the more the recall of the original list declined. Participants who spent 10 minutes resting without any new material to learn had the highest recall.

This shows that retroactive interference affected recall. It indicates that the more similar the later material, the greater the interference and the higher the level of forgetting.

EVALUATION

The experiment has low ecological validity – as it was a laboratory study which is not set up like everyday life and furthermore the task is not something you would experience in everyday life. Generalisations to the wider world should be made with caution. It can also be suggested that in real life – interference would be spread out over a longer period of time than the short spell of a laboratory experiment. Different settings also need to be taken into consideration.

It seems to fit common sense. Loftus (1980) mentions how a woman in a state of passion may call out her ex-boyfriend's name an unfortunate example of proactive interference!!

HOW DO THE THEORIES OF RETRIEVAL FAILURE COMPARE TO 'INTERFERENCE'???