

**“Discuss two theories of forgetting in LTM” (18 Marks)**

Interference is when similar memories interfere and confuse each other. There are two types of Interference; Pro-active and Retro-active, Pro-active is when old memories interfere with or affects new memories, for example calling a new boyfriend by an old boyfriend's name. Retro-active is when new memories interfere or affects with old memories, for example you have to fill in a form and it asks you for your old phone number but you can only remember your new one. Interference does make cognitive sense because most people would agree that it is more difficult to recall similar material than dissimilar material, face validity. There are studies to show interference in the lab like the paired associate technique, where P's had to learn two lists, with the first word the same e.g. List A: Desk-Boy, List B: Desk-Tree. Then P's are given the first word in the pair and asked to recall the word in List A. The study found that Interference does cause forgetting but only when similar information is paired together, these conditions are rare in everyday life and this means that interference does not really explain most of forgetting in LTM.

A criticism of the study is that Interference does not seem to occur with Experts, if you are an expert in a field then learning new information does not cause any interference in the old information this may be because an expert's memory is highly organised. The idea can be associated with revision, People try to learn very different material after each other otherwise they will forget more due to interference for example learning one topic in Psychology then revise or learn a totally unrelated and dissimilar subject like Law. Also in Lab studies P's have to learn and recall information in a short compressed time frame but in real life learning is more spread out in time and so less affected by interference, making studies artificial.

Interference is only one explanation for forgetting and is simplistic in LTM forgetting happens because of a complex interaction of factors not just one, for example Retrieval Failure. Retrieval Failure suggests that you can't remember information because you cannot find them or retrieve them when you need the information, this means that forgetting occurs because the information is stored in LTM but there are not enough Cues or Clues to help find or trigger the memory. If someone gave you a hint the memory might pop back into your head but without the cue you are left feeling blank. There are two types of cues; External clues and Internal clues, External clues suggest that the place or context where the material was learnt can affect recall. In a different place or situation information is difficult to retrieve but in the same place then the memory is triggered by the external clue.

Abernathy arranged for students to be tested about the course they were doing. Some P's were tested in the same room with the same instructor that they had learnt the information. Others were tested in a different place with a different instructor to where they had learnt the information. Abernathy found that P's in the same room and instructor recalled most of the information supporting that the place and instructor acted as external cues for the information. Internal clues suggest that the physiological state of a person can affect recall, if you are under the influence of any drugs when you learn

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the info. this can act as a cue and make it difficult to recall info. unless you are in the same state.

Goodwin et al examined the affects of alcohol. P's who had been alcoholics tended to hide money and alcohol when drunk but were unable to remember doing this until they were in the same state then the P's would find the hidden money and alcohol, this may be real life evidence but an unusual sample because they are alcoholics you can't generalise. There is a large amount of research to support this explanation for forgetting and retrieval failure makes cognitive sense because most people do agree that places, sounds, smells etc. do seem to trigger memories. The idea of cue dependant forgetting is used to help people recall information, for example the police often use reconstructions or take people back to the scene of the crime in order to trigger memories. It would be useless to have a memory that relies on being in exactly the same place etc to remember anything

Overall, both studies do make cognitive sense and have lots of evidence to support them but also some criticisms that support other theories.