

Outline the multi-store model of memory and consider its strengths and limitations (18marks)

The multi store model of memory is an explanation of the flow of information through a series of stages. Atkinson and Shiffrin (1968) believed that memory involved three different stores. These being sensory memory, short term memory and long term memory. They believed that to transfer information into the short-term memory it needs to be attended to (attention is focused on the information in sensory memory) and to transfer information from short-term memory into long-term memory the information needs to be rehearsed. Atkinson and Shiffrin found that when information passes through these stores it can be lost by forgetting. Their findings were that in sensory memory information is lost through decay, in short-term memory information is lost through displacement and in long-term memory information is lost as an affect of interference. Atkinson and Shiffrin also believed that rehearsal is needed for information to be transferred to long-term memory and how well it is rehearsed will determine how effective recall is.

There are many strengths to consider in terms of the multi store model of memory. Previous studies such as Milner (1966 study of HM) and Baddeley (1997 Clive Wearing) support the theory that long-term memory and short-term memory are very different and separate systems. These studies support it because Clive wearing had both hippocampi removed and suffered from amnesia. The fact that Clive can walk, talk, play music and read and write suggests that his long-term memory is still in working condition, however he is unable to remember how long it was since he last saw his wife this suggests it is his short-term memory he is having problems with. The primacy and recency effect also support the fact that there is a clear distinction between short-term memory and long-term memory. Another good point to make about the model would be that it was a good starting point and generated a lot of research towards the theories of memory. Brain scanning also supports the theory that there are two separate stores of memory (short term and long term) it supports this by showing that when an individual works on a task in short term memory the prefrontal cortex is active however when working on a task in long term memory the hippocampus is active. This justifies that there are two separate system and they both work in different ways

There are also limitations of this model such as, it does not consider the fact that incidental learning can occur and states that the only way to retain information in long-term memory is through rehearsal. However there are studies to support that incidental learning takes place (Hyde and Jenkins 1973). This model also ignores that flashbulb memory can also occur, this is a brief and vivid long lasting memory of an incident which is made up of a collection of details such as where you was when the incident happened, what you where doing at the precise time, etc, this information is not also rehearsed and therefore also supports the theory that incidental learning can take place. This model is also criticised for being too focused on structure and doesn't focus enough on the process. The model suggests that there is only one form of long-term memory, however research

suggests that there are different forms of long-term memory such as semantic, episodic and procedural memory.

In conclusion to the multi store model of memory although I think that it was a good starting point and that it got other psychologists to ethicise and focus on memory, other models do a better job of explaining memory. This model is very simple and could have developed into a more complex and detailed model. I think all the limitations of this model are relevant and stand out.