Memory WGLL

Apply it Read the item below and then answer the question that follows.

Jess loves studying languages as she finds that learning words by repeating them back to herself out loud helps her to remember them. She also has a vocabulary list of key words from each topic area for the exam with a definition of what each word means in English. She finds reading through this list useful as understanding words also helps her to remember them.

Identify the two types of encoding Jess uses in the item above. Explain your answer. [4 marks]

Jess is repeating the words back to herself which relates to acoustic encoding as she is listening to the sound the words make. Another type of encoding she is using is semantic as, by also learning the English definition of the words, she understands their meaning. Knowledge check 1. Outline the difference between storage and retrieval. [2 marks] Storage involves keeping information in your memory whereas retrieval relates to bringing this information out of storage.

Explain the difference between episodic and semantic memories. [4 marks]

Semantic memory is your own encyclopaedia of shared facts and knowledge of the world, whereas episodic memory is memory for events in a person's life. Therefore, semantic memories are always shared with many other people, whereas episodic memories may be unique to the person or just shared with close family and friends.

Explain one evaluation of different types of memory. [3 marks]

A weakness is that distinctive types of LTM are difficult to separate. There isn't a clear difference between episodic and semantic memories because memories are usually a mixture of types. Therefore, having separate types of LTM may be an oversimplification.

Outline and evaluate the multi-store model of memory. [9 marks]

The model consists of three kinds of memory where information moves from one store to the next. Firstly, information is received by one of the senses and is stored in our sensory memory which holds information for a short time and has a large capacity. Paying attention to information transfers it to the short-term memory (STM). This is a limited capacity store that holds 5–9 items/chunks of information for less than 30 seconds unless it is rehearsed. If information is rehearsed for long enough it is transferred into long-term memory which has a potentially unlimited capacity and duration.

A strength of the model is that there is support for the existence of different memory stores. Baddeley's study of encoding shows that STM and LTM encode information differently. This study demonstrates that the two types of memory have qualitative differences. A weakness is the model is too simple, suggesting we have one STM and one LTM. Research shows STM is divided into visual and acoustic stores, and LTM into episodic, semantic and procedural memory. So, memory is more complex than the model proposes. Another weakness is that research studies in the 1950s and 60s tended to use artificial memory tasks. The studies often required participants to recall word lists or nonsense syllables such as PRQ or SDF. This means that the results would not illustrate all the different ways we use memory in our everyday lives but instead tended to focus on verbal learning.

Explain how recall is affected by primacy and recency effects. [4 marks]

The primacy effect means that words which appear first in a list will be more likely to be recalled because they can be rehearsed. By the time they are recalled they will have become long-term

memories because of this rehearsal. The recency effect refers to the words will have been heard more recently. This means they will still be in the short-term memory so are more likely to be recalled than words in the middle of a list.

What is meant by the phrase 'serial position curve'? [2 marks]
'Serial position' refers to the fact that the position of a word in a list affects the likelihood of its recall. The curve shows the tendency of people to recall the first and last words in a list best.

Describe and evaluate a study that investigated how memory is an active process. [9 marks]
Bartlett wanted to see whether people would reconstruct an unfamiliar story when they recalled it. Participants were shown the War of the Ghost's story. They were asked to recall it after 15 minutes. Bartlett then showed the new version to another person and asked them to recall it a short time later and repeated this with further participants. Bartlett kept a record of the recall. Bartlett found that participants changed the story and left out information they were less familiar with. The story was shortened, and phrases were changed to words used in the participant's own culture. This shows we use our knowledge of social situations to reconstruct memory as details of the story were invented to improve meaning.
A weakness with this study is that Bartlett's own beliefs may have affected the results as he analysed the recollections himself. His belief that recall would be affected by cultural expectations may have biased the interpretation of the results. Therefore, we cannot fully trust the conclusions from his study. Another weakness of the study is it has a lack of control as the participants were not told accurate recall was important. Other studies found recall was better when participants were told this. This suggests recall is more accurate than Bartlett concluded. Another weakness is the story was unusual and therefore may not represent how we use our memory in real life. In such cases our memories are not affected by cultural expectations and we therefore may recall things quite accurately. Therefore, this study may tell us very little about everyday memory.

Describe how memory may be an active process. [3 marks]
Memory is an active process because people do not record whole memories, they store fragments of information and build these fragments into a meaningful whole when they need to recall something. This means that elements may be missing and memories may not be an accurate representation of what has happened. People tend to remember the overall meaning of events and reconstruct memories from this overall meaning. The way that we store and recombine the small pieces can be related to social and cultural expectations which influence the meaning.

Outline and evaluate the effect of interference on the accuracy of memory. [9 marks]
Interference occurs when two memories compete with each other. One memory prevents us accessing the other memory. A study was conducted by McGeoch and McDonald where participants learned a list of 10 words (list 1) and then studied another list (list 2). It was found that when participants were asked to recall the initial list of words (list 1), their memory was affected by list 2. The effect was strongest when the words in list 2 had similar meaning to the words in list 1. This shows that interference from a second set of information reduces the accuracy of memory. Interference is strongest when the two sets of information are similar. Research that supports interference theory has a high level of control, so it tests memory in an unbiased way. For example, McGeoch and McDonald used techniques such as counterbalancing

to control order effects which would have acted as an extraneous variable and reduced the validity of the results. This gives the theory greater validity.

A weakness is that the research used to support interference theory does not reflect real-life memory activity. We don't often have to remember lists of words or very similar things. This means the conclusion about the effect of interference on the accuracy of memory is limited because it only applies to very specific conditions. Another weakness with interference is that it may not be an explanation of forgetting. It may be that information is not forgotten but just cannot be accessed as an appropriate cue has not been given. Therefore, interference only appears to cause inaccurate memories.

Use your knowledge of psychology to describe how context affects the accuracy of memory. [3 marks]

If the context is the same when memories are encoded and recalled, it will enhance the ability to recall information. If the context is different, this can decrease how much is recalled. This is because the context of learning acts as a trigger or cue when trying to remember information. Godden and Baddeley found participants who learned words on the beach and recalled them on the beach remembered more than those who changed context (such as learning words on the beach and recalling them underwater).

Outline what is meant by a 'false memory'. [1 mark]

A false memory is recalling something that did not happen, but it feels like it is a true memory. In Loftus and Pickrell's study some people later had a memory of an experience in their childhood which actually never happened.