2.5 Explanations for Forgetting: Proactive and Retroactive Interference: Test Pack

AQA 7182 · about 20 minutes

Total Marks

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / _____

Answer all questions. For questions worth 4 marks or more write your answers in full sentences. Time guidance: 20 minutes.

1 Define proactive interference as an explanation for forgetting in long-term memory, naming which information interferes with which.

(Total for Question 1 is 2 marks)

2 Underwood (1957) reviewed memory experiments and reported a pattern suggesting proactive interference accumulates over many prior learning experiences. Outline Underwood's contribution and its implication for interference theory.

(Total for Question 2 is 3 marks)

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3 Explain one methodological limitation of interference research that challenges its usefulness in explaining everyday forgetting, and suggest a reasonable counterargument that defenders of interference theory might offer.

(Total for Question 3 is 3 marks)

4 Briefly outline one piece of evidence that challenges interference as the sole explanation for forgetting, and explain why it weakens interference theory.

(Total for Question 4 is 6 marks)

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Mark scheme · 2.5 Explanations for Forgetting: Proactive and Retroactive Interference: Test Pack

Question 1

states that proactive interference occurs when older previously learned information disrupts recall of newer information oe	**B1**
makes clear which interferes with which, e.g. old information interferes with new information cao	**B1**

Answer: Proactive interference occurs when older, previously learned information interferes with the recall of newer information.

Question 2

identifies that Underwood reviewed multiple studies and noted that prior learning sometimes caused forgetting of later material oe	**M1**
states the idea that proactive interference can build up over many lists or experiences oe	**M1**
explains the implication that past learning can have a cumulative effect, supporting proactive interference as a cause of forgetting cao	**A1**

Answer: Underwood reviewed many experiments and concluded that previous learning can accumulate to impair later learning, supporting the idea that proactive interference can build up across repeated similar experiences.

Question 3

identifies a methodological limitation, e.g. low ecological validity of lab tasks or reliance on artificial materials oe	**M1**
explains why this challenges usefulness, e.g. everyday memories are richer and involve context and retrieval cues that lab lists do not capture oe	**A1**
gives a plausible counterargument, e.g. defenders argue interference processes have been demonstrated in more naturalistic settings and that similarity and competition for cues apply broadly oe	**A1**

Answer: Limitation: many interference studies use artificial word lists so findings may not generalise to everyday memory. Counterargument: researchers can and have shown interference effects in real-life tasks and the core mechanism, competition between similar memories for retrieval cues, is applicable outside the lab.

Question 4

identifies a relevant piece of evidence challenging interference, e.g. instances where retrieval failure cues explain forgetting better or where context change effects account for forgetting oe	**M1**
explains the study or phenomenon briefly, e.g. context-dependent forgetting shows that recall can be restored by returning to original cues oe	**M1**
explains how this evidence suggests forgetting may be due to lack of cues at retrieval rather than competition between memories oe	**A1**
offers a further elaboration, e.g. some studies show reinstating cues reduces forgetting even when interfering lists were present oe	**M1**
explains consequence for interference theory, e.g. interference alone cannot account for all forgetting and must be integrated with retrieval explanations cao	**A1**
clear concluding statement that interference is a contributory factor but not a complete explanation of forgetting oe	**A1**

Answer: Evidence such as context-dependent forgetting and cue-reinstatement studies shows that forgetting can often be reduced by restoring retrieval cues, suggesting missing cues rather than interference may explain some forgetting. Therefore interference cannot be the sole explanation and must be integrated with retrieval failure accounts.

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