

FORGETTING

Forgetting

“Forgetting is the loss, permanent or temporary of the ability to recall or recognizing something learned earlier” Munn (1967).

Types of Forgetting

It may be broadly classified as natural and morbid forgetting. In natural forgetting, forgetting occurs with the laps of time in a quite normal way without any intention of forgetting on the part of the individual while in morbid or abnormal forgetting one deliberately tries to forget something.

According to another view, forgetting may be classified as general or specific. In general forgetfulness, one suffers a total loss in one’s recall or some previous learning while in specific forgetfulness the individual forgets only one or the other specific parts of his earlier learning.

Curve of Forgetting

Studies done by the psychologist Ebbinghaus (1885) represents the earliest systematic work in studying the phenomenon of forgetting. He himself worked as a subject for these studies and described his results by plotting a curve for forgetting. He memorized a list of non-sense syllabus and then tested himself at intervals varying from 20 minutes to a month to see how much of the list he remembered. The result in terms of the percentage of material forgotten with the lapse of time were as follows :

Time elapsed	Amount forgotten
20 minutes	47 %
One day	66 %
Two days	72 %
Six day	75 %
Thirty one days	79 %

A mix up of previously learned information with new and similar information is called Retroactive information.

Example: A student studies and understands the events and causes of World-War I thoroughly. After few weeks, the student studies events and causes of World-War II. If the student then fails to remember the events and causes of First World-War, this would be an example of Retroactive Interference.

Proactive Interference

The phenomenon where the student fails to remember new information having mixed it with similar previous information is called Proactive Interference.



Example: Like the previous example, a student studies and understands the events and causes of World-War I in depth. After few weeks, the student studies events and causes of World War II. If the student then fails to remember the events and causes of Second World-War, this would be an example of Proactive Interference

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