# Eyewitness Testimony Activities

## **Activity 1**

## **Aim:- To introduce concepts of EWT & Schema Theory**

Resources: - Enough copies of the story below for all students. Textbooks to research Bartlett’s study or class notes.

Split the class into two groups. Take one group outside of the classroom and explain that the passage you are going to read to them all is about washing. Insist on complete silence and (if possible) seat students on their own. Read the story and then ask them to write down everything they remember. Give the students a copy of the story and ask them to count up the number of correct facts they recalled and errors made. The group who knew the story was about washing should remember more details and make fewer errors.

This activity will generate discussion about schema theory. It might also be useful to examine students’ restaurant schemata by asking them, in pairs, to write down what happens when you go to a restaurant. When students fully understand schema theory, outline Bartlett’s classic ‘War of the Ghosts’ study and ask them to make detailed notes.

**Bransford & Johnson (1972)**

First you arrange items into different groups. Of course, one pile might be sufficient depending on how much there is to do. If you have to go somewhere else due to lack of facilities, then that is the next step, otherwise you are pretty well set. It is important not to overdo things. That is, it is better to do too few things at once then too many. In the short run this may not seem important, but complications can easily arise. A mistake can be expensive as well.

At first the whole procedure seems complicated. Soon, however, it will become just another facet of life. It is difficult to see any end to the necessity for this task in the immediate future, but then one can never tell.

After the procedure is completed, one arranges the items into different groups again. Then they can be put into their appropriate places. Eventually they will be used once more and the whole cycle will have to be repeated. However, this is part of life.

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## **Activity 2**

#### Aim: To develop students’ skills of critical thinking

Resources: Short Cuts DVD, PowerPoint Presentation, Textbooks and/or access to Internet.

#### Activity 2

**Aim: To develop students’ skills of critical thinking.**

Show students DVD and go through the PowerPoint (Either ask them to make notes or give a printout summary of slides).

Discuss evaluation of this study and ask students to complete the following table: -

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Real world implicationsHow can Loftus’s findings be used?  |  |
| Strengths of the Experimental Method |  |
| Weaknesses of the Experimental Method |  |
| Possible alternative explanations for Loftus’s results |  |
| Evidence to support Loftus’s findings and conclusions |  |
| Evidence against Loftus’s findings and conclusions |  |

Ask the students to research and make notes on the numerous variations upon this study that Loftus and colleagues have undertaken.

**Activity 3**

**Aim: To give students first hand experience of being a witness, so that they appreciate the difficulties and issues. To practice interview question design.**

Show students a short video of a crime (e.g. mugging) and ask them to write down everything they can remember, and then play the video back. Discuss errors and differences. You could recreate Loftus’s study by splitting the group into two and asking one-group leading questions (e.g. What colour hat was the mugger wearing (when not wearing one)).

Ask students to design an interview schedule for a short video that contains leading questions (This is very difficult, as the trick is to make them plausible and not too obvious).

If you do not have access to a short film clip ask a colleague or student (preferably someone not well known to your students) to come into your classroom at some time during your lesson to borrow a board pen. Beforehand make detailed notes about what they are wearing.

After a few minutes ask students to make notes about the person, using the ideas given above.

To increase students ability to evaluate studies, give them sentence starters such as: -

* This study could be said to lack ecological validity because…..
* This research is seen as unethical because…..