Describe and evaluate types of long-term memory (16 marks)

Tulving (1985) proposed long-term memory (LTM) to be divided into three main types of memory: episodic, semantic and procedural memory.

Episodic memory refers to our ability to recall events from our lives. E.g. breakfast you ate this working, recent trip to the dentist. These memories are 'time-stamped'- you can remember when they happened (e.g. recently or last week). Memory of single episode will include several elements such as people and places, objects and behaviours. Moreover, memories from this store have to be retrieved consciously and with effort.

Semantic memory contains knowledge of the world. This includes facts and our knowledge of what words and concepts mean. They are not 'time-stamped', meaning we don't remember when we learned about them. This type of memory tends to be less personal and more about facts we all share. Like episodic memory, semantic memories usually need to be recalled deliberately.

Lastly, procedural memory is a long-term memory store for our actions, skills, and how we do things. Unlike semantic and episodic memory, we can recall these without conscious awareness e.g. driving a car. Our ability to do this depends on procedural memory e.g. we change our gear stick without having to recall how.

Support for different types of LTM comes from case studies of HM and Dive Wearing. Episodic memory in both men was severely impaired as a Concentence of amnesia. They both had difficulty recalling events happened intrepresent. However, their semantic memory was unaffected. They still understood meaning of words, both knew how to tie shoelaces, and in Wearing's case how to play the piano, and teac music. This supports the view that there are different 16° memory stores. All prow one store can be damaged, but others not show severence that not only are there different types, but they are stored in different parts or brain.

This explanation uses a nomothetic approach as it attempts to establish universal laws but utilises ideographic approach with case studies. The problem with using case studies of individuals is that the sample is not big enough to be able to generalise to wider population due to potential individual differences, meaning they lack external validity. Nevertheless, case studies help us to better understand how our brain works which may have been very hard/ impossible to test otherwise.

More evidence to support that there are different types of stores in different parts of LTM memory comes from brain scanning techniques. Tulving conducted a study using PET scanner. The findings showed episodic and semantic memory were both recalled from the prefrontal cortex. Left prefrontal cortex was involved in recalling semantic and episodic was recalled in the right side of prefrontal cortex. This supports the view that there is physical reality of different types of LTM. This was confirmed many time in later research, which increasing validity of findings.

Tulving's three types of LTM has real-life applications. Identifying different types of LTM allows psychologists to target certain types of memory to improve people's lives. Belleville