





The Central Executive

- · Most complex and least understood component of WM
- "In some ways the central executive functions more like an attentional system than a memory store" - Baddeley (1997)
- "our initial specification of the CE was so vague as to serve as little more than a ragbag..." Baddeley (1996).
- Model suggests CE coordinates the activity of the two slave systems
- Other potential roles for the CE include coordinating retrieval strategies, selective attention, temporary activation of long term memory, suppression of habitual responses.
- Baddeley suggests that a model of action control developed by Norman and Shallice (1980,1986) may serve as a model of the central executive



Evidence for the CE

Dual task performance and DAT:

 Pursuit rotor and digit span tasks were adjusted so that individual performance was identical in DAT and matched controls

• Combining the two tasks caused greater costs in the DAT patients than the controls - CE impaired in DAT

Random number generation:

• Ss required to generate random sequences of letters make more repetitions and stereotyped responses the faster the task

• Dominant schema (ABC, ITV etc) must be constantly inhibited by the SAS and novel schema activated.

Evidence for the CE

Neuropsychological evidence: - Dysexcutive Syndrome

Original Norman and Shallice model developed to account for behaviour of patients with frontal lobe lesions.

Perseveration - patients have lost ability to interrupt ongoing schemas

Catatonia - patients can remain motionless and speechless for hours - unable to initate schemas.

Distractibility - schemas easily "captured" by external/internal stimuli

Utilisation behaviour - Lhermite (1983)

Utilisation Behaviour

Utilisation behaviour:

The tendency to grasp common objects when presented, and perform the function commonly associated with the object E.g Lhermite (1983)

































Fun Facts about WM

- Items in WM defined by a high level of activation
- If unattended, items in WM decay
- Items maintained in WM via rehearsal to keep them in activated state

(more) Fun Facts about WM

- Number of items one can maintain in WM is limited
- Limitations of WM depend on rehearsal capacity
- As items in WM decay, activation level and access speed go down



