

**Aim:** To see whether people could remember more short words than long words in a serial recall test, and so to demonstrate that pronunciation time rather than number of items recalled, determines the capacity of short term memory.

**Procedures:**

- ❑ The reading speed of the participants was measured
- ❑ Participants were then presented with sets of five words on a screen
- ❑ The words were taken from one of two sets: a set of one-syllable words (e.g. harm wit, sum) or a set of polysyllabic words (e.g. opportunity, aluminium, university)
- ❑ Participants were asked to write down the five words in serial order immediately after presentation. They recalled several lists of both short and long words

**Findings:**

- ❑ Participants could recall considerably more short words than long words
- ❑ They were able to recall as many words as they were able to articulate in about 2 seconds
- ❑ There was a strong positive correlation between reading speed and memory span

**Conclusions:**

- ❑ Immediate memory span represents the number of items of whatever length that can be articulated in approximately 2 seconds

**Criticisms:**

- ❑ It might simply be that short words are easier to recall than long words because they are more familiar to us. Baddeley and colleagues responded to this criticism in later versions of the study and showed clearly the importance of pronunciation time over familiarity.
- ❑ This was a laboratory experiment using lists of unconnected words and did not reflect everyday use of STM
- ❑ Miller was not able to account for the findings of research which showed that immediate span depends on the nature of the stimulus, i.e. the kinds of words and the language in which they are spoken. This study can explain such findings.