

Among possible criteria for distinguishing separate memory systems for implicit and explicit memory is that of substantial differences in either the form or rate of forgetting. Prior literature has claimed both differential forgetting and equivalent forgetting for implicit and explicit tasks. Existing experimental data for word stem completion and explicit control tasks were reviewed and shown to be inconclusive. Our experiments measure forgetting in comparable implicit and explicit memory tasks of stem completion and stem cued recall. The form and the rate of forgetting are essentially the same for these implicit and explicit tasks. Levels of processing and task conditions differ only in the level of initial learning or availability. Thus, either the implicit and explicit task reflects traces in the same memory system, or they reflect traces in different systems that have identical forgetting dynamics.