

THE PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF ALGERIA
MINISTRY OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH
UNIVERSITY OF MOHAMED KHIDER –BIKSRA
FACULTY OF ARTS AND LANGUAGES
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

3. Introduction to Human Attention

Lecturer: Khaled Lebiar
Contact: khaled.lebiar@univ-biskra.dz
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1. What is Attention

Attention is our brain's ability to focus on specific information while filtering out other, less relevant details in our environment. This skill is fundamental to daily life, enabling us to concentrate, learn, and perform tasks efficiently. In academic settings, the capacity to pay attention can directly impact how well we absorb information, understand concepts, and retain knowledge. Without attention, learning would be haphazard and fragmented.

2. Types of Attention

- a. **Selective attention** is the process of focusing on one particular item or detail while ignoring other distractions. For instance, when you're engaged in a conversation in a noisy room, you're able to tune out the background noise and zero in on the discussion.
- b. **Divided attention** involves trying to focus on multiple tasks simultaneously. Many people attempt to multitask, such as studying while responding to messages, but research shows this often reduces overall performance.
- c. **Sustained attention** is the ability to maintain focus on a single task for a long period. Activities that require deep concentration, such as reading an entire chapter of a book without taking breaks, rely on sustained attention.

3. Selective Attention in Daily Life

Selective attention is essential because it helps us prioritize and filter through the information we encounter every day. In our increasingly noisy and busy world, this type of attention allows us to focus on the most relevant details, reducing the overload on our senses and improving our concentration.

4. The Challenges of Divided Attention

Although multitasking can seem like a helpful strategy, dividing our attention between tasks often has negative effects. Studies have shown that focusing on multiple things at once decreases efficiency, especially if both tasks require concentration. For example, attempting to study while watching television might mean you miss key information in both activities.

5. Sustained Attention and Concentration

Sustained attention, or the ability to keep focus on one activity for extended periods, is critical for tasks that require time and effort. It is an ability that can be strengthened with practice. Techniques like mindfulness, single-tasking, and taking brief breaks have been shown to enhance sustained attention.

6. Factors That Affect Attention

Many factors can impact how well we pay attention. External distractions, such as background noise, visual movement, and the presence of other people, can make focusing difficult. Internal distractions, including wandering thoughts, daydreaming, and stress, also affect our attention span. Additionally, our interest in the task at hand significantly influences our level of attention; we're more inclined to concentrate on things we find enjoyable or important.

7. Improving Attention for Studying

There are several strategies that can enhance focus while studying. Creating a quiet environment, with minimal noise and few visual distractions, is an effective starting point. Taking short breaks during study sessions can prevent mental fatigue and keep attention fresh. Another useful practice is engaging in activities that naturally enhance focus, such as reading, memory exercises, or solving puzzles.

Deep breathing exercises are known to calm the mind, which in turn improves focus. Time management techniques, such as the Pomodoro Technique (working for 25 minutes followed by a 5-minute break), can help maintain sustained attention over long periods. Additionally, breaking down larger tasks into smaller goals can make it easier to stay focused.