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ATTENTION

Attention is a selective mental process in which the person by adopting certain bodily posture is set to bring certain stimuli into focus of consciousness. It is a term given to perceptual process that select certain inputs for inclusion in our conscious experience or awareness at any given time.

SELECTIVE ATTENTION

Selective attention is the process of directing our awareness to relevant stimuli while ignoring irrelevant stimuli in the environment. It is a phenomenon in which we concentrate over only one activity and notice every little about other activities.

Theories of selective attention

1. Bottle-neck theory
2. Filter-attenuation theory
3. Multimode theory

1. Bottle-neck theory

This theory suggests that individuals have a limited amount of attentional resources that they can use at one time. Therefore, information and stimuli are “filtered” somehow so that only the most important information is perceived. This theory was proposed by Broadbent(1958), later work was done by Treisman(1964), Deutsch & Deutsch(1963). An experiment was done with

A large bottle filled with sand that is turned upside down. The bottleneck restricts the flow of sand so that it slowly pours out instead of coming out all at once. Stimuli in our environment is the same way- if we perceive every visual, auditory, olfactory, and tactile sense all at once all of the time

our brains would be overflowing. Broadbent said that physical characteristics of messages are used to select one message for further processing and others are lost. Deutsch & Deutsch said that all messages get through, but that only one response can be made which was coined late selection.

2. Filter-attenuation theory

Filter-attenuation theory was developed by Treisman by modifying Broadbent's theory. This theory proposes that the stimuli not getting access to the selective filter at a given moment of time are not completely blocked. The filter only attenuates (weakens) their strength. Thus some stimuli manage to escape through the selective filter to reach higher levels of processing. It may be possible that personally relevant stimuli can be noticed even at a very low level of sound. Such stimuli, even though fairly weak, may also generate response occasionally by slipping through the selective filter.

3. Multimode theory

Multimode theory was developed by Johnston and Heinz. This theory believes that attention is a flexible system that allows selection of a stimulus over others at three stages. At stage 1 the sensory representation of stimuli are constructed and at the stage 3 the sensory and semantic representation enters the consciousness. It is also suggested that more processing requires more mental effort. When the messages are selected on the basis of stage 1 processing, less mental process is required than when the selection is based on stage 3 processing (late selection).