



Question 5. Define attention. Explain its properties.

Answer: The process through which certain stimuli are selected from a group of others is generally referred to as attention.

The properties of attention are selection, alertness, concentration and search.

1. Selection— A large number of stimuli impinge upon our sense organs simultaneously, but we do not notice all of them at the same time. Only a selected few of them are noticed, e.g. when you enter your classroom you encounter several things like doors, walls, windows etc but you selectively focus only on one or two of them at one time.
2. Alertness— Alertness refers to an individual's readiness to deal with stimuli that appear before him/her. e.g. while participating in a race in your school you must have seen the participants on the starting line in an alert state waiting for the whistle to blow in order to run.
3. Concentration— Concentration refers to focusing of awareness on certain specific objects while excluding others for the moment, e.g. in the classroom a student concentrates on the teacher's lecture and ignores all sorts of noises coming from different corners of the school.
4. Search— In search an observer looks for some specified subset of objects among a set of objects, e.g. when we go to school to fetch our younger sister and brother from the school we just look for them among innumerable boys and girls.

Question 6. State the determinants of selective attention. How does selective attention differ from sustained attention?

Answer: Selective attention refers to the focusing of conscious awareness on a particular stimulus. It is concerned mainly with the selection of a limited number of stimuli or objects from a larger number of stimuli. Factors affecting selective attention :

External factors:

These are related to the features of the stimuli. Other factors held constant.

- The size, intensity and movement of stimuli are important determinants.
- Large, bright and moving objects easily catch our attention.
- Auditory narrations are readily attended than visual narrations.
- Stimuli that are novel and slightly complex catch our attention.
- Human figures are more likely to be attended than the inanimate objects.

Internal factors can be of two types :

(1) Cognitive factors (2) Motivational factors

1. Cognitive factors include factors like interests, attitudes and preparatory set.
  - Stimuli that appear interesting are readily attended.
  - Stimuli that are favorably disposed by us also catch our attention.
  - Preparatory set a state of mind to act in a certain way and to respond to some stimuli and not to others at that

moment.

2. Motivational factors

- These are related to our biological and social needs e.g. hungry person will attain food first. During examination days students focus more on teacher's instructions.
- Selective attention is concerned mainly with the selection of a limited number of stimuli from a large number of stimuli whereas sustained attention refers to focusing of awareness on specific objects while excluding others for the movement.
- It is ability to maintain attention on an object or event for longer duration.

Question 7. What is the main proposition of Gestalt psychologists with respect to perception of the visual field?

Answer: Gestalt psychologists (Wertheimer, Koffka and Kohler) outlines several principles that describe the way in which basic sensory input are organized into whole patterns.

- According to Gestalt psychologists, human beings perceive different stimuli not as discrete elements, but as an organised, "whole" that carries a definite form.
- They believe that the form of an object lies in its whole, which is different from the sum of their parts.
- For example, a flower-pot with a bunch of flowers is a whole. If the flowers are removed, the flower-pot still remains a whole. It is the configuration of the flower-pot that has changed. Flower pot with flower is one configuration, without flowers it is another configuration.
- Gestalt psychologists also indicate that cerebral processes of human beings are always oriented towards the perception of a good figure. That is the reason why human beings perceive everything in an organized form.

Some of these principles are discussed below:

1. Figure ground relationship—We tend to divide the world around us into two parts: figure, which has a definite shape and a location in space; and ground, which has no shape, seems to continue behind the figure, and has no definite location. The figure-ground relationship helps clarify the distinction between sensation and perception.
2. Contours—Contours are formed whenever a marked difference occurs in the brightness or colour of the background. Contours give shape to the objects in our visual world because they mark one object off from another or they mark an object off from the general ground. Contours determine shape, but by themselves they are shapeless.
3. Grouping—Laws of grouping describe basic ways in which we group items together perceptually. These are simple principles through which we perceive the world around us. The principles of grouping include similarity, proximity, closure, and continuity.
  - The principle of similarity says that objects of similar shape, size, or colour tend to be grouped together. In the auditory sense, sounds of similar tone and intensity are grouped together.
  - The law of proximity says that items which are close together in space or time tend to be perceived as belonging together or forming an organized group
  - Principle of continuation describes the tendency to perceive a line that starts in one way as continuing in the same way.
  - Law of closure refers to perceptual processes that organize the perceived world by filling in gaps in stimulation.

- In case of principle of continuity if interruptions are too pronounced or too long, continuity disappears and a unified whole is not perceived.
4. Camouflage: When contours are disrupted visually, objects are difficult to distinguish from the background. This is camouflage. It works because it breaks up contours, e.g. uniform of soldiers in the forest.

Question 8. How does perception of space take place?

Answer: Space is perceived in three dimensions. This is because of our ability to transfer a two-dimensional retinal vision into a three dimensional perception. Spatial attributes of objects like, size, shape and distance between objects also contribute towards the perception of space.

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