STUDENT ATTENTION SPAN IN THE UNIVERSITY CLASSROOM: DIGITAL DISTRACTIONS, TEACHING METHODS, AND MOTIVATION

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Abstract

This literature survey examines various factors influencing the attention of college students, including digital distractions, teaching methods, and student motivation. Studies show that attention is not a fixed entity but instead varies depending on the learning type and the individual characteristics of a person and the environment. For instance, engaging in non-educational activities on smartphones can have a negative effect on one's attention and memory.

On the other hand, the use of interactive methods of instruction may increase the amount of participation in the learning process. Based on these facts, the survey points out that the application of both technology and different kinds of teaching methods needs to be balanced for the effective use of time in university classrooms.

Keywords: *student attention, university students, digital distractions, teaching methods, motivation*

1. Introduction

When it comes to attending university lectures, attention is a key ingredient since students need attention in order to learn information, think it through, and store it in memory. Nevertheless, maintaining attention in class is difficult. Distractions such as smartphones, social media, boring teaching styles, fatigue, and lack of desire could all lead to low engagement in class. It is widely accepted that a university student can keep his/her concentration only for up to fifteen minutes. But the studies of Wilson and Korn (2007) and Bradbury (2016) provide evidence that this limit cannot be viewed as a universal set of rules. There is a possibility of attention being

in constant motion during one class depending on the particular student, task, and atmosphere. The following literature review is focused on the examination of the impact of technological distractions, teaching methods and motivation on students' attention.

Literature Review

2.1. Digital Distractions

Digital Distractions Smart phones and laptops are great sources of valid educational content; however, they expose students to different distractive content such as messengers, social media, entertainment, etc. When students stop studying to turn to unrelated activities, their focus can become split. According to Glass and Kang (2019), split attention reduces exam scores in the class. Kim et al. (2019) demonstrate through their research on the impact of constant smart phone use on learning that it is more efficient to learn from practice about the ways of using mobile devices in real life rather than depend only on the opinion of students on this matter. It cannot be said that digital technologies have only negative influence, since the effect depends on how they are used. Some technologies such as online tests, dictionaries, learning platforms contribute to students' engagement in learning, while notifications can distract them. Flanigan et al. (2023) stress that it is crucial to solve the problem of digital distractions in terms of students' motivation and classroom requirements.

2.2. Teaching Methods and Attention

Regardless of the specific lesson being taught, the way the teacher approaches their instruction will affect student participation. Extended periods of unbroken lecturing will reduce chances for student input, while asking questions, providing demonstrations, engaging in discussions and doing group work increases chances for engagement. Bunce et al. (2010) state that questioning and demonstration practices were linked to fewer instances of students reporting lapses in attention as opposed to lengthy lecturing. There is evidence from research on university classes that shows that the context of teaching influences students' attention. Allison (2020)

studied students' attention in an EAP classroom while Rosengrant et al. (2021) examined sustained attention during guided-inquiry lectures. The results of these studies show the importance of the organization of classroom activities. In regards to English language learners, pair work, role play, listening activities and collaborative presentations provide opportunities for involvement.

2.3. Motivation and Engagement

The importance of motivation in facilitating students' learning activities and engagement in education is enormous. Ryan and Deci (2000) identified autonomy, competence, and relatedness as the main elements of the motivational concept. Thus, students become motivated to learn when they take active part in the process of education and make their choice and get feedback and support from teachers and their friends. However, motivation should not be confused with attention because the person may be motivated to study successfully but have difficulties in focusing. Therefore, it is important not only to take into account students' motivation to study but also to create appropriate classroom conditions that will help students concentrate and pay attention.

3. Critical Discussion

It has been shown in the literature that the principle of attention of students is not static, but dynamic. Wilson and Korn (2007) and Bradbury (2016) refute the 10-15 rule of attention span, while Bunce et al. (2010) provide evidence that attention can be lapsed during lectures. So, a sign of attention loss can appear during the lecture but might be avoided by changing the methods of instruction. However, these studies have their limitations. Different methods used in these studies (e.g., self-reports, observation, eye-tracking, and physiology) do not measure the same aspects of attention. In addition, the results obtained in science courses may not be directly applicable to L2 learning scenarios. Therefore, conducting more research in the field of English language learning would help reveal the relationship between digital habit, motivation and teaching practices.

4. Practical Implications

University professors use multiple techniques for the purpose of increasing the level of engagement. They are successful in achieving their aims by controlling the use of smartphones in the classroom and raising classroom discussions among students, encouraging discussions and group work in classrooms and relating the subject with the students' aspirations. Technology may be an efficient means for educational purposes, but it is not effective in itself if it does not facilitate learning. Also, it must be remembered that every student is different and has peculiar needs while learning.

Conclusion

This study examined effects of online distraction, teaching methods, motivation, and classroom environment on university students' attention. It was concluded that attention is not stable over an interval of 10-15 minutes-a supposition that one would discard based on a more serious look at the trends. The characteristics of controversies indicate that on any given occasion, attention may be improved meddlingmostlydepending on its design and offers opportunities for stimulation. One should continue to evaluate which approaches can productively take this one forward.

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