The Attention economy

EAE Learning objectives for this lesson

Objectives - Future predictions.
Dependent prepositions. Reading and Listening comprehension

Introduction – **Questions and Answers**

With your partner or teacher, ask and answer the questions below

1. What is the Attention Economy?
2. What do you pay the most attention to online?
3. What grasps your attention when you look at information?
4. Do you find that you are unable to concentrate when your phone is beside you?
5. Do you get distracted when you are searching for things on the web?
6. Do you follow suggestions on YouTube or Netflix or google and find yourself getting sucked into the web?

Activity one - **Dependent prepositions**
Try to connect the correct prepositions with the words below - one has no preposition)
(ON, FOR, TO, AT, IN)
People often make mistakes with these words

Arrive (two possibilities)	Laugh
Ask	Listen
Belong	Look forward
Depend	Spend
Discuss	Wait



Activity two - **Gap fill**
Here is a gap fill with some other dependent prepositions. Let's see which ones you get right / already know. Fill in the gaps with the correct prepositions.

- The term "attention economy" is commonly used nowadays to refer to the economy of digital worlds and especially of the internet. It relates _____ a longstanding idea, put forward by Herbert Simon, that in a situation of informational abundance, scarcity lies with the processing of that information.
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- I argued that the attention economy grouped together under the same label two radically different theoretical approaches based _____ two fairly compartmentalized disciplines in the social sciences: ergonomics and economics.
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- Not everybody agrees _____ the use of their information to personalize marketing online. Companies can be blamed _____ over using information from cookies they obtain while people browse the web.

Question - Can you think of any other dependent prepositions that you get confused with?

Activity three - **Reading Comprehension**Source - https://readwrite.com/2007/03/01/attention_economy_overview/ (edited) -Read the article and answer the comprehension questions. Before you read, try to explain what each of the words in bold mean.

It is no secret that we live in an information **overload** age. The explosion of new types of information online is a **double-edged sword**. We both enjoy and drown in news, blogs, podcasts, photos, videos and cool MySpace pages. And the problem is only going to get worse, as more and more people discover the new web.

Because of this information explosion, we no longer read – we **skim**. The news that used to last a day now lasts just a few hours, simply because we need to pay attention to the new news. So it is becoming increasingly difficult to juggle all the news sources and keep on top of things. Which brings us to the law of information, stated first by Herbert Simon: the rapid growth of information causes scarcity of attention.

Economics of Attention

Things get more interesting when we realize that our attention crisis is not only our problem. It is also a big problem for news sites, blogs, search engines and online retailers. Our **scarcity** of attention hurts their economics. The web sites that contain content relevant to us have a big incentive to make sure that we find it. Consider this scenario. You navigate to a news site and start reading the headlines. What is the **likelihood** that you leave if you see an irrelevant headline? High. Another example. You go to Netflix and look at movie recommendations. What is the likelihood that you will stop browsing after Netflix shows you a movie you do not like? Again, very high.

When information is abundant, the **false positives** are very costly – they are basically **deal breakers.** Consumers happily leave sites, knowing there are a ton of alternatives out there. Unfortunately, this becomes a lose-lose situation, because if consumers rarely find satisfying experiences then retailers won't get consumer dollars. The idea behind the Attention Economy is to create a marketplace where consumers are happy, because if they are shown relevant information – then retailers are happy too, because happy consumers spend money!

The basic ideas behind the Attention Economy are simple. Such an economy facilitates a marketplace where consumers agree to receives services in exchange for their attention. The ultimate purpose is of course to sell something to the consumer, but the selling does not need to be direct and does not need to be instant. For example **news feeds** illustrate the point well, since they ask for consumers attention in exchange for the opportunity to show him/her advertising. The Search engines are similar in that respect, because they show ads in exchange for helping users find answers online.

It is important to realize that the key ingredient in the attention game is relevancy. As long as a consumer sees relevant content, he/she is going to **stick around** – and that creates more opportunities to sell. Literally, the longer a user stays on a site reading news etc, the higher the chance that person will click on an ad. So the question is: how do you show the user relevant content? This is a complex problem that can be partially addressed by recommendation engines. However, it is not possible for sites to generate relevant, personalized content unless they know the user. To personalize, web sites need to know you: your **browsing** history, the books you like, the wines you drink, the music you listening to, etc. The more information the better.

Comprehension questions

1. What has happened because of the information explosion?
2. What does the rapid growth of information cause?
3. What is the idea behind the attention economy?
4. What is the ultimate purpose of the attention economy?
5. What is the key ingredient in the attention game?
6. What do sites need to know to personalize content?



Activity four - **Future tenses for prediction**

There are two ways we can make predictions about the future

The simple future with WILL.
This is usually used when you are making predictions about the future. But only if it is a general prediction, and not supported by evidence.



The future with GOING TO
It is also used to talk about future predictions if they are based on existing evidence.

Discuss - Now try to make some predictions about the future of the internet and the attention economy.

Activity five - **Listening Comprehension**
Watch the video and answer the comprehension questions
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=50R21mblLb0
The attention Economy - How they addict us. (Watch the first 2 minutes)
Comprehension questions



1. How long does he look at his phone at the beginning?
2. What is it like being part of the attention economy?
3. What did Michael Goldhaber state?
4. What are workers no longer involved with?
5. What is economics the study of?
6. What is literally seconds away?
7. What is the natural economy of cyberspace?

Activity Six - **Role plays** (Do as many of them as you can and use the future tenses …).

1. You are a parent talking to their child. You tell them that you don't want them to use certain websites or applications in the future because you feel that they are being manipulated by advertisers or big companies.

2. You are a Google executive talking to a big advertising company about how they can get the most out of google to get the attention of future clients.

3. You are a company manager trying to explain to workers why you disagree with them working from home. You explain that their social media could be too distracting.

4. You are a politician explaining a new policy idea for new rules which you hope will help to reduce damage done by the attention economy, for future generations.

