CHAPTER 5
The Perceptual Context

The Perceptual Context

- Deals with how we take in, store & retrieve info
- Human universal, but how we see, hear, smell, taste is culturally determined
- When we communicate, we start from a perceptual frame of reference
- Based on our cultural “programming” (Hofstede)
- Same objects perceived differently as a result of cultural values or beliefs

The Perceptual Context

- Clip: US products in India
  - What do Indians make of a cheesehead
  - For Hindus, the same object (cow) perceived very differently than in US
- Geography helps determine how we perceive the world
- How Asian/Western viewpoints differ?
  - Relationships vs. similarities
  - Fish in tank / images of cow, chicken & grass

Stage 1—Input/sensation

- Perception - the mental interpretation of external stimuli via sensation
- Perceptual filters:
  - Physiological—the senses
  - Sociological—demographic info & groups
  - Psychological—attitudes, beliefs, & dispositions
- Same external stimuli may have different responses
– Examples in text:
  • Rap music
  • Anti-abortion speech

8 Input/sensation: Cross-cultural Differences
  • Conditions of the physical environment
    – Hearing loss: where?
  • Indirect environmental conditions
    – African miners
  • Genetic differences
    – “alcoholic blush”
  • Cultural differences in the interaction with the environment
    – Sensotype: favoring one sense [Africans/Europeans]

9 Input/sensation
  • Carpentered World Hypothesis
    – Effect of living in world of rectangles & right angles

10 Stage 2—Storage/memory
  • Short-term memory
    – 7 plus or minus 2
    – May be affected by writing system
  • Long-term memory
    – Episodic
      • Personal, unique experiences (also called autobiographical)
      • Earliest memories: Asian vs. western
    – Semantic
      • Not individualized
      • Preservation of the general conceptual world & language
    – Procedural
      • How to do something manually

11 Stage 3—Recall/retrieval
• Long-term memory capacity?
• Long-term memory may be affected by:
  – Interference
  – Anxiety
  – Repression
  – Age
• Mnemonic devices: techniques for better recall

12 Memory Palaces

13 Other Memory Devices
• Acronyms
  – Used often in language learning: Mrs Van der Tramp
  • Verbs in French conjugated with être (monter, rester, sortir)
• Acrostic
  – Please Excuse My Dear Aunt Sally (PEMDAS)
  – Sequence in solving math equations
    • Parenthesis | Exponents | Multiplication | Division | Addition | Subtraction
• Keyword Method
  – Select a known key word that sounds like the new word. Next, imagine an image to associate the two [barrister => bear in court]
• Spaced repetition
  – Based on the “forgetting curve”, that there is a frequent pattern for how people learn (and forget). This pattern dictates a particular rhythm for reviewing items to be learned, i.e. 1 - 3 - 7

14 Categorization & Stereotyping
• Categorization—grouping, sorting, or classifying objects, events, or living things into identifiable groups or compartments that share certain features or characteristics
• Stereotypes—membership in social categories that are
believed to be associated with certain traits and behaviors

15 Categorization
- Used to make sense of the world, give us a frame of reference
- Many things categorized, including people
- Categories formed from perceived differences
- Dichotomy between Asian & Western process
  - Asian: holistic categories
    - Emphasis on relationships, environment
    - Parts not separated out
  - Western: analytical categories
    - Similarities among objects used primarily
    - Objects separated from context

16 Consequences of Categorization
1 Positive
- Helps to confirm thinking
- Reduces the amount of incoming information to a manageable size
- Increases the availability of incoming information
- Reduces uncertainty & stress
- May help to link our own culture with others

2 Negative
- Ignores individual elements of the person
- Minimizes in-group differences
- Maximizes out-group differences

17 Stereotyping
- Stereotypes are categories with attitude.
- Stereotyping involves members of one group attributing characteristics to members of another group.
- These attributions can carry a + or -evaluation
- Can lead to prejudice and discrimination
- Established early in life
- In US, race & gender groups often stereotyped
• In other cultures, different social groups

18 Stereotyping

19 Explanations of stereotypes 1
• The *out-group homogeneity effect*
  – “those” guys are all the same
• The *illusory correlation principle*
  – Rare negative behavior remembered for all
• Real conditions
  – Example: wide-spread poverty in a group

20 Explanations of stereotypes 2
• Serve self-fulfilling prophecies
  – Dominant culture creates adverse conditions
• Help develop and maintain a positive self-esteem
• The *stereotype threat* phenomenon
  – When we sense that some aspect of our self (behavior, physical characteristics, social condition) seems to match the stereotype.
  – Examples
    • Women – math / Elderly – cognitive

21 Stereotype Content Model
• Warmth
  – Does this person intend to harm me?
  – Associations: honesty, trustworthiness, friendliness
• Competence
  – Are they capable of harming me?
  – Associations: skill, knowledge, intelligence
• Difference emotions emerge from these dimensions:
  – Contempt – Pity – Admiration – Pride
  – Those lacking both warmth & competence = negative
  – Low-low: poor, druggies, Arabs
  – Competent but low warmth: Germany, UK, the rich
Ethnocentrism

- The tendency for any people to put their own group in a position of centrality and worth while creating and reinforcing negative attitudes and behaviors toward out-groups.
- Natural, universal condition
- Can have positive side
  - Fosters patriotism, solidarity, cooperation

Ethnocentrism in practice

Communicative distance of indifference

Ethnocentrism

- *Ethnocentric attributional bias*
  - Negative action of others seen as representative
  - Positive action of others seen as incidental
- Can negatively influence intercultural communication
  - Communicative distance
    - Indifference: talking loudly or slowly to non-native
    - Also in expressions such as “jew them down”
    - Avoidance: use of slang exclusive to in-group
    - Disparagement: open contempt (“chink”, “nigger”)

Communicative distance of indifference

Ethnocentrism in practice

- Communicative distance
- Indifference
  - talks loudly and enunciates words clearly “Do you understand the words that are coming out of my mouth?”
  - doesn’t try very hard to see if he is being understood
  - calls Jackie Chan “Mr. Riceroni”
- Avoidance
  - use of slang that he assumes won’t be understood
27 Ethnocentrism in the Workplace
   • Work place issues
     – Job interviews
     – Manager-subordinate communication
     – Consequences in a diverse society?

28 Relationship of Ethnocentrism & Racism
   • Racism: biologically based superiority
   • Unlikely to be racist and not ethnocentric
   • Possible to be ethnocentric and not racist
   • Ethnocentrism is considered innate.
   • Racism is considered learned.
   • Frustration-aggression hypothesis
     – Racism especially seen in difficult economic times
     – Out-groups as scapegoats