

Principles of Professional Communication 1

Lecture 2 Perception
– *is the truth really out there?*

What is perception?

- The mental or cognitive process by which we make sense of stimuli from the environment
- Intuitive recognition or “the action by which the mind refers its sensations to external objects as cause”
- The Matrix – what is real?



Source: Sadler & Tucker, 1981,37

Can you read this?

fi yuo cna raed tihs, yuo hvae a sgtrane mnid too. Cna yuo raed tihs? Olny 55 plepoe out of 100 can.

i cdnuolt blveiee taht I cluod aulacly uesdnatnrd waht I was rdanieg. The phaonmneal pweor of the hmuan mnid, aoccdnig to a rscheearch at Cmabrigde Uinervtisy, it dseno't mtaetr in waht oerdr the ltteres in a wrod are, the only iproamtnt tihng is taht the frsit and lsat ltteer be in the rghit pclae. The rset can be a taotl mses and you can sitll raed it whotuit a pboerlm. Tihs is bcuseae the huamn mnid deos not raed ervey lteter by istlef, but the wrod as a wlohe. Aزانمگ huh? yaeH and I awlyas tghuhot slpeling was ipmorantt! if you can raed tihs forwrad it.

What is perception?

- When we perceive, we select , organise and interpret stimuli or information until it has meaning for us – this does not mean that it has the same meaning for others
- Perception is influenced by the social and cultural context in which an experience takes place
- Perception is influenced by the learning, socialisation, experiences, deviance and creativity of the person doing the perceiving

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What is a schema?

- Schemas are mental structures that “file” chunks of information and put them together to create meaning and understanding
- Our minds refer to schemas to enable us to more quickly process and make sense of the mass of stimuli from the outside world
- Throughout life, you continue to gather new information and combine it with old, “filed” information to create understanding

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Types of schemas

- *People Schemas*
 - How you perceive and categorize people eg young, old, fat, good, bad, snooty, intelligent
- *Role Schemas*
 - How you perceive and categorize a person’s place in society and therefore how they should act eg mothers, politicians, teachers
- *Event Schemas*
 - How you predict what will happen in certain situations eg invited to a party, bring drinks or maybe a plate of food to share

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Schemas, perception & reality

- This simple concept has existed among mass media professionals for decades – *perception is reality ... true or false?*
- Each person's schema is unique – moderately in some cases, radically in others; therefore, each person's idea of reality is unique

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Perception Quiz

- Can the naked eye see atoms, magnetic fields and gravity?
- Why does a partly submerged stick appear bent to the naked eye?
- Why does a forward moving vehicle appear to be moving backwards when captured on film?
- Does our sense of taste or smell ever diminish?

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Perception Quiz cont ...

- When you dive into a bubbling surf, it feels cold, yet within minutes you feel comfortable. Has the water temperature changed?
- If you run water in the bathtub and then turn off the light, the sound of running water is suddenly louder. Why?
- When you first put on your clothes, you can feel their weight on your skin. After a while you don't notice it. Have they become lighter?

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Our senses are limited ...

Receptor	Perception	Limitations & Differences
Eyes (sight)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Light waves (186,00 m/ sec) Colours – red-green, yellow-blue, black-white 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High frequency waves – ultraviolet, infrared, TV & radio waves Physical limitations – retina’s blind spot, colour blindness Eyesight can be trained to see differences eg printers, spray painters perceive minute colour variations
Mouth (taste)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tastes – sweet, salty, sour, bitter 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Misinterpretations due to prior intake (eg spicy food, smoking),age Personal tastes eg spicy food
Nose (smell)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Smells – musky, flowery, pepperminty, etherlike, pungent, putrid 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Molecular structures that are too small or large to fit nasal receptors Smell is linked closely to memory

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Our senses are limited ...

Receptor	Perception	Limitations & Differences
Skin (touch)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Touch – pain, pressure, cold, heat 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cold spots outnumber hot spots 4:1 Women are generally more sensitive to cold than men Extremes of heat are perceived as cold
Ears (hearing)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sound waves (750 m/ hour) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Low tones – low sensitivity Low speed of sound waves means that an object/event is seen before it is heard eg high speed fighter plane Personal interests and needs influence what we “hear” eg new mothers will awake immediately their babies cry – selective deafness

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Influences on interpersonal perception

<p>The perceiver ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Motives Personality Expectations Prior learning Self concept Attitudes Experiences 	<p>The perceived ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Physical characteristics – size, colour, shape Social attributes – status Past experience – traditions, history <p>The context ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Place and/or time Situational factors
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Why is understanding perception important to communication?

- Our ability to receive stimuli or information is limited eg Rubin's reversible pattern
- Everyone has different capacities to take in stimuli or information eg blind people usually have acute hearing
- We select or filter information from around us according to what is important to us. At times we only see and hear what we choose eg selective deafness

Fig 1 Rubin's reversal pattern



Source: Sadler & Tucker, 1981, 30

Optical Illusions – 1

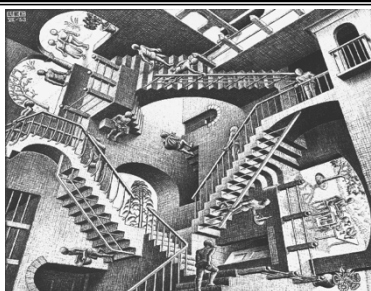


Fig 2 M.C. Escher

Optical Illusions – 2



Fig 3 M.C. Escher

Optical Illusions – 3




Fig 4 – Old Woman / Young Woman – can you see them both?

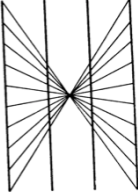


Fig 5: – does knowing that the four lines are parallel help you see them that way?

Source: Sadler & Tucker, 1981.30

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Why is understanding perception important to communication?

- We organise and interpret stimuli according to our past experiences and frame of reference eg how *hot* is a *hot day* to someone in London compared to Darwin?
- Stereotyping members of a racial, cultural or age group, makes it difficult to see unique qualities of individuals eg all Muslims are terrorists, all Australians like sport and drink beer, blondes are dumb

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Why is understanding perception important to communication?

- A person with positive qualities will be perceived as having other equally positive qualities – the Halo Effect eg someone who is good looking will be perceived as being kind and intelligent as well
- Our feelings, emotions, attitudes and aspirations influence our perceptions eg different interpretations of the same incident or conflict situation

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Why is understanding perception important to communication?

- We tend to generalise from past experiences no matter how specific or isolated they were eg stereotyping
- We perceive things as whole units
- We pattern information eg trying to make sense of optical illusions, the phenomenon of closure – “Which bank?”
- We tend to see good qualities in people we perceive to be like ourselves and to be critical of those we perceive to be different from us

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Optical Illusions – 4

Fig 6: An engineer's nightmare

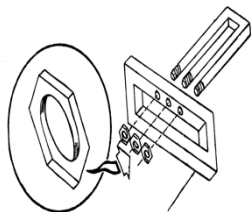


Fig 7: What can you see in this inkblot?



Source: Sadler & Tucker, 1981_29
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Optical Illusions – 5



Fig 8: Which of these men are the tallest?

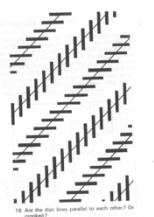


Fig 9: Are these lines parallel or crooked?

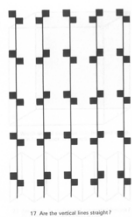


Fig 10: Are the vertical lines straight?

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Optical Illusions – 6

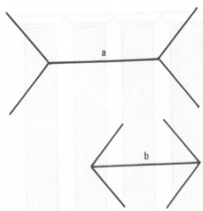


Fig 10: How much longer is line 'a' than line 'b'?

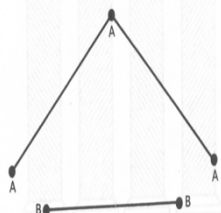


Fig 11: Are the two sides labelled 'AA' each the same as 'BB'?

Finally ... why parents and teenagers will never understand each other ...