

Culture's Influence on Perception

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SENSING

Sensation is the neurological process by which you become aware of your environment. Of the human senses, sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch including pain, temperature, and pressure are the most studied.



OUR SENSES AND THEIR LIMITATIONS



SIGHT

The average person is able to see objects the size of a cantaloupe at a distance of about 1,200 feet. Within that range, the average human gets a workable approximation of objects and actions for most of what exists above the microscopic and below the macroscopic. It has been estimated that 20% of what is available to be seen is lost or distorted in transit to the human brain.



HEARING

The average person has a workably conscious sound spectrum covering a range from 20 to 20,000 vibration cycles per second. There is a normal loss of fidelity estimated at between 22% and 25%, and there is reason to believe that our contemporary noisy world has even further reduced our hearing fidelity.



SMELL

The average person can differentiate among about 5,000 different smells down to a threshold of stimulation of as little as 400 molecules of a substance. But there are inadequacies and problems. The same person can even identify the same batch of molecules differently at different times. Smell is a less reliable human sense.



TASTE

The average nonsmoker has about 10,000 differentiated taste sensations in relation to the basic sensations of bitter, salty, sour, and sweet. To taste a substance requires about 25,000 times more molecules than are required to smell it. Sense of taste is only an approximate capacity at best.



TOUCH

Of all human senses, touch, especially as related to pain, temperature, and pressure, relates most directly to automatic, reflex-arc reactions. Virtually all these sensations lead to responses initiated before the brain consciously begins to react.



BODY MOVEMENTS

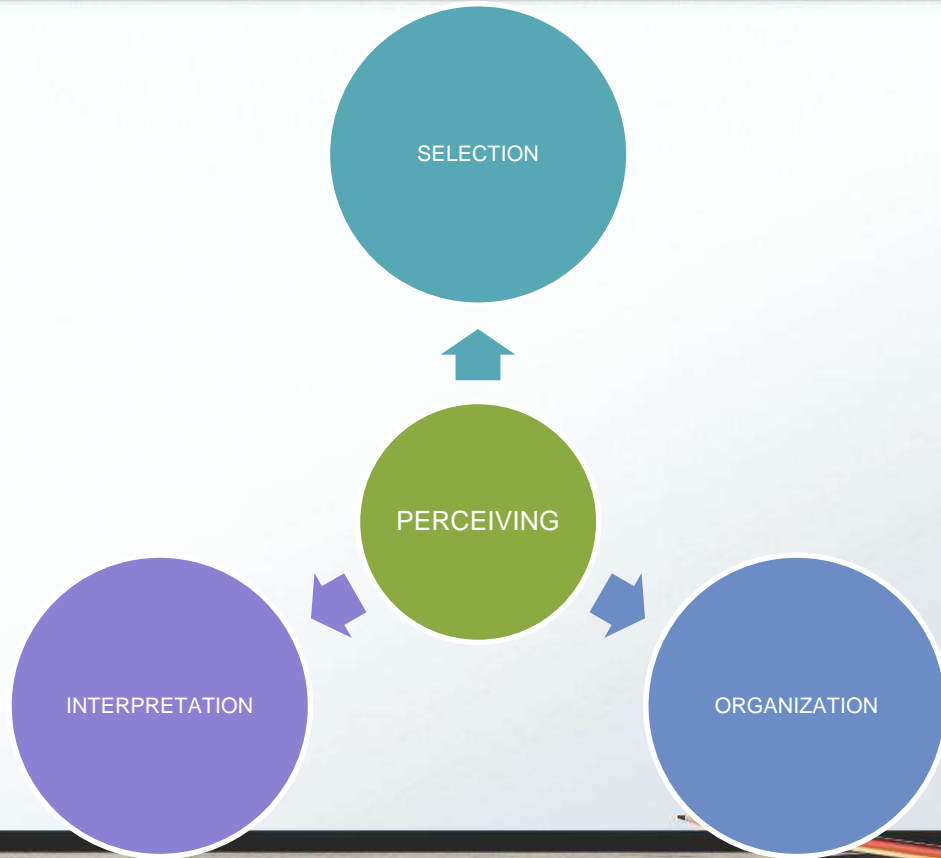
Two senses give us information about our own body movements. Kinesthesia uses pain and pressure receptors in muscles, joints, and tendons. Equilibrium, or our senses of balance, gives us information to know if we are upright, falling, or rotating.



EFFECT OF CULTURE ON SENSING

We know that very different stimuli can produce the same sensations, that the same stimulus can produce very different sensations, and that the route from stimulus to sensation is in part conditioned by culture. Although the differences are minimal, individuals raised in diverse cultures can behave as though they actually sense different things.





SELECTION

The first step in the perception process is selection. Within your physiological limitations you are exposed to more stimuli than you could possibly manage.

Needs affect what we are more likely to attend to. When we need something, have an interest in it, we are more likely to sense it out of competing stimuli. This demonstrates that even stimuli we can be aware of we do not attend to continually.



EXAMPLE

If you grew up speaking English, there are aspects of the Japanese language that are difficult for you to practice. There are aspects that do not occur in English, so you didn't learn to listen for them.

Vowel length is important in Japanese. Japanese has short-duration vowels and long-duration vowels. Because vowel length is not a critical attribute in English, perceiving the difference in sounds is a problem for those attempting to understand Japanese.

ORGANIZATION

Along with selecting stimuli from environment, we must organize things in some meaningful way. Language provides the conceptual categories that influence how its speakers' perceptions are encoded and stored.



HOW ARE PERCEPTIONS CATEGORIZED

You somehow grasp some set of attributes that things have in common and it is on basis that they are grouped.

There need to be no such set of shared characteristics.
(Ludwing Wittgenstein 1889-1951)

Your language provides the symbol to group perceptions of any kind together.



EXAMPLE

Speakers of English organize color perception by grouping certain perceptions together and labeling them with shared symbol.

Japanese concept of shibui. Language provides the label for perceptual categorization, and this categorization can lead us to assume that all items referred to by the same label have certain attributes in common. In Japanese, a word at one time used more commonly to refer to art and individual is shibui.



INTERPRETATION

Interpretation refers to attaching meaning to sense data and is synonymous with decoding.

The same thing/situation can be interpreted quite differently by diverse people



THE EFFECT OF CULTURE

You can make a judgment as to age, social status, educational background based your culture perception. The cues you use to make these decisions are so subtle that is often difficult to explain how and why.



EXAMPLE

People in United States perceive tall men as more credible. People in South Korea thinks that people who have small face are pretty.

People in China eat dog and cat. But, people in US think that eating dog or cat is disgusting thing.

1. Perceptions are greatly determined by your cultural background.
2. People in most cultures have strong idea about which things are acceptable.
3. Your reaction about something is culturally learned interpretation- and that interpretation can be quite strong.



High VS Low CONTEXT

Context

Environment in which the communication process takes place and helps define the communication.



LOW CONTEXT

Cultures in which little of the meaning is determined by the context because the message is encoded in the explicit code are labeled low context.



In low context cultures, verbal message are elaborate and highly specific and tend to be highly detailed and redundant.

Logic and reasoning are expressed in verbal message.

Verbal activities are highly valued.

HIGH CONTEXT

Culture in which less has to be said or written because more of the meaning is in the physical environment or already shared by people are labeled high context.





In high-context cultures, most of the information is either in the physical context or internalized in the person.

Very little is in the coded, explicit, and transmitted part of the message.



High context cultures are more sensitive to non verbal messages; hence they more likely to provide a context and setting and let the point evolve.



Language separates people. When we understood from the perspective of high and low context, that statement makes sense.


In high context cultures, people are brought closer by the importance of their shared context.

Those meaning are often lost in low-context cultures.

THE CONCEPT OF FACE


In Chinese culture, face is conceptualized in two ways: *lian* (face) and *mian* or *mian zi* (image).

Hu (1944) defines *lian* as something that “represent the confidence of society in integrity of ego’s moral character, the loss of which makes it impossible to function properly with the community.” *Mian* “stands for the kind of prestige that is emphasized in the U.S., a reputation achieved through life.



Ting Toomey (1985) has proposed that the low context cultures tend to use direct-face negotiation and express more self-face maintenance. Meanwhile, the high-context cultures tend to use indirect-face negotiation and express more mutual-face or other-face maintenance.

Communication in high-context cultures is hence more indirect or implicit and likely to use intermediaries.



A CASE OF PERCEPTION AND FOOD

Cultures use foods to reinforces and express identities.

For Example in China, culinary style is effected by Confucianism and Taoism.

In Confucianism, they concern more on balance and beauty. There is *fan* (grains), *chai* (vegies), and meat, and those three have to be balance and aesthetic.



In Taoism, the principle is a life in perfect accord with nature. It close to simplicity, spontaneous, and meditative to nature. There is also the believe of *yin* (cold) and *yang* (warm), on culinary aspect, *yin* is represented by plants, beans or crustaceans. The *yang* is represented by meat, oil plant, peanuts and so on.

In China, rice is the symbol of well-being and fertility

FROM THE INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

Culture affect how people perceive the world. Everyone sense the world similarly but culture teach us how to process and understand the information received by our senses.

Our senses just received the information, then we make a perception. There are three parts of perceptions; the selection, organization, and interpretation.

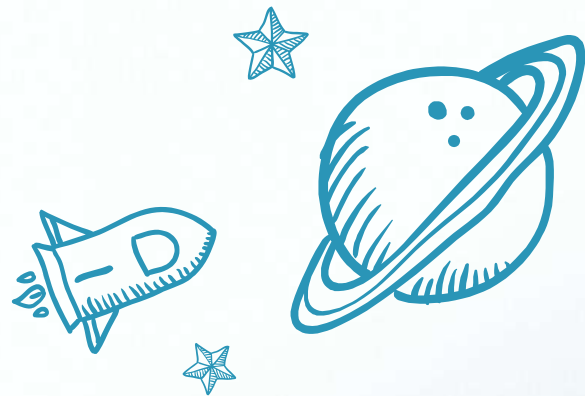


Perception can be different in the culture. The high-context use fewer words and rely on shared cultural experienced to communicate their thought. In the low-context, they rely more on words to communicate their thought.

Cultural differences interpretation can be quite dramatic.

The physical geography of a country has a strong effect on cultures.





THANK YOU

