Human Communication 1
Lecture 27

Social Communication

Social Communication

Social communication refers to language that is used in social situations.

2 or more people communicate with each other in a specific social environment:

Family, school, work, sport events, etc...

Social Communication

- The area of social communication is seen as fascinating. Why?

- Because communication is omnipresent, in that one cannot not communicate

- But the art of effective communication can be extremely demanding and elusive

  - For communication to be successful, it must be at once informative - somehow indicating an intended direction of thought or action - as well as subtle - somehow concealing intentions and instrumental goals

Social Communication

- Social communication includes a variety of communication-related topics:

  - Stereotypes

  - Culture

  - Deception

  - Persuasion

  - Non-verbal cues

  - The impact of conversation situations

    → Discussions in groups

Social Communication - Stereotypes

- Any group might be subject to stereotypes, but the most commonly studied stereotypes are those based on race or ethnicity, nationality, religion, sex, and age

  - Although stereotypes have traditionally been associated with exclusively negative beliefs about social groups, they generally include positive beliefs as well. For example, stereotypes of older people include not only such negative traits as forgetful and sad, but also positive traits such as wise and family-oriented

Social Communication - Culture

- Face-saving Theory

  Face originally stands for dignity (the meaning was derived from the Chinese culture)

Brown and Levinson divided "face" into two kinds: negative face and positive face. Negative face means that a person does not want others to enforce their ideas upon his/hers or to interfere in his/her behaviour. Positive face is the hope that a person wants others to agree with him/her or to praise him/her.

Brown and Levinson, Politeness: Some universals in language usage, 1987

Social Communication - Culture

- ## Speech Code Theory

- Refers to a framework for communication in a given speech community. As an academic discipline, it explores the manner in which groups communicate based on societal, cultural, gender, occupational or other factors

- A speech code is a historically situated and socially constructed system of resources that people use to talk about their own and others' communicative conduct

- Example: Philipsen's "Teamsterville" study: social communication in a particular area in Chicago

Social Communication - Culture

A speech code is a construct that an observer-analyst formulates explicitly in order to interpret and explain communicative conduct in a particular speech community. The observer-analyst notices that participants in the discursive life of a speech community use particular resources – acts, practices, patterns of activity, symbols, meanings, premises, and rules – to enact, name, interpret, and judge communicative conduct. And the analyst uses what was noticed to construct a hypothesis as to the existence and nature of a system of resources that these participants use to do that enactment, naming, interpretation, and evaluation.   G. Philipsen 1997

Social Communication - Culture

- Intercultural communication

  - Same gesture - different meaning

  - Different habits e.g. no handshake for greeting but bowing

  - Racism, sexism and religious intolerance can make communication very difficult

  - Closing the circle: *Face saving. In Asia it is not common to criticise a person in front of a third person or a group since this is an insult and the criticised individual would lose face (dignity)*

Social Communication - Deception

- Deception is a common phenomenon in communication

- Deception is an act to propagate beliefs that are not (believed to be) true or the whole truth (omissions)

Interpersonal Deception Theory posits that socially skilled individuals are better able to project truthful demeanors and evade detection than are unskilled individuals. It also predicts that social skills benefit receivers, making them better able to detect deception

Social Communication - Persuasion

- Our thoughts and actions are influenced by other people, whether we are passively observing their behaviour or actively complying with their requests

- Where do we meet persuasion in our daily communication?

    - For example: advertisement, sales

- Persuasion is such a present part of our communication that we easily overlook how we are influenced by outside sources

Social Communication - Non-verbal

Communication through sending and receiving wordless messages

- Facial expression (e.g. smiling)
- Body movements/posture (mirroring)
- (Hand) Gestures (e.g. "waving" something off)
- Eye contact (e.g. hostility, affection)
- Touch (e.g. firm handshake - confidence)
- Space (e.g. too close - uncomfortable)

Social Communication - Situations

- Speech acts

- Phone conversation

- Face to face conversation

- Gender specific

→ Common ground

Individuals engaged in conversation must share knowledge in order to be understood and have a meaningful conversation. (Clark, 1985)

Social Communication - Groups

- In group communication we use all the topics we have just talked about

- Group communication can take place in a context that mixes interpersonal communication interactions with social clustering

- Let's look at small groups (3 – 20 individuals) 2 Examples

Social Communication - Groups

- Example 1:
- Business meeting
  - 7 individuals
  - Round table
  - Charts
  - Manager

Social Communication - Groups
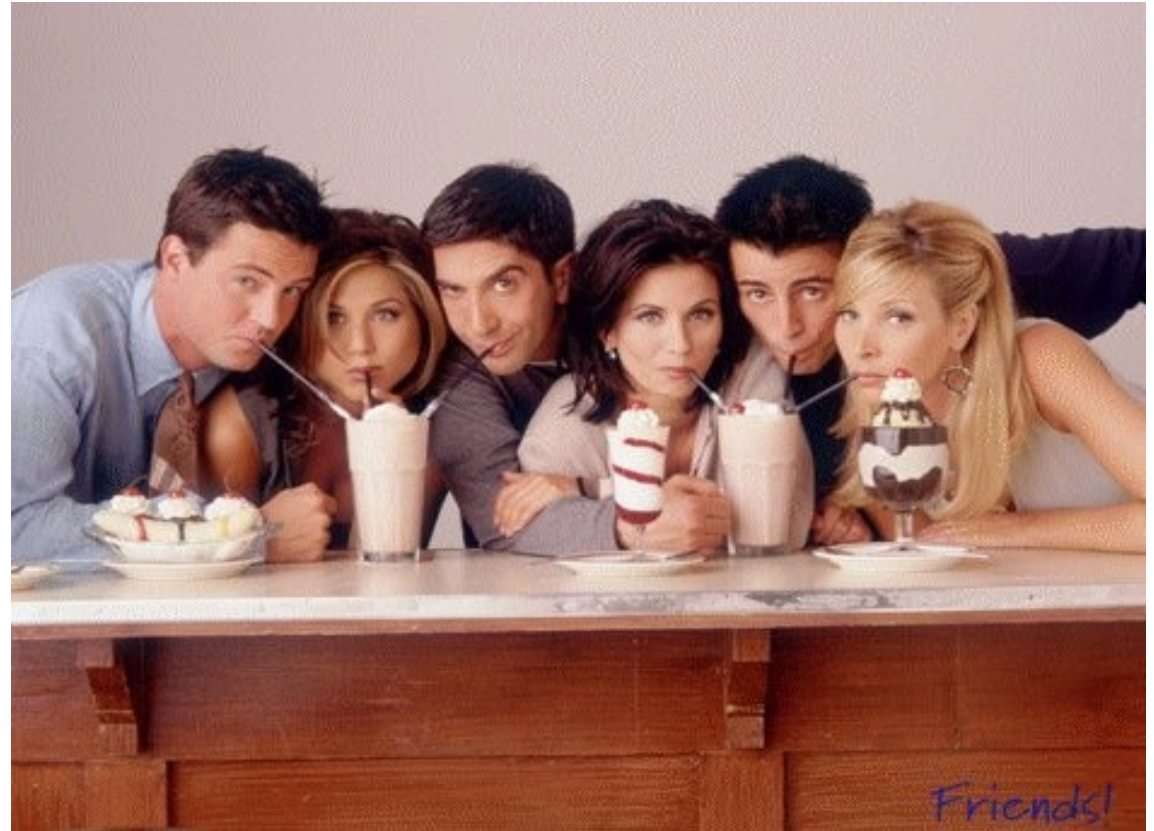
- Apply:
  - Stereotypes
  - Culture
  - Deception
  - Persuasion
  - Non-verbal cues
  - The impact of conversation situations
  - Interpersonal communication

Social Communication - Business

- Stereotypes – *work related or personal*

- Culture - *Face – saving theory, intercultural communication*

- Deception – *Someone may blame a co-worker for their own mistake*

- Persuasion – e.g. *managers want to impress their superior to gain promotion*

- The impact of conversation situations – *formal social meeting, we have one superior and 6 others. The superior usually guides the conversation*

Social Communication - Groups

- Example 2
- Having friends over for dinner

  - 6 individuals
  - Table/no table
  - Food/drinks
  - Equals

Social Communication - Groups

- Apply:
  - Stereotypes
  - Culture
  - Deception
  - Persuasion
  - Non-verbal cues
  - The impact of conversation situations

Social Communication - Friends

- Stereotypes – *personal*

- Culture - *intercultural communication*

- Deception – *mainly to be seen in a better light*

- Persuasion – *e.g. different political views*

- The impact of conversation situations – *social informal meeting, everybody is equal to each other, when everybody knows each other conversation usually flows, if not host starts conversation with similarities between guests to create a comfortable atmosphere, etc ...*

Social Communication - Groups

- Look at other groups:
- Tutorials, University
- Classroom, School
- Families
- etc ...

Social Communication - Problems

Communication is in general complicated

- Individuals might have different expectations when they start a conversation no matter what context

- Missing common ground makes it sometimes difficult to communicate with each other

- Some people break the "rules", e.g. ignore non-verbal clues or intercultural communication principles deliberately

Artificial Social Communication

- Difficult!

- Really only just beginning …

- JAST project:

    http://www.jast-project.eu/

    http://www6.in.tum.de/Main/ResearchJast

    http://cordis.europa.eu/ictresults/index.cfm?ID=90631&section=news&tpl=article