1

2 Language and Relationships

- Main topics:
 - How to have successful intercultural encounters and relationships
 - Recognizing different styles of communication
 - Sources of miscommunication and how to overcome them
 - Importance of gaining knowledge, reducing anxiety

3 Types of Interpersonal Relationships

- Many different kinds of relationships with different degrees of permanence and importance
- Human relationships often difficult, but even more so if intercultural
- Same relationships can have different characteristics in other cultures
- · Relationships can change over time
- Different types relationships call for different kinds of behavior
 - Strangers
 - Acquaintances
 - Friends
 - Romantic partners
 - Family members

4 Interpersonal Relationships Across Cultures

- How we approach strangers
 - Lack of knowledge => Uncertainty => Anxiety => Problems!
 - Context in which encounter takes place may be a determining factor
 - Topics to address vary with culture: Politics? Religion? Money?

- Safe across cultures: Food, music, humor

5 Interpersonal Relationships Across Cultures

Humor's great but doesn't always work culturally or linguistically

6 Interpersonal Relationships Across Cultures

- Differences in attitudes towards strangers
 - "Collectivistic" cultures
 - Strong in-groups
 - Strangers might be "non-persons"
 - "Individualistic" cultures
 - Vary considerably
 - US: Less in-group coherece
 - More accepting

7 Interpersonal Relationships Across Cultures

- What are friends?
 - Terms vary in different languages
 - More than acquaintances
 - How long does it take?
 - US
 - · Friendships compartmentalized
 - · Meaning of friendship can vary
 - Friends come and go
 - Asia: friends for life

8 Interpersonal Relationships Across Cultures

- Romantic partners: Big differences
 - Cultural beliefs, norms, values
 - Social practices: dating, love, marriage
 - USA
 - Dating not necessarily serious
 - Marriage partners self-chosen
 - Families told, not always consulted

No arranged marriages

9 Interpersonal Relationships Across Cultures

- · Family: You're stuck with 'em
 - Also large cultural variations
 - Nuclear vs. extended
 - How important in social identity?
 - Who makes the decisions?
 - Study, career, marriage

10 Recognizing communication styles

- · Important in initial encounters
 - Recognize assumptions we make
 - Treat as individuals not as types
- · Social science research
 - Studied widely in communication studies and linguistics
 - Variety of approaches to understanding differences in verbal communications

11 Bernstein Hypothesis

- The Bernstein hypothesis is a sociolinguistic theory that establishes a connection between social groups and their ways of speaking (1971)
 - Relationships established within social groups affect the way that group uses language, and the type of speech that is used
 - Focuses on two types of verbal codes: elaborated and restricted
 - elaborated code can "stand on its own", it is complete and full of detail, most overhearing a conversation would be able to understand it
 - restricted code is shorter, condensed and requires background information and prior knowledge.

12 Direct vs. indirect interaction styles

- Direct
 - Statements clearly reveal the speaker's intentions and are enunciated in a forthright tone of voice
- Indirect
 - Verbal statements tend to camouflage the speaker's actual intentions and are carried out with more nuanced tone of voice.

13 Speech code theory

- Main researcher: G. Philipsen, influenced by Bernstein
- Also called ethnography of communication
- · Deals with culturally distinctive ways of speaking
- · Teamsterville study
 - Studies a unique speech community
 - Men in blue-collar community
 - How to talk "like a man"

14 Communication accommodation theory

- Theory of communication developed by H. Giles (1970's)
- When people interact they adjust their speech, vocal patterns & gestures, to accommodate to others
- Explores the reasons individuals emphasize or minimize social differences in verbal & non-verbal communication
- 2 accomodation processes: convergence, divergence
- Overaccomodation: other person may perceive behavior as patronizing or demeaning

15 Example of overaccomodation

16 Ethnocentrism in practice

- Overaccomodation
 - 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"
- use of slang that he assumes won't be understood
- Here used for humor, but in reality can be insulting and humiliating

17 Interpersonal Relationships Across Cultures

- Uncertainty and anxiety management
 - Uncertainty results from lack of knowledge, unpredictability
 - A natural reaction
- Uncertainty Reduction Theory Berger/Calabrese
 - Premise—the primary goal when interacting with a stranger is to reduce uncertainty and increase predictability of behavior.
 - Can be:
 - Proactive—weighing options prior to interactions.
 - Retroactive—explaining behavior after it occurs.
 - Bottom line: More verbal & non-verbal interactions => reduce uncertainty, anxiety => better communication => more satisfying experience => more likely to engage in conversations

18 Anxiety/Uncertainty Management Theory

- Focuses on managing, rather than reducing, anxiety
- Mindfulness—we are often not aware of behavior; we are habitual.
 - Watching for clues to miscommunication such as nonverbal behavior
 - Negotiate meaning with others, by repeating, paraphrasing, explaining
 - Adjust language register for use with non-native speakers

- Communication effectiveness: when interpretation of a message is similar to the intent of the message.
 - The goal of an interaction is to achieve effectiveness.
 - Can only be achieved to the degree that uncertainty & anxiety are managed
 - High ethnocentrism => superior, not mindful, no interest in effective communication

19 Gender and Communication

- · "Genderlect" theory: Deborah Tannen
 - Male-female conversation is cross-cultural
 - Women value rapport talk, men value report talk
- Standpoint theory
 - The social groups within which we are located shape what we experience and and how we understand and communicate with ourselves, others, and the world.
 - Marginalized people, including women, see the world differently. The difference between men and women is largely the result of cultural expectations