



Communication in the Real World: An Introduction to Communication Studies, V2.0

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CHAPTER 2

Communication and Perception



LEARNING OBJECTIVES 2.1

1. Define perception.
2. Discuss how salience influences the selection of perceptual information.
3. Explain the ways in which we organize perceptual information.
4. Discuss the role of schemas in the interpretation of perceptual information.

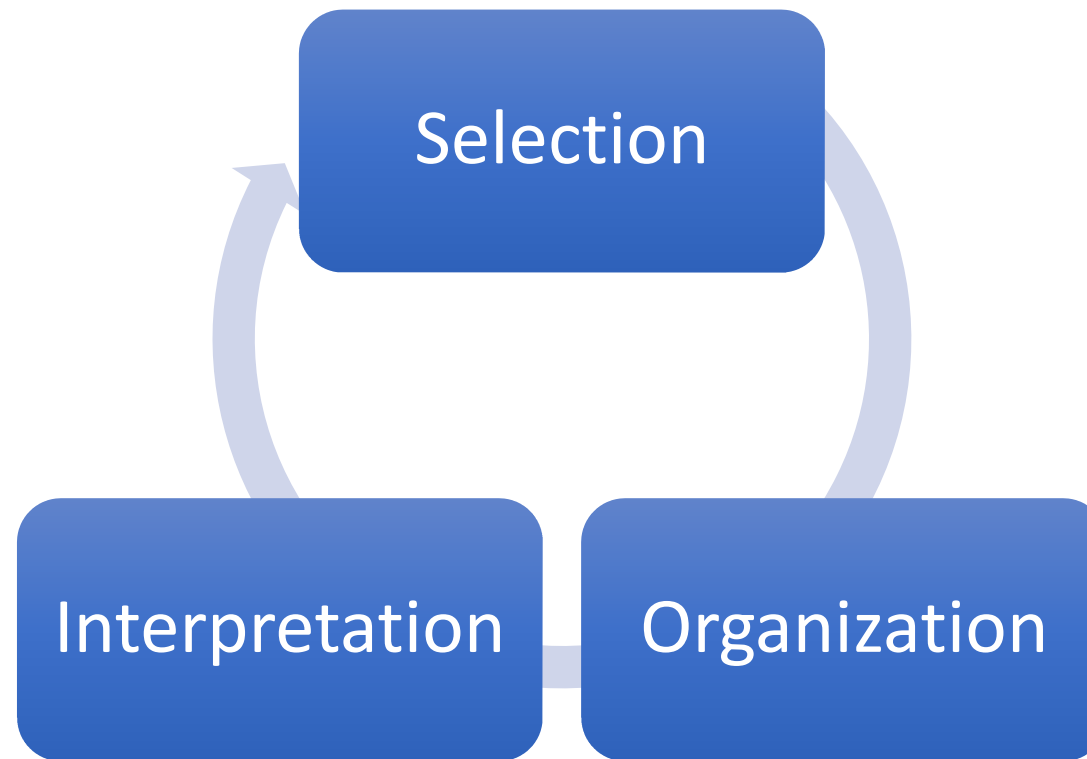


DEFINING PERCEPTION

- Perception:
 - The process of selecting, organizing, and interpreting information



PERCEPTION PROCESS





SELECTION AND SALIENCE

- Selecting is the first part of the perception process, in which we focus our attention on certain incoming sensory information
- Salience:
 - The degree to which something attracts our attention in a particular context



SALIENCE AND PERCEPTION

- We tend to find salient:
 - Things that are visually and/or aurally stimulating
 - Things that meet our needs or interests
- Expectations affect salience in more complex ways. We find salient:
 - Something that is out of the routine that we are expecting
 - Something that is very out of the routine



ORGANIZING INFORMATION

- Organizing is the second part of the perception process, in which we sort and categorize information that we perceive based on innate and learned cognitive patterns
- We use the following to organize information:
 - Proximity
 - Similarity
 - Difference



PUNCTUATION

- Punctuation:
 - The structuring of information into a timeline to determine the cause (stimulus) and effect (response) of our communication interactions



INTERPRETATION

- Interpretation is the third part of the perception process, in which we assign meaning to our experiences using mental structures known as schemas
- Schemas:
 - Databases of stored, related information that we use to interpret new experiences



LEARNING OBJECTIVES 2.2

1. Differentiate between internal and external attributions.
2. Explain two common perceptual errors: the fundamental attribution error and the self-serving bias.
3. Discuss how the primacy and recency effects relate to first and last impressions.
4. Discuss how physical and environmental factors influence perception.
5. Explain the horn and halo effects.
6. Recognize the roles that culture and personality play in the perception of others.



ATTRIBUTION

- Internal attributions connect the cause of behaviors to personal aspects such as personality traits
- External attributions connect the cause of behaviors to situational factors



ATTRIBUTION ERRORS

- Fundamental attribution error:
 - Our tendency to explain others' behaviors using internal rather than external attributions
- Self-serving bias:
 - A perceptual error through which we attribute our successes to internal personal factors while attributing our failures to external factors beyond our control



IMPRESSIONS AND INTERPRETATION

- The primacy effect leads us to place more value on the first information we receive about a person
- The recency effect leads us to put more weight on the most recent impression we have of a person's communication over earlier impressions



PHYSICAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL INFLUENCES

- Physical characteristics (e.g., personal style, dress, and grooming affect impressions)
- Physical body features affect perceived attractiveness
- Environmental factors (e.g., material objects or other people)



HALO AND HORN EFFECTS

- Halo effect:
 - Occurs when initial positive perceptions lead us to view later interactions as positive.
- Horn effect:
 - Occurs when initial negative perceptions lead us to view later interactions as negative.



CULTURE AND PERCEPTION

- Race, gender, sexual orientation, class, ability, nationality, and age affect perception
- Schemas through which we interpret what we perceive are influenced by our cultural identities
- Gender affects perception, but men and women are more similar than they are different



PERSONALITY AND PERCEPTION

- Personality:
 - A person's general way of thinking, feeling, and behaving based on underlying motivations and impulses
- Assumed similarity:
 - Our tendency to perceive others as being similar to us



LEARNING OBJECTIVES 2.3

1. Define self-concept and discuss how we develop our self-concept.
2. Define self-esteem and discuss how we develop self-esteem.
3. Explain how social comparison theory and self-discrepancy theory influence self-perception.
4. Discuss how social norms, family, culture, and media influence self-perception.
5. Define self-presentation and discuss common self-presentation strategies.



SELF-CONCEPT

- Self-concept:
 - The overall idea of who a person thinks he or she is
- The looking glass self:
 - We see ourselves reflected in other people's reactions to us
 - We then form our self-concept based on how we believe other people see us
- Social comparison theory:
 - We describe and evaluate ourselves in terms of how we compare to other people



SELF-ESTEEM AND SELF-EFFICACY

- Self-esteem:
 - The judgments and evaluations we make about our self-concept
- Self-efficacy:
 - The judgments people make about their ability to perform a task within a specific context



INFLUENCES ON SELF-PERCEPTION

- Society and Family
 - Example: praise or criticism from parents
- Cultural
 - Example: via the self-enhancement bias, we emphasize our desirable qualities relative to other people (varies by culture)
- Media
 - Example: representations of attractiveness can affect body image



SELF-PRESENTATION

- Self-presentation:
 - The process of strategically concealing/revealing personal information in order to influence others' perceptions
- Pro-social self-presentation:
 - Behaviors that present a person as a role model, more likeable, and attractive
- Self-serving self-presentation:
 - Behaviors that present a person as highly skilled and willing to challenge others



TO IMPROVE SELF-PERCEPTION

- Avoid reliance on rigid schema
- Be critical of socializing forces
- Beware of self-fulfilling prophecies
 - **Self-fulfilling prophecy:** a thought and action pattern in which a person's false belief triggers a behavior that makes the initial false belief actually or seem to come true
- Create and maintain supporting relationships
- Beware of distorted patterns of thinking and acting



TO IMPROVE PERCEPTION OF OTHERS

- Develop empathetic listening skills
- Beware of stereotypes and prejudice
 - **Stereotypes**: sets of beliefs that we develop about groups, which we then apply to individuals from that group
 - **Prejudice**: negative feelings or attitudes toward people based on their identity or identities
- Engage in self-reflection



PERCEPTION CHECKING

- Perception checking is a strategy to help us monitor our reactions to and perceptions of people and communication
 - Step 1: Describe the behavior or situation without evaluating or judging it.
 - Step 2: Think of possible interpretations of the behavior (being aware of attributions).
 - Step 3: Verify what happened and ask for clarification from the other person's perspective.