# DM2556
Intercultural communication

Lecture 9

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Culture is defined as a learned set of shared interpretations about beliefs, values, norms and social practices.

"the culture's collective assumptions about what the world is, shared judgments about what it should be, widely held expectations about how people should behave, and predictable behaviour patterns that are commonly shared." (IC 78)
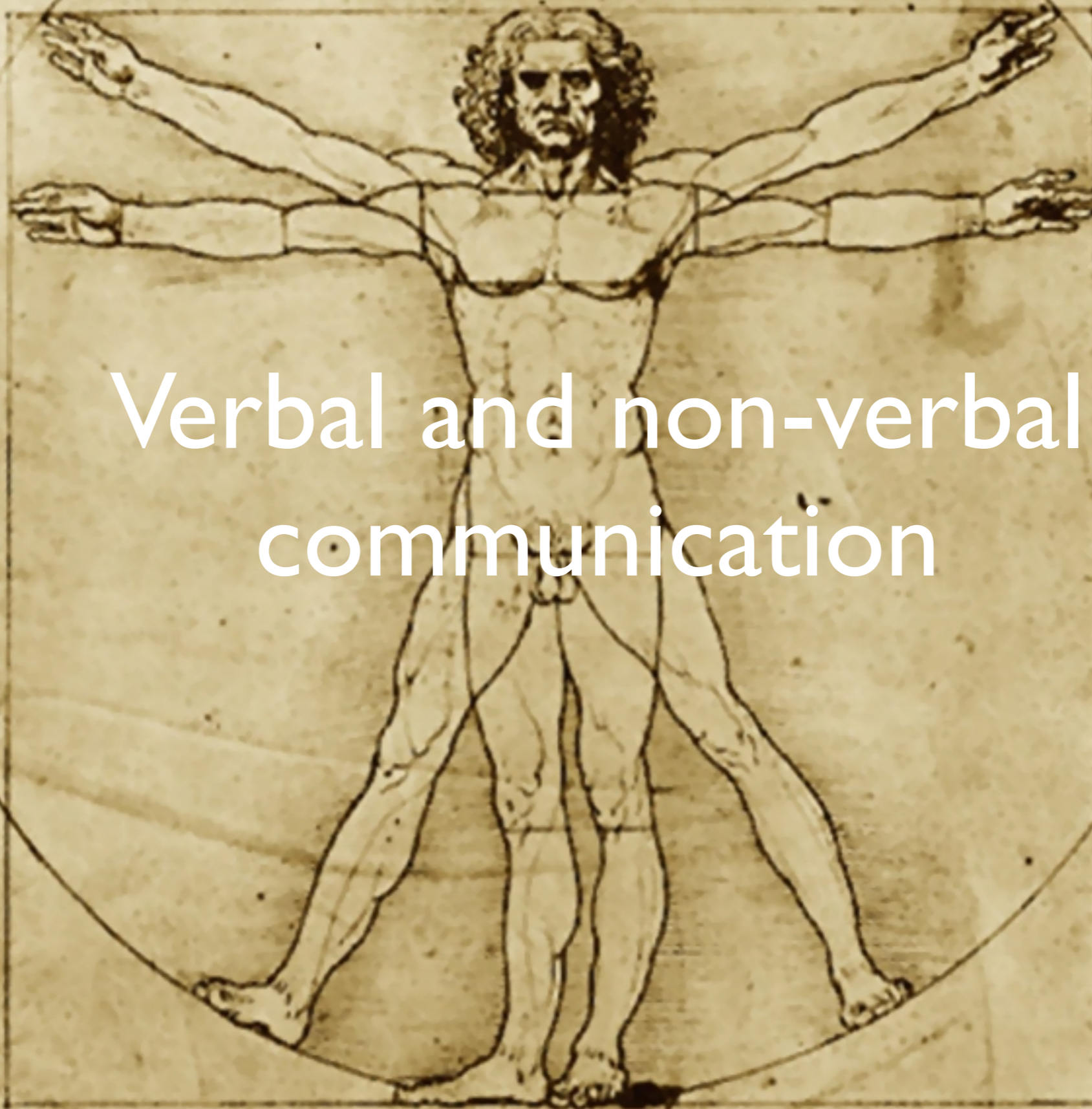
Verbal and non-verbal communication

Is language innate to man (like walking) or is it learned (like a skill)?

Noam Chomsky vs Jean Piaget

In intercultural communication there is usually a focus on *face-to-face communication*, that is, on spoken (oral) verbal communication - and also on non-verbal communication - but we should not forget other forms of communication.

1. Phonology (phonemes + rules)
2. Morphology (morphemes + rules)
3. Syntax (in some languages, like Latin, word order is free; in others the order of words is governed by rules and determines meaning of the phrase)
4. Semantics (denotation & connotation)
5. Pragmatics (the impact of language on human perception and behaviour; focuses on how langauge is used in the social context)

Communications styles

1. Direct/indirect styles
2. Elaborate/succinct styles
3. Personal/contextual styles
4. Instrumental/affective styles

Communication styles and
- education
- class
- profession
- gender

Gender and language (stereotypes):

men report &
women create a relationship

women are talkers, men are doers

men tend to speak more often in public, and they also tend to speak longer in meetings

Translation, interpretation, and equivalence

Vocabulary equivalence ("faux-amis")
Idiomatic equivalence
Grammatical-syntactical equivalence
Experiential equivalence
Conceptual equivalences (cultural patterns)

Language shapes our *perception* of reality, our attitudes towards others, and others perception of us. In this sense, language is a cultural tool and cannot be fully understood unless it is being placed within its social context. Language is an integral part of our personal and social identities, because the language we speak marks our cultural and social boundaries.

Language categorizes our experiences *without our full awareness.* Only when one learns a second language and moves back and forth between the first and second language does one become aware of *the influence that language has on perception.*

Sapir-Worff hypothesis, "firm version":

Language and thought are inextricably tied together, so that a person's language *determines* the categories of thought open to that individual.

Sapir-Worff hypothesis, "soft version":

Language *shapes* how people think and experience the world, but this influence is not unceasing.

Sapir-Worff hypothesis, soft or hard?

Variations in vocabulary
Variations in linguistic grammars
Cultural conceptions of time
Showing respect & social hierarchy

Convergence and divergence
in
intercultural communication behaviour

Alternative versions of language
- Dialects
- Accents
- Jargong
- Argot (slang)

Code switching

Non-verbal communication

"One of the most basic and obvious functions of non-verbal communication is to communicate one's culture."
(Peter Andersen, quoted in *IC* 202)

People hold expectations about the *appropriateness* of others' non-verbal behaviour. These expectations are learned and, thus, vary accross cultures. Interactants from different cultural backgrounds have to learn each other's expectations regarding appropriate non-verbal behaviour.

Non-verbal codes are *different* from verbal codes in that they are:
- Multichanneled
- Multifunctional
- People send and receive non-verbal with less awareness

We use eye movements and eye contact to manage conversations and to regulate interactions according to culturally prescribed codes; we follow rigid rules governing intra- and inter-personal touch; our bodies synchronously join in the rhythm of others in a group, and gestures modulate our speech. We must internalize all this in order to become and remain fully functioning and socially appropriate members of our culture.
(Sheila Ramsay, quoted in *IC* 180)

Functions of non-verbal codes:
1. Repeat a verbal message
2. Contradict a verbal message
3. Substitute a verbal message
4. Complement a verbal message
5. Accent a verbal message
6. Regulate verbal communication

Seven categories of non-verbal communication:
1. Kinesics, body movement (emblems, illustrators, affect displays, regulators, adaptors)
2. Proxemics (personal space)
3. Chronemics (time)
4. Haptics (touch)
5. Physical appearance and dress
6. Paralanguage (or voice)
7. Olfactics (smell)

Time systems:

Monochromic

Polychronic

Universality and cultural variation

"A smile in one society portrays friendliness, in another embarassment, and in still another it may contain a warning that unless tension is reduced, hostility and attack will follow."
(Ray Birdswell, quoted in *IC* 184)

Cultural variations:

1. Culturally specific repertoires
2. Display rules
3. Interpretation; meaning attributed to non-verbal behaviour (random, idiosyncratic, shared)

Sharing pain and sorrow

An American college student, while having a dinner party with a group of foreigners, learns that her favorite cousins has just died. She bites her lips, pulls herself up and politely excuses herself from the group. The interpretation given to this behavior will vary with the culture of the observer. The Italian student thinks, "How insincere, she doesn't even cry." The Russian student thinks, "How unfriendly, she didn't care enough to share her grief with her friends." The fellow American student thinks, "How brave, she wanted to bear her burden herself." (IC 184)