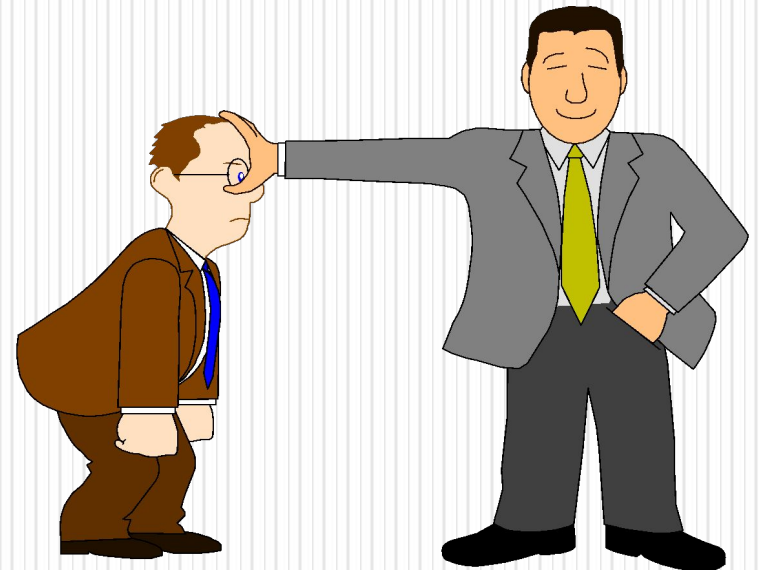


# Lecture 3

## American Communicative Behavior



# Plan

- Culture-Related Communication Patterns
- Verbal Communicative Behavior
- Non-verbal Communicative Behavior
- Russian and American Differences in Communication

# Culture-Related Communication Patterns

- The Cooperation Principle (P. Grice, 1975)

(“Make your contribution such as it is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged”)

4 maxims (quality, quantity, relation and manner)

# Culture-Related Communication Patterns

- Politeness Maxims (G. Leech)
  - tact
  - generosity
  - approbation
  - modesty
  - agreement
  - sympathy

# Culture-Related Communication Patterns

- The “face” notion (Goffman, 1967) (“the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact”)
- Politeness Theory (P. Brown and S. Levinson, 1978) (positive and negative face)

# Styles of Communication

- Direct/ low context
- Indirect/ high context
- Criteria
  - Degree of directness
  - The role of context
  - The importance of face
  - The task or the person

# Characteristics and Behaviors

- 1. Communication is like that between twins.
- 2. People are reluctant to say no.
- 3. You have to read between the lines.
- 4. Use of intermediaries or third parties is frequent.
- 5. Use of understatement is frequent.
- 6. It's best to tell it like it is.
- 7. It's okay to disagree with your boss at a meeting.
- 8. "Yes" means yes.
- 9. "Yes" means I hear you.
- 10. Communication is like that between two casual acquaintances.
- 11. It's not necessary to read between the lines.
  
- 12. People engage in small talk and catching up before getting down to business.
- 13. Business first, then small talk.
- 14. Lukewarm tea means all is not well.
- 15. Lukewarm tea means the tea got cold.
- 16. People need to be brought up to date at a meeting.

# Taboos

- Taboos are consciously-avoided words and expressions
- American taboo topics (sex, private life, marital status, religion, health, financial standing, age, criminal record)



# Euphemisms

- euphemism is "the practice of referring to something offensive or delicate in terms that make it sound more pleasant or becoming than it really is" (Geoffrey Leech)

# Examples of Euphemisms

- *The caretaker was accused by the executive administrator of contributing to the misappropriation of office supplies.*
- *The clerical assistant had an inappropriate relationship with the office building's superintendent.*
- *Jenny's dog Bowser went to the great doggy park in the sky.*
- *The executive in charge of increasing the company's workforce requested proof that the applicant had never been detained for possessing controlled substances.*

# Politeness-Related Russian and American Differences

- Rs value positive politeness more than negative;
- As pay more attention to negative politeness;
- Rs express more emotive data than As
- As are more conventionally indirect in requests than Rs
- Rs invest more effort into supporting their requests by justifications than As;
- As preface corrections with positive remarks more than Rs;
- for Rs directness with familiars is associated with sincerity;
- for As directness with familiars is associated with imposition on their freedom;
- there is a huge amount of linguistic means in Russian, specifically used to show warmth and inoffensive closeness with familiars and intimates, thus amplifying positive politeness;
- being translated into English, they will render into expressing patronizing attitude, thus becoming extremely offensive to the negative face;
- friends normally are considered 'intimates' to Rs, but 'familiars' to As;
- As express more politeness to 'strangers' than Rs do;
- for As apologizing means taking responsibility for the offence;
- for Rs apologizing is more of expressing compassion

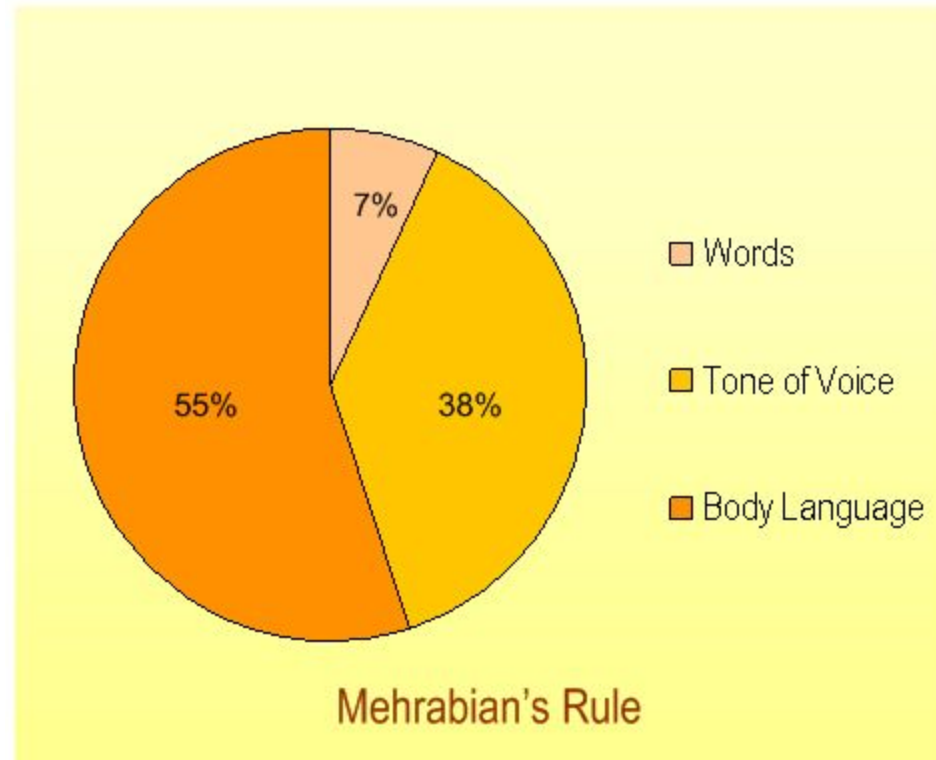
# Problems Related to Processing Information (Russians)

- Communication style is not targeted at reaching consensus
- Wrong or no answers to your questions, or 'knowing better what you need'
- Addressee's responsibility for information.
- Potential mistrust of 'objective truths'.
- Parallel processing of information

# Non-Verbal Behavior

- Most nonverbal communication is unconscious or subconscious
- Occurs mostly face-to-face

# Three factors in Message Interpretation



# Non-Verbal Behavior

- Proxemics (space)
- Kinesics (body movements, gestures, facial expressions)
- Chronemics (time)
- Chromatics (color)
- Paralanguage (pitch, volume, intonation)
- Silence
- Sign language

# Proxemics and U.S. Culture

- **Intimate distance** for embracing, touching or whispering
  - *Close phase* – less than 6 inches (15 cm)
  - *Far phase* – 6 to 18 inches (15 to 46 cm)
- **Personal distance** for interactions among good friends or family members
  - *Close phase* – 1.5 to 2.5 feet (46 to 76 cm)
  - *Far phase* – 2.5 to 4 feet (76 to 120 cm)
- **Social distance** for interactions among acquaintances
  - *Close phase* – 4 to 7 feet (1.2 to 2.1 m)
  - *Far phase* – 7 to 12 feet (2.1 to 3.7 m)
- **Public distance** used for public speaking
  - *Close phase* – 12 to 25 feet (3.7 to 7.6 m)





Figure 9 Zone distances

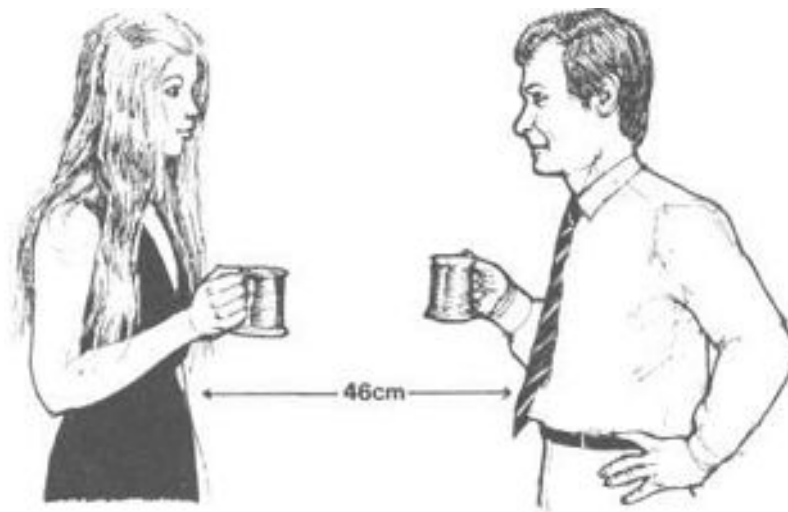
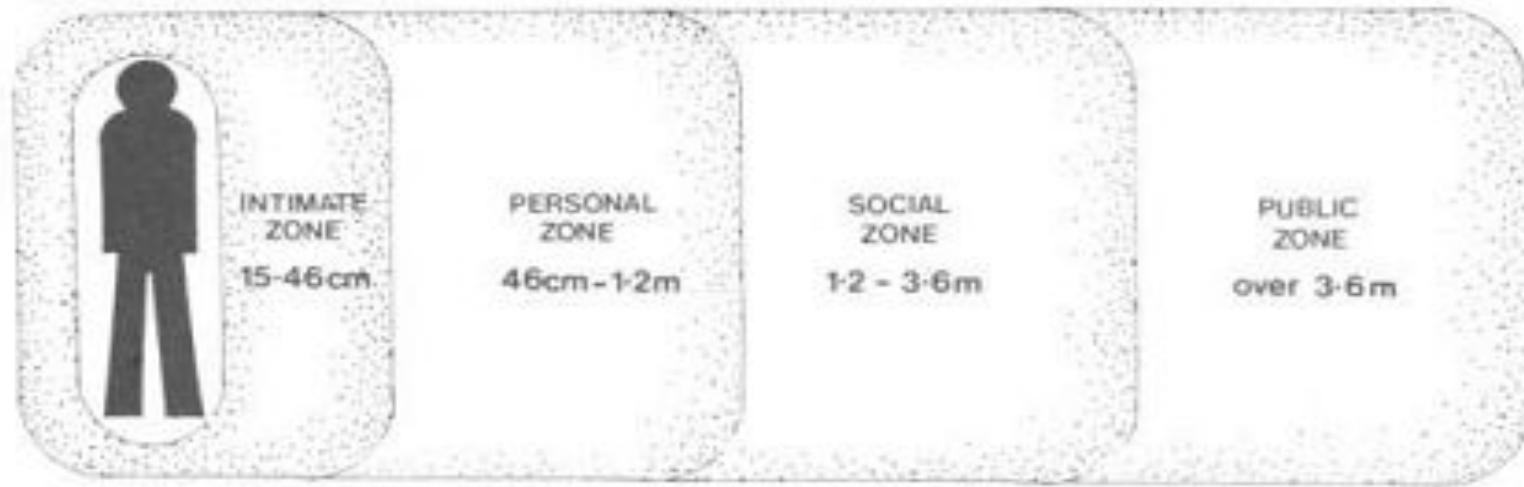
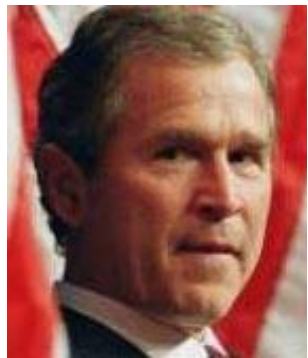


Figure 10 The acceptable conversational distance for most city dwellers

# Kinesics: facial expression



- Birdwhistle (1970): the face is capable of conveying 250,000 expressions



# Body Language

- Body posture
- Gestures
- Facial expression
- Eye movements



# Misunderstanding

