

GESTURES IN DIFFERENT CULTURES

ЖЕСТЫ В РАЗНЫХ КУЛЬТУРАХ

***Аннотация:** В статье обосновывается необходимость изучения особенностей невербального поведения представителей разных культур, вызванная несоответствием кинесических систем. Особая природа невербальной коммуникации объясняет наличие универсальных, понятных всем знаков, а также специфических сигналов, используемых в рамках только одной культуры.*

***Ключевые слова:** межкультурная коммуникация, невербальное общение, кинесика, кинесическая система, невербальные сигналы.*

***Abstract:** The necessity of studying the characteristics of nonverbal behavior of different cultures due to the mismatch kinesics systems. The specific nature of non-verbal communication explains the existence of universal, understood by all characters, as well as specific signals used only within the same culture.*

***Keywords:** intercultural communication, nonverbal communication, kinesics, kinesics system, non-verbal signals.*

Communication and its skills plays vital role and holds the key in all spheres of our life. Effective communication takes into account on the way we use effective words and sentences, and swiftness of deliverance of those words, its intonation and sign language we use. Effective use of proper tools to convey the proper messages at the right time can recover crises and encourage every one of us to work towards success.

To have clear crystal understanding, communication refers to the process by which people exchange information, feelings, and meanings through verbal and non-verbal message. We see that it is merely the process of conveying information from one person to another person, but when we think of how we may communicate, then the subject becomes quite intricate. And two main complex categories of communication are verbal and non-verbal communication.

Non-verbal communications include facial expressions, the tone and pitch of the voice, gestures displayed through body language and the physical distance between the communicators. These non-verbal signals can give clues and additional information and meaning over and above spoken (verbal) communication.

Nonverbal communication is a silent form of communication, which has a great influence over our social environment and the whole communication process. Nonverbal communication allows us to send messages to others conveying what we are feeling or thinking without verbal language. Nonverbal Communication has many different functions in the communication process. It regulates relationships and can support or even replace verbal communication in some situations. This is accomplished solely through the use of nonverbal communication. Nonverbal communication is the use of the body, environment, and personal attributes in order to communicate messages either consciously or unconsciously. Using clothing, facial expressions, and touch are just of a few ways nonverbal communication can be implemented. By reading somebody's nonverbal communication, it is possible to make many assumptions about the person. Whether these assumptions are correct or not often go unchecked. And just like a book, it may be best not to judge by appearances. However, much of society still focuses heavily on nonverbal communication failing to give people a chance before they even speak. Nonverbal communication is used daily in everybody's lives.

Non-verbal Messages Allow People To:

- Reinforce or modify what is said in words. For example, people may nod their heads vigorously when saying "Yes" to emphasise that they agree with the other person, but a shrug of the shoulders and a sad expression when saying "I'm fine thanks," may imply that things are not really fine at all!

- Convey information about their emotional state.
- Define or reinforce the relationship between people.
- Provide feedback to the other person.
- Regulate the flow of communication, for example by signalling to others that they have finished speaking or wish to say something.

The types of interpersonal communication that are not expressed verbally are called non-verbal communications.

These include:

- Body Movements (Kinesics)
- Posture
- Eye Contact
- Para-language
- Closeness or Personal Space (Proxemics)
- Facial Expressions
- Physiological Changes

Nonverbal Communication Carries More Meaning than Words

Nonverbal communication might look nonessential for humans – who needs to communicate nonverbally, when we have words to express our thoughts? We do have words; however, as it turns out, we still convey most of the meaning via nonverbal methods. What is more, many nonverbal expressions we consider to be fine in our culture can get us into trouble in other parts of the world or when working with people from other countries at home.

Nonverbal Communication: Different Cultures, Typical Differences

Nonverbal communication can be divided into several categories: facial expressions, head movements, hand and arm gestures, physical space, touching, eye contact, and physical postures. Here are some noteworthy examples in each of the categories:

Facial Expressions: A smile is one of the most common examples of a facial expression in different cultures. While Americans smile freely at strangers, in Russia this is considered strange and even impolite. In Asian cultures a smile isn't necessarily an expression of joy and friendliness but

it can be used to convey pain and embarrassment. For many Scandinavians a smile or any facial expression used to convey emotions is untypical because it is considered a weakness to show emotions.

Head Movements: In many cultures in the Middle East and Bulgaria, the head movement for “Yes” is just the opposite of the head movement for “Yes” in almost any other culture. You can imagine how confusing it can be to see that somebody is all smiles but his or her head movement means “No” to you. In such cases saying “Yes” or “No” with words is enough to avoid confusion.

Hand and Arm Gestures: Hand and arm gestures as a form of nonverbal communication also vary widely among cultures. While in some cases a particular gesture means nothing to a representative of another culture, in other cases--for instance the “thumbs up” gesture or the “OK sign” – have vulgar meanings in Iran and Latin America, respectively. Yet in other countries the “OK” sign means just “zero”, which is not offensive.

Physical Space: The acceptable physical distance is another major difference in the nonverbal communication between cultures. In Latin America and the Middle East the acceptable distance is much shorter than what most Europeans and Americans feel comfortable with. This is why an American or an European might wonder why the other person is invading his or her personal space by standing so close, while the other person might wonder why the American/European is standing so far from him or her (are they trying to run away or what?) .

Touching: Handshakes are usually acceptable almost everywhere, even between strangers; however, kissing on the cheek, patting on the shoulder, embraces, or touching other bodily parts aren't – for many people in Asia and other parts of the world such actions are interpreted as an offense or even a violation of one's private space. This is why you should avoid touching.

Eye Contact: Eye contact is one of the forms of nonverbal communication where the differences are most striking. In America and Latin America not looking the other person in the eye is a sign of disrespect and it might even look suspicious (“he or she doesn't dare to look me in the eye, so he or she is hiding something”) . In other cultures, i.e. Asian cultures, prolonged eye contact is especially offensive, so you should avoid it at all costs.

Physical Postures: Physical postures are also quite of a difference between cultures. The most

common example is the habit of many American executives to rest with their feet on their desk, which in Asia, the Middle East, and Europe is considered highly offensive.

Touch is another cue of non-verbal communications. It helps in indicating a person's feelings or expressions, closeness, and illustrates characteristics of that person. A firm and stiff handshake or warm and lovely hug signify obviously different than a loose one.

Never the less, the sound, pitch, tone and volume of our voice while we are communicating can also be referred as forms of non-verbal communication. Voice use intonation, tone and vocally produced sounds. We use the pitch of voice to differentiate whether the sentence is a command, or advice or else a question or statement, and whether it shows aggressiveness; meaning vocal sounds and tone project our expressions. For example: Shaky and low volume of our voice when we present something in the class or when we speak to any kind of gatherings indicate that he or she fear or is not confident enough to do so.

The clothing we wear and its colour are also other forms of non-verbal communication that commonly outline judgements among us depending on different cultures and custom. After all, we would find that non-verbal communication coexist alongside verbal communication, which can affect each other and aid each other in delivering right thoughts and ideas through interpersonal communication.

As you see, the differences in nonverbal communication between cultures are pretty striking. This means that when you need to communicate with people from different cultures, it makes sense to learn in advance about their nonverbal communication. This can save you a lot of embarrassment and misunderstanding. Of course, cultural stereotypes are just stereotypes, and you can't say that every single individual from a different culture exhibits the same forms of nonverbal communication. Still, even individuals with a lot of international experience continue to carry some or many of the signs of their culture of origin.

Importance of non-verbal communication

Firstly, we can say that non-verbal communication is important in expressing our emotions. Emotions such as happy, satisfied, confident, surprised, eager, tired, stressed, sad etc. These are almost all expressed through different body gestures and face. We are able to understand each other up on judging each other's

expression. For example if someone cries, it indicate that something has happened to him or her and others will be able to help it. Non-verbal gestures are what our recipients see in the first place, even before a single word is heard. These figurative messages can be a visual sign of feeling, but our words convey a different message. Using non-verbal cues help in expressing meaning, to navigate complicated state of affairs and build strong relationship for us at home or work. Thus, expression of the face becomes basic mode of non-verbal communication among people.

So, upon knowing the facts and reasons about importance of non-verbal communication, we should take consideration both verbal and non-verbal equally while communicating in our daily life. Our everyday success depends upon our capability to communicate effectively, both verbally and non-verbally. Verbal and non-verbal communication actually defines our interactions and our relationships with others, and portrays physical and psychological well-being of a person. Therefore, understanding the different forms and aspects of verbal and non-verbal communication, and its vitality in playing roles during any kind of daily interactions is the first step to enhancing positive communication and nurturing relationships.

To sum up, these statistics and proves indicates that non-verbal communication is also equally important to verbal communication in this real world.

Non-verbal communication is an incredible means of communication that serves many purposes. Some non-verbal communication is used to communicate attitudes and emotions, and to manage immediate social situations. Other forms support and complement verbal communication, as well as offer another means of speaking simply through gesture. There are many complex rules of its sequence and structure, but if used enough through the practice of conversation it can, and will, help you to become the best tutor that you can be.

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