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CULTURAL GUIDE TO NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION

This article focuses on cultural differences in nonverbal communication. It first emphasizes the importance of nonverbal communication and body language in the context of globalization and multiculturalism. Also, this paper briefly debates the issue of culturally acquired nonverbal universal expressions. The article then focuses on comparison of verbs denoting gestures, posture, touch, voice and their using in English and Kyrgyz languages.

Key words: *nonverbal communication, body language, kinesics, silent language, interaction, proxemics, haptic, paralanguage.*

Аннотация: Бул макалада дүйнө мамлекеттеринин маданиятында баарлашуунун бейвербалдык каражаттарынын айырмачылыктары жөнүндө жазылган. Глобалдык жана дүйнөлүк маданият алкагында бирдей максатта колдонулган бейвербалдык каражаттар тууралуу макалада баса белгиленген. Макаланын жүрүшүндө жансоонун, дененин турушунун, жанышуунун, үндүн дабышынын маанисин билдирүүчү этиш сөздөрдүн англис жана кыргыз тилдеринде колдонуу өзгөчөлүктөрүн салыштыруу камтылган.

Түйүндүү сөздөр: бейвербалдык баарлашуу, жаңдашып-ымдашып сүйлөшүү, кинесика, жансоо тили, карым-катнаш, проксемика, тактилдүү, паралингвистика.

Аннотация: Рассматриваемая статья посвящается вопросу различия невербальных средств общения в разных странах мира. В статье отмечается важность невербальных средств общения и языка телодвижения в контексте глобализации и мультикультурализма. Данная работа выступает с целью изучения всеобщепринятых невербальных выражений. А также в статье рассматривается описание сравнения глаголов, обозначающих жесты, позу, соприкосновение, звуки и пути их использования в английском и кыргызском языках.

Ключевые слова: невербальное общение, язык телодвижения, кинесика, немое общение, взаимодействие, проксемика, тактильный, паралингвистика.

There are numbers of books and articles have been written and numbers of researches have been done on a base of

significance of nonverbal communication in intercultural aspect of relationship between human beings. Each work focus on an area in which social psychological knowledge is being applied to the resolution of social problems, so it still remains actual. We express our love and intimacy, agreement, anger, power and status, establish rapport, regulate flow of information with the help of nonverbal communication. The start for the study was set up more than 125 years ago by Charles Darwin in his book "Expression of the emotions in man and animals" (1872). Researchers in fields as psychology, ethology, communication studies, sociology, anthropology and neuroscience have made important contributions to human's understanding of the way of communicating nonverbally. Much of our nonverbal behavior are learned and culturally determined but most of the basic communication gestures are the same all over the world.

Just as verbal language differs from culture to culture, so the nonverbal language may also differ. Whereas one gesture may be common in particular and have a clear interpretation, it may be meaningless in another culture, or even have completely opposite meaning. Take for example, the cultural interpretations and implications of

three common hand gestures, the ring gesture, the thumb up and V sign [1]. This kind of nonverbal communication is called **kinesics** – related to study of communication with the help of gestures, mimics, pose. The founder of this direction Ray Birdwhistell considered that any movement of the body has the sense, and body language system has its own grammar on a basis of natural language grammar. The bow of the upper part of the body shows the reverence in Japan. People greet each other by bowing; the deeper you bow (up to 90 degrees), the deeper respect you show to the person. In Korea, when greeting someone, the senior person offers to shake hands first, but the junior person bows first. The same lexical unit, in a tradition of Kyrgyz people has a context like *келиндин жүгүнүүсү*, which is considered to be a bride's regard to her "in-lows". Misusing nonverbal greeting rituals can sometimes create bad first impressions. The beckoning "come here" is observed in many Asian cultures including Kyrgyz with the palm down and fingers waving toward the body can signal "go away" to most North Americans.

Italians have been found to use more broad full-arm gestures to illustrate their conversations, than do US.

Americans. They also like “to talk with their hands” and most hand-gestures are expressive. Many Spaniards also use a variety of hand illustrators and many of these illustrators are region specific. (Morrison et.al., 1994). In contrast, Asians tend to use fewer and more restrained hand gestures to complement their, than do either U.S. Americans or southern Europeans. Kyrgyz people, like other Asians prefer “quiet gestures” when speaking. Furthermore left hand is considered unclean. It is wise not to gesture too much with the left hand and it is somehow the taboo to eat and “*break the bread*” with. Additionally, the head is considered to be the soul by many Asians, therefore individuals should refrain from touching or *patting* the head of the child during the conversation [7]. Pass an item to someone with one hand - in Japan this is very rude. Even a very small item such as a pencil must be passed with two hands. In Thailand, Japan and France as well as countries of the Middle and Near East *showing the soles of the feet* demonstrates disrespect. You are exposing the lowest and dirtiest part of your body so this is insulting. But it is also disrespect in Kyrgyz and Japanese cultures to enter home not barefoot (үйгү жыланайлак кирүү) if even it is clean while Indian people proudly *demonstrate their bare feet* full of different accessories and jewelries [8].

In 1959 the book “The silent language” by Edward Hall was published. This work greatly influenced the development of cross-cultural communication. E. Hall proved not only close connection between culture and communication, but also attracted scholars’ attention on necessity of researches related to both culture and behavioral subsystem. He compared study of culture with study of language (foreign), its subsystem – the grammar: case, kind, tense etc. The specific attention in this study was paid to nonverbal aspect of communication. As a result one more direction in nonverbal interaction-proxemics was found: **proxemics** – dealing with study of space zone in communication of people and animals. He emphasized four distant zones (intimate, personal, social and public) and claimed that zone strength can vary from culture to culture [6]. 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*. As for Kyrgyz culture, it is much more complicated to set some limit up on a basis of proxemics. Due to its historical background as one of nomad countries, people are used to invite a big quantity of guests, including close and extended families, where some of them can get to know each other for the first time and stay at host’s house for night chatting and sharing the same room to sleep, even if they have to *lie down one by one*. The youngest child also *shares the same bed* with parents up to 5-6 years old.

Haptic (professional, ritual, friendly and sexual) studies investigate the perceptions, functions and meanings of touch behavior as communication in different cultures. Different cultures interpret them in different ways. In a comparison with the cultures of Latin America, the Mediterranean and Southern part of Europe, where it is not strange to kiss each other right in a first meeting, Canadians, Americans, Germans, and Asian people prefer

to have a distance in correlation. Touch is taboo for the people of Japan, India and Pakistan, while Italians find such interaction as unfriendly [2]. Like other Asian people, representatives of Kyrgyz culture can’t stand shaking hands hardly and firmly for a long time but traditional handshake and “hug of brotherhood” may take place. By the way, it is not acceptable for women to touch and be touched by stranger, but the child *may be kissed by* without being surprised or afraid of.

Cultural guide gives opportunity to observe cultural features of nonverbal behavior in literal works as well:

... *As the women worked, his voice rose, exclaiming at their slowness...*

...*Мына, анын алачыкты жыйнап, жай кыймылдан жаткан аялдарга кыйкырган үнү угулду...* [3].

...*Old Koskoosh strained his ears...*

...*Коскуучал тыншады...* (“The law of life” Jack London, 1906) [3].

In these examples from Jack London’s work which was translated into kyrgyz language by N. A. Ergeshbaeva nonverbal cues of the voice **paralanguage** (George. L. Trager, 1950s) are expressed through lexical units: *кыйкыруу; тыншоо*. Seemingly, it would be given with the help of other semantic equivalents like: *бакыруу; ач айкырыкты салуу; нааразы болуу; урушуу; and кулак түрүү, назарсалуу;* that carry more specific cultural peculiarities. These acoustic properties are also a part of nonverbal communication, which is called sometimes paralinguistic. This voice qualities are: volume, pitch, tempo, rhythm, resonance, accent and other “voice prints” [5].

On the initial stages people, as a rule, recognize their needs in each other and on this basis are able to form psychological and communicative contact. Meanwhile the personality of partner are recognized and the appropriate place and time are chosen in order to realize the purpose of the communication. Verbal and nonverbal means of communication should fulfill each other and demonstrate appropriate attitude towards partner. The formulation of words, phrases, mimics, gestures, and poses can either simplify or complicate the process of interaction. Sometimes emotional expressiveness may have hidden messages, so misunderstanding between partners is inevitable. The people of different cultures can have such difficulties as well [4].

Thus, we see that every country has their own idea about the rules and regulations of non-verbal communication. Knowledge of these features will help not only to avoid the perception of errors, but also to make a favorable impression on the interlocutor and to establish long-term partnerships with them.

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