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## SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENT FEATURES OF HAND GESTURES IN AMERICAN AND KYRGYZ CULTURES

### АМЕРИКА ЖАНА КЫРГЫЗ МАДАНИЯТТАРЫНДА КОЛДОНУЛГАН КОЛДОРДУН ЖАНДОО КЫЙМЫЛЫНЫН ОКШОШТУКТАРЫ ЖАНА АЙЫРМАЧЫЛЫКТАРЫ

### СХОДСТВА И РАЗЛИЧИЯ ЖЕСТИКУЛЯЦИИ В АМЕРИКАНСКОЙ И КЫРГЫЗСКОЙ КУЛЬТУРАХ

**Abstract:** This paper highlights similarities and different features of the category of kinesics “hand gestures”, its frequency usage and acceptance by different individuals in two different cultures. This study shows its similarities, differences and importance of the gestures, for people in both cultures. Consequently, kinesics study was mentioned as a main part of body language. As indicated in the article, the study kinesics was not presented in the Kyrgyz culture well enough, though Kyrgyz people use hand gestures a lot in their everyday life. The research paper begins with the common definition of hand gestures as a part of body language, several handshake categories like: **the finger squeeze, the limp fish, the two-handed handshake** were explained by several statements in the English and Kyrgyz languages. Furthermore, this article includes definitions and some idioms containing **hand, shake, squeeze** according to the Oxford and Academic Dictionary to show readers the figurative meanings of these common words. The current study was based on the books of writers Allan and Barbara Pease “The definite book of body language” 2004, Romana Lefevre “Rude hand gestures of the world” 2011 etc.

**Key words:** kinesics, body language, gestures, acoustics, applause, paralanguage, non-verbal communication, finger squeeze, perceptions, facial expressions.

**Аннотация.** Бул макалада вербалдык эмес сүйлөшүүнүн бөлүгү болуп эсептелген “колдордун жандоо кыймылы”, алардын эки башка маданиятта колдонулушу, айырмачылыгы жана окшош жактары каралган. Макаланын максаты болуп “колдордун жандоо кыймылынын” мааниси, айырмасы жана эки маданиятта колдонулушу эсептелет. Ошону менен бирге, вербалдык эмес сүйлөшүүнүн бөлүгү болуп эсептелген “кинесика” илими каралган. Берилген макалада көрсөтүлгөндөй, “кинесика” илими кыргыз маданиятында толугу менен изилденген эмес, ошого карабастан “кинесика” илиминин бөлүгү болуп эсептелген “колдордун жандоо кыймылы” кыргыз элинин маданиятында көп колдонулат. Андан тышкары, “колдордун жандоо кыймылынын” бир нече түрү, англис жана кыргыз тилдеринде маселен аркылуу берилген. Төмөнкү изилдөө ишин жазууда чет элдик жазуучулардын эмгектери колдонулду.

**Түйүндүү сөздөр:** кинесика, жандоо кыймылы, акустика, кол чабуулар, паралингвистика, вербалдык эмес баарлашуу, кол кысуу, кабыл алуу сезими.

**Аннотация.** В данной статье рассматриваются сходства и различия “жестикуляции” и частота ее использования, в американской и кыргызской культурах. Следовательно, здесь было упомянуто понятие “кинесика” как основная часть языка тела. Как указано в статье, “кинесика” не была представлена в кыргызской культуре достаточно хорошо, хотя кыргызский народ часто использует

жестикуляцию в повседневной жизни. Исследовательская работа начинается с общего определения "жестикуляции" как части языка тела и несколько категорий жестикуляции, таких как: сжатие пальца, слабое рукопожатие, рукопожатие двумя руками, были объяснены несколькими примерами на английском и кыргызском языках. Кроме того, эта статья включает определения слов "рука", "рукопожатие", "сжатие" и некоторые идиомы, содержащие данных слов согласно Оксфордскому и Академическому словарю, чтобы показать читателям их образное значение. Данное исследование было основано на книгах писателей Аллана и Барбары Пиз «Определенная книга языка тела» 2004 года, Романа Лефевра «Грубые жестикуляции мира» 2011 года и т. д.

**Ключевые слова:** кинесика, язык жестов, жесты, акустика, аплодисменты, паралингвистика, невербальная коммуникация, сжатие пальца, чувство восприятия, выражение лиц.

Our body language conveys a lot of information than our speech itself. It represents two-thirds of all communications. This topic was chosen to give information and share the results of the research on the component *hand gestures* used by Americans in Kyrgyzstan and Kyrgyz people in the USA as well as Kyrgyz people being in the USA can confront adversity in using *hand gestures* and Americans in Kyrgyzstan. As far as we know, the component "*hand gestures*" is known as a part of body language that is *kinesics*, in the Kyrgyz language *кинесика*. Firstly, let's find out what *kinesics* means. The nonlinguistic transmission of information through physical movements and gestures to the listener regarded as a form of the study *kinesics*. This study is not researched in the Kyrgyz language deeply enough, as well as it is considered to be a new study. However, *kinesics* is thought to be the main part of paralinguistics. *Kinesics* captures body languages such as *facial expressions, hand gestures, head nodding, shrugging* etc. The present research paper is devoted to the specific part of the study *kinesics* "hand gestures" with its examples.

In non-verbal communication, the manner in which we move our hands and fingers say a lot of things, good and bad. These movements of our hands that transmit meaning are known as *hand gestures*. They often signify the state of well-being of the person making them. *Hand gestures* are often expressive actions, which we display to communicate our messages. *Hand movements* have a wide range of meanings and also emblematic of different religious and cultural traditions. Every individual movement has a meaning symbolizing various forms of perceptions. The significance and usage of *hand gestures* can differ from one culture to another. Although, people and cultures, tend to interpret them in their own way. There are still some gestures which hold universal meanings, that is, they mean the same everywhere in the world.

- Let's pass through several examples that are expressed by *hand gestures*: "handshake"- "алик алышуу", "pointing with index finger"- "сөөмөй менен көрсөтүү", "thumbs up" - "баш бармагын көтөрүү", "thumbs down" - "баш бармагын ылдый каратуу", "clapping hands" - "кол чабуу"

They are all in use in both cultures; in most cases carry the same meanings.

The first example under analysis is *handshake*. It is regular greeting rituals and commonly done on meetings, greetings, offering congratulations or after the completion of an agreement. A strong handshake usually indicates the level of confidence and emotion level in people. They are popular

in American business meetings and are appropriate for using between men and women. This gesture is often used by Kyrgyz people either. But Kyrgyz men, if they do not know women enough may not shake hands or touch them. In any way, vice versa. Instead, they greet women by nodding their heads. The component *handshake* is thought to date to ancient times as a way of showing a stranger you had no weapons. It is the most used gesture at current time. According to Oxford Dictionary, the taken word *handshake* carries separate significances. *Hand* as a noun has several meanings:

- *the end part of the arm beyond the wrist.*

- *a pointer on a clock or watch indicating the passing of units time*

- *a person's power or control*

as a verb:

*to give to*

*hold the hand of, in order to assist*

Phrases connected with *hand*: *at hand, by hand, keep one's hand in, hand in glove, in safe hands, turn one's hand to, wait on someone hand and foot* etc.

The definitions of the verb *shake* according to Academic Dictionary are:

- *move quickly and jerkily up and down or to and fro;*

- *tremble uncontrollably with strong emotion;*

- *get rid of or put an end*

Fixed phrases are: *no great shakes, shake the dust off one's feet, in two shakes* etc.

When we put two words together, the meaning is to *shake somebody's hand* while greeting him. Studies have also categorized several *handshake* styles:

- *the finger squeeze*- колду кысуу, *the limp fish*- (*shaking hands too weakly*) колдун учун берүү, *the two handed handshake*- кош колдон саламдашуу;

Each category will be analyzed separately. First comes, *the finger squeeze*. The verb *squeeze*, if we look it up in Oxford Dictionary, signifies *pressing something with an effort, firmly press from opposite or all sides*. As a slang a *person's girlfriend or boyfriend*. A man's finger squeeze indicates his being happy to see and meet you. We gave an example to show it: "I have not seen him for ages. When I met him he squeezed my hand to express his feelings". [The American short story. 1999]

In Kyrgyz culture, if people greet a person squeezing their fingers, it informs the person's missing and looking forward to seeing him. Here is an example to justify it: "Биздин көрүшпөгөнүбүзгө көп болуптур. Убакыттын учканын карачы. Бул жолку жолугушуубузда, ал мени сагынганын билдиргенсип колумду бекем кысып учураш-

ты.” [Ч.Айтматов “Эрте келген турналар”1978], is rendered into English, he squeezed my hand, that shows the feelings of missing and liking.

Next is the phrase the *limp fish* which is considered to be worse handshake. The hand has no energy, there is no shake, no squeeze, not even a pinch and it gives the feeling you are holding a dead fish instead of a hand. This handshake is synonym to low self-esteem; a person is weak in character, cold in nature, insincere and lack of commitment. In dictionary, the word *limp* means weak, feeble and powerless. Here is an example to clarify it: “*This guy looks unconfident. He has a limp fish handshake.*” [www.en.wikipedia.org]

The above given phrase is translated into Kyrgyz колунун учун беруу, that carries the meaning to greet a person by giving the tip of one’s hand, stands for a person’s arrogance, impoliteness and being uninterested in him. This feeling is shown in the next example: “*Ооба, ал менден денгээли жогору, алган билими бар, бирок анын колунун учун берип учурашканы, адамга болгон сый-урматынын жоктугун, текебер мамилесин көрсөтүп турат.*” [11] With the line “*колунун учун берип учурашканы, адамга болгон сый-урматынын жоктугун, текебер мамилесин көрсөтүп турат*”, the author reassures the person’s indifference, arrogance and impoliteness.

The following phrase *the two-handed handshake* is usually seen among politicians, business partners, close friends and relatives. This type of handshake is said to convey the meaning of warmth, friendship, honesty and trustiness, considered being a sincere one. Phrase two-handed stands for used with both hands, requiring a handshake might want to show you some extra affection. If a guy respects you a lot, he can shake hands with both hands. This gesture is very common for males as it’s not common for a male to shake hands with a female with both hands since it can seem awkward. The equivalent of this phrase in the Kyrgyz language is “*кош колдоп саламдашуу*”. It conveys the same meaning of warmth, friendship and sincerity. The given example can be supportive for this idea: “*Бүгүн айылыма жол тарттым. Анын салкын абасын, шаркырап аккан таза суусун, керемет жаратылышын сагындым. Айыл ак - сакалдары менен кош колдоп алик алышып, чер жазышып кайра борборго кайтам.*” [11]

The next type to speak about is “*pointing with index finger*”. This is believed to be used over the early 2000’s. It is thought to be an affectionate gesture in the American culture. But, in most cases, it had been perceived as a marginally rude gesture in both cultures. Pointing with index finger is impolite to older generations, because you should only point at inanimate objects, animals and never at humans. If you are in doubt, motion with your head to point at a person or use your thumb. We face some more gestures using index finger in the Kyrgyz culture. They are signified according to their positions, if a person raises index finger “*сөөмөйүн өйдө көтөрүү*”, it gives the message of giving somebody advice, If he points at him directly, “*сөөмөйүн тике кезөө*”, which indicates to his aggression and anger, if he moves his index finger left, right “*сөөмөйүн ары бери кыймылдатуу*”, signifies the message of warning and scaring. Based on the meanings

of these gestures, some examples are given in the Kyrgyz language: “*Ачууланган Базарбай Бостонго сөөмөйүн тике көзөп мындай деди: “Бостон бөлтүрүктөрдү ордуна алып барып кой, адам катары суранып атам, эгерде бөлтүрүктөрдү бүгүн Акбарага алып барбасан анда сени менен башкача сүйлөшөм.*” [Ч.Айтматов “Кыямат” 1985]. Here, the writer used the phrase “*сөөмөйүн тике көзөп*” to make clear Bazarbai’s fury. Another example is: “*Кичинекей Акбар эжесинин кыймыл-аракетин туурап калды. Кээде, эжеси үйүндө апасына көрсөтпөй таттууларды алып жесе, Акбар сөөмөйүн ары бери кыймылдаттып, апасына айтаарын эскертет.*” [superinfo.kg] The line “*сөөмөйүн ары бери кыймылдаттып*” indicates the meaning of warning and scaring.

The other gestures to analyze are *thumbs up* and *thumbs down*. These are common hand gestures achieved by a closed fist held the thumb extended upward or downward in approval or disapproval, respectively. They have become metaphors in English: “*The audience gave the movie the thumbs -up*”; stands for the audience’s approval of the movie, regardless of whether the gesture was actually made. While working on them, a number of origins have been proposed. One of them says, these signs were used in the context of gladiatorial combat for a hand gesture used by Ancient Romans, to pass judgment on a defeated gladiator. In modern popular culture, it is assumed that “a thumb down” was the signal that the defeated gladiator should be condemned to death;” a thumb up” he should be spared. The Oxford English Dictionary cites the earliest written instance of “thumbs up” with a positive meaning as being from *Over the top*, a 1917 book written by Arthur Guy Empey. Empey was an American who served in the British army during World War I. He wrote “*Thumbs up, Tommy’s expression which means everything is fine with me*”. The *thumb up* signal has a generally positive connotation in English speaking countries. However, its perceived meaning varies significantly from culture to culture. On the internet, and most particularly on the social media site Facebook, the *thumbs up* gesture is shown as an icon and associated with the term “like” which means to follow or subscribe to the page, posts, photos, while thumbs down an icon of “dislike”. These very connotations are delivered into the Kyrgyz language either. “*Агасы Анатайдан үйүндөгүлөр кандай жатканын сураган кезде, ал жөн кана баш бармагын көтөрүү менен жооп узатып тим болду.*” [11] Thus, the statement “*баш бармагын көтөрүү менен*” demonstrates “*everything is fine with them*”.

Further, *clapping hands* gesture is to be analyzed. A clap is the percussive sound made by striking together two flat surfaces, as in the body parts of humans or animals. Humans clap with the palms of their hands, often quickly and repeatedly to express appreciation or approval. Clapping is used in many spheres. One example is in gospel music, to set the rhythm and is an integral part of the songs, in acoustics to check the reverberation time of a room and in medical applications to open up blocked blood circulation. Golfers use a golf clap (a form of quiet clapping) not to disturb other players who may be in the process of attempting a shot. In our country, well-recognized politicians, singers, respectful people often receive hand clapping as soon as they first appear on stage to give their speeches, to sing etc. If people clap their hands for politicians, this accolade is given to show admiration for

their past achievements, well-done jobs. Hand clapping given for a singer at his concert, the sign of enjoyment and liking. The very notion was explained in these following statements: “*But to their great delight Undine was standing there, laughing and clapping her little hands*”. [Friedrich de La Motte Fougee “Undine” 1998 p.50]

*“He clapped his little finger,*

*And almost danced for joy*

*It seemed a glimpse of paradise,*

*To that poor hungry boy*”. [John Hartley “Who cares?” 2001 p.102].

This gesture is determined by the situations. For instance: on a demonstration, it is utilized to show anger; the given example carries this meaning: “*In order to evade tough regulations on public rallies, protestors eschew placards and shouted slogans, and merely lap their hands to display their anger at Mr.Lukashenko’s policies*”. [www.bbcnews.com]. Another example shows the other meaning: “*Clap your hands or say, Puppy, puppy, puppy to see how the dog reacts*”[8]. The same meanings are spared in the Kyrgyz language too. Let’s look through one example: “*Концертте эл жык жыйма. Бир дагы бош орундук калган эмес. Эл ар бир чыккан ырчыны кол чабып колдоп жатышты*”. [superinfo.kg] The sentence “*кол чабып колдоп жатышты*” gives the meaning of encouragement. The English language is rich with synonyms. Followings

are the related words for clap hands: *acclaim, applaud, to give a handclap, to give applause etc.*

In conclusion, it can be mentioned that gestures play an important role in a person’s life. The meaning of gestures can be very different across cultures and countries, so it is important to be careful to avoid misinterpretation. Every action of our body conveys this or that kind of information depending on the situation. Thus, Kyrgyz and American cultures are rich with examples of non-verbal communication, which can be represented as international gestures and non-verbal means to cultural identify. Both cultures have their specific gesture fund that constantly changes and grows with the development of their language and culture.

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