



CULTURAL ASPECT OF NON-VERBAL MEANS OF COMMUNICATION

Saidova Mariya Aleksandrovna¹

¹ Master's Student, Tashkent State Pedagogical University,

e-mail: mariya_joint@mail.ru

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ABSTRACT

The article is dedicated to the study of the nonverbal aspect of intercultural communication. More emphasis is put on the cultural specificity of some types of nonverbal means.

In the process of communication, people pass on much more information than we might stand for. Gestures, intonation, postures, expressions, timbre, facial gaze and, even the distance between the interlocutors transmit the information as well. Any expressive movement becomes an action itself besides an essential act of influencing people. As an integral part of every culture, nonverbal communication is one of the most significant components of communication. According to Yu.S. Maslov, human interaction is a phenomenon that is a complex system of transmitting information, intentionally or automatically transmitted by the sender and accepted by the recipient. [1998. pp. 7-24]. Sound language is a key to its implementation, while another component less frequently mentioned, but still regarded as important is presented in nonlinguistic (nonverbal) forms.

According to V.N.Kunitsina [2002. pp.68-71], non-verbal means carry out such functions as:

- complementing verbal messages (including duplicating and strengthening);
- refutation of verbal messages;
- supersedence of verbal messages;

- regulating of conversation.

V.N.Kunitsina clarifies that nonverbal messages in the complementing function make speech more expressive, accurate and explain its content. Any speech may be more comprehensible and arresting when duplicated by gestures. Let us take greeting as an example people may shake hands or hug each other while saying how happy they are to see each other. Non-verbal signs can also heighten the most significant moments of speech: we can invite attention to something we say by elevating our voice, pausing, or gesturing in a certain way, or lifting of index finger up, we draw the addressee's attention to the fact that this information is imperative.

Refutation of verbal messages means that the non-verbal contradicts the verbal one. Non-verbal behavior is quite spontaneous and is less controlled by consciousness, so not match or even contradict what was said. Many people can check up on the first reaction emotional state is revealed in 4-5 seconds so; a smile or surprise that lasts longer than this time may betray deception.

The most descriptive examples are nodding and headshaking, accompanying the speech. These



gestures indicate the honesty of the opponent. Par example, if for the question "Are you eavesdropping on us?" the answer is "No!" accompanied by headshakes, the verity of interlocutors beyond any doubt. If the answer accompanies giving a shrug, looking the other way, apologetic smile, then the inconsistency of speech and movements presents the insincere.

The displacement function indicates the use of non-verbal messages instead of verbal ones. To cite one example, using only gestures, we can tell a person to end the conversation or step out and discuss an issue face to face. A silent agreement, expressed by slow blinking or a nod, may also be a clear-cut example.

Regulation, as a function of non-verbal communication, is used to coordinate interactions between people. In this case, the replacement signs mentioned above are often used - a turn of the head - indicating who should take tern in action; touch - expressing a desire to ask about something, etc. These and many other signs regulate the communication process, besides they are important indicators of emotional states and attitudes of a person to the world in various situations.

It is time to move to another issue related to cultural specificity. One might get the impression that non-verbal language, or body language, is universal. But the basic patterns of communication, such as body language significantly differ from one culture to another. Knowing cultural features of body language can be useful in making business and friendly contacts, improving understanding of the interlocutor. Body language on the formal and functional levels can be opposite or have another connotative colouring that represents a certain risk in intercultural communication. It was substantiated by a great number of scholars [Anderson, 1999; Prohorov & Sternin, 2006; Andrianov, 2007; Briksina & Sofoshina, 2016].

Along with other gestures, the customs that regulate the justification of touch vary

considerably across cultures. So, representatives of Western cultures often shake hands when meeting each other beyond that kiss or hug. Whereas, Mediterranean people allow a kiss on each cheek as a sign of greeting. However, for representatives of Eastern culture, touching a stranger as a sign of greeting, and even more so a kiss, is taboo.

As previously referred to, the greeting is one of the most valuable factors in all types of communication and varies from culture to culture. For example, Americans and Canadians traditionally greet each other with handshakes, and the tighter handshake is, all the better. However, representatives of Asian and African cultures prefer non-contact greetings, like bringing folded hands to the chest, as prayer, bowing, or placing the right hand to the chest (the heart). At the same time, considering the greeting in Japan expressed by a bow, we observe the fact that the lower the bow, the more respect is shown to whom the bow is intended. In Spain, Portugal, Italy, and Eastern Europe, people greet each other by kissing each other on the cheeks.

Referring to a substitute gesture, palm up, pressed fingers, a movement towards oneself, which replaces the verbal expression "Come up!" in Russian culture, on the other hand in Greek culture is perceived as a sign of greeting or farewell, which very often leads to misunderstanding. At the same time, the gesture typical for Russian people - raising of hand with wide-spread fingers conveying the meaning of a greeting, for the Greeks is insulting and derogatory; Greeks widely use it to express their negative emotions.

It is also imperative to be careful with the pointing gesture. As an example, let us take a look at the attitude of representatives of various cultures on the American continent to this gesture: for most Americans, a gesture pointing to an object or person does not have any negative meaning, while Native Americans find this gesture extremely rude, and to avoid it, they denote to



anything with their chin. In the East, it is also considered very rude to point a finger, just as in Russian culture, therefore here, they post with the entire hand, always with the palm up. The Germans use the little finger to indicate something.

Showing someone a thumb up, in Russian and Eastern cultures, is perceived as approval of something, a way to say - I like - in France, it means - one. In Britain, Australia, New Zealand, the thumb raised has three meanings: firstly, it is used by hitchhikers to stop a car; secondly, it means that everything is fine, but when the thumb is raised sharply, the gesture becomes offensive.

V- Gesture. This sign has a strong following among England, New Zealand, and Australia, where it is a symbol of victory only if the palm with fingers apart is turned away. If we turn the palm to oneself this gesture acquires an offensive meaning. This gesture means: "Two" or "Goat" as an offensive meaning in Russian culture.

Visual contact is another important aspect of intercultural communication. In the United States of America, direct eye contact is preferred in conversation and is considered a sign of directness and honesty in many Western countries. For example, Germans value visual contact, especially talking face to face, as a sign of self-honesty and interest in the discussion. A person who does not make eye contact holds as unreliable and weak-willed. In France, not looking at a person means looking down at him, and steadfast gaze has an intimate connotation. However, in the East, eye contact has another meaning. Japanese, for example, consider eye contact as an intrusion on privacy and rarely look to use direct eye contact. In Chinese non-verbal culture, prolonged eye contact regards as rude. It is unacceptable here to

look at a respected person is better to lower eyes as a sign of respect.

Significant differences are also presented in different cultures in the perception of personal space or the accepted distance between people. Each one believes that space around is personal so the violation of this space is considered as an invasion, as an unfriendly act. Therefore, communication between people always occurs at a certain distance, and this distance is a significant indicator of type, nature, and kind of relations between people. These boundaries depend not only on the culture of people but also on the attitude to a particular interlocutor. So, friends are always closer to each other than strangers. Thus, changing the distance between people while communicating is a part of the communication process. Personal space depends on the characteristics of culture and the nature of the relationship between people. In South America, people tend to stand closer than their North American neighbors, who prefer more personal space than other cultures. In Asian cultures, especially in China, the concept of personal space is practically non-existent: strangers often touch each other while standing in line or on public transport. Ignorance of the boundaries during intercultural communication may lead to intercultural conflict since people of different cultures experience discomfort when communicating due to ignorance of the rules of the distance of their interlocutor.

Therefore communicants need to understand nonverbal means in various languages, as well as demonstrate adequately of own ones that are important components of linguacultural competence to participate in intercultural communication successfully.

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