

***NATIONAL DIFFERENCES IN THE STRUCTURE OF  
NON-VERBAL MEANS OF COMMUNICATION***

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*Стаття присвячена порівняльному аналізу проявів невербальної комунікації у представників різних національних культур. Охарактеризовано знакові системи невербальної комунікації, види невербальних засобів спілкування.*

*Ключові слова: спілкування, прояви, знаки, засоби, різниця, порівняння, словесні, невербальне, жести, пози, міміка, дотик, рухи.*

The article deals with comparative analysis of non-verbal manifestations of representatives of different cultures. The conducted research reveals that ability to read non-verbal language helps to understand and translate correctly. Sign systems of nonverbal communication and types of nonverbal means of communication are characterised.

*Key words: communication, manifestations, signs, means, difference, comparison, verbal, non-verbal, gestures, postures, facial expressions, touch, movements.*

**Problem formulation.** Nowadays the problem of interpersonal relationships and their communication is very important. Non-verbal communication includes such forms of self-expression which are not expressed with the help of words, but on other linguistic symbols. It is very important to understand the language of non-verbal communication, because non-verbal communication is valuable for its spontaneity and can be manifested on unconscious level. Signs of non-verbal communication transfer abundant information about the person you are talking to, his/her feelings, mood, attitude, etc. and they can be the subject of special research. However, the fact that the signs of non-verbal communication are culturally specific, causes some difficulties in intercultural communication and can be a source of misunderstanding and even

conflicts. As E. G. Kreidlin emphasizes: “There are no face expressions, posture or body position which has the same meaning in all cultures” [10].

In order to get successful communication it is necessary to understand not only the person's words you are talking to but also the means of non-verbal communication which are used during the conversation: gestures, postures, body motions, the use of space and other signs, the role of which must not be neglected. According to the data of researchers (Filonenko M., Larina T., Ter-Minasova S., Nierenberg, Pease A.) 40% of all information is uttered with the help of words, the rest of the information – by non-verbal means of communication; the significance of pronouncements at the first meeting constitutes only 7 % [8]. Thus, visual perception of the interlocutor plays the most important role. The study by A.Mehrabian (1972) showed that in the communication of attitudes, 93 percent of the message is transmitted by tone of the voice and by facial expressions, whereas only 7 percent of the speaker's attitude is transmitted verbally [9].

#### **Analysis of recent achievements and publications.**

During the last decade a significant increase can be noticed in the interest of scientists and the public to the problems of non-verbal communication, to the intangible ways with the help of which people express their feelings. Non-verbal means of communication reinforce or change verbal communication, but also confirm or deny information, supplement the content of the utterance, control and regulate this process. It is non-verbal means allow to understand true feelings, because their appearance is caused by unconscious impulses, and inability to falsify them allows to trust them more. In addition, non-verbal behaviour helps to know the person and form our attitude towards him/her.

The problem of interpreting of non-verbal aspects of interpersonal communication has a long history. However, this problem has started to develop in details only in recent decades (since the 1960-s in the works of Brosnahan L, J. Fast, A. Pease, Sampson E., Nierenberg G, Hall P., O. Leontiev and others). In connection with this it remains poorly researched.

**The aim** of the article is to determine the content and components of non-verbal communication and identify national differences in manifestations of non-verbal communication.

**The statement of the fundamental material.** Efficiency of communication is determined not only by understanding of the interlocutor's words, but also by the ability to evaluate the participants' behavior of communication correctly, their face expressions, gestures, movements, posture, eyes direction, i.e. to understand the language of non-verbal communication. This language enables the speaker to express his/her feelings more, indicates how the conversation participants control themselves and what they think about each other in the reality.

Non-verbal communication includes different sign systems: optical-kinetic, para- and extralinguistic, spatial-time, "face-to-face" contact which have their own peculiarities.

Optical-kinetic sign system uses gestures, face expressions, and pantomime. In general, this system can be described as perception of general motility properties of different parts of body (hands – gesticulation "hand-play", face – facial expressions, postures – pantomime). This general motility reflects emotional reactions of a person, as optical-kinetic sign system in communication gives certain nuances which are taken ambiguously, provided using the same gestures in different national cultures. The importance of optical-kinetic sign system in communication is so great that a special area of research was defined – kinetics which deals with these problems. Paralinguistic system is a system of speech vocalization which is characterized by voice quality, its range and tonality that expresses human feelings and states. Thus, calm and serious voice reduces tension, stimulates interest, and annoyed one is perceived as a sign of aggressiveness. Extralinguistic sign system is incorporation of pauses and other non-linguistic components (cough, laugh), speaking rate [11].

Identification of person's psychological state based on "body language" makes a great sense. Psychology of communication contains knowledge about body language, or

non-verbal communication. It is important to show different variants of identification and usage of non-verbal means of communication and also pay attention to partial credibility of such conclusions.

A partner's emotions, gestures and manners play a very significant role in this process. Sometimes misunderstandings take place; your message can be taken incorrectly because it is conducted with "contradictory" motions, postures. As they are as words in language, their accuracy and accordance to that what we want to express enable us to understand how our words are accepted, with approval or with hostility, whether the interlocutor is open with us or withdrawn or whether he/she is browned off or controls himself/herself. "Wordless" feedback can inform us how we can change our behavior to achieve the proper result [7].

Among these means of communication there are those which are not the main in information transmission but additional which reinforce communication. The language of non-verbal communication is a language of gestures, facial expression, pantomime, i.e. "body language" which expresses feelings, emotions of a person. A person uses various motions (gestures, facial expression, postures, intonation, touches) which express psychic states to reinforce auditory and visual effects, his/her attitude to the partner, communicative situation in general. Expressive body motions and interpretation of non-verbal behavior depend on the age, people's personal features of people and also the communicative situations, communicative tasks and communicative aims.

Non-verbal means of communication are as follows.

1. *Visual: kinetic*: "hand-play" (hand motions), head, legs, body movements, gait; face expressions, eyes, posture, poses, head position, direction of eyes, visual contacts, skin reaction: blushing, paleness, sweating; spatial-time organization of communication): distance between interlocutors, the angle of rotation to the interlocutor, personal space; subsidiary means of communication: emphasizing or hiding of body-build peculiarities (signs of age, sex, race); means of conversion natural body-build: clothes, hair-do, cosmetics, glasses, tattoo, moustache, beard, jewelry, small things in hands.

2. *Acoustic: paralinguistic* (voice quality, voice range, pitch): volume, tone, rhythm, pitch of sound, *extralinguistic*: speech pauses, laugh, cry, cough, crack, sighs.

3. *Tactile*: touch, handshake, hugs, kiss.

4. *All-factorial*: pleasant and unpleasant smell of the environment, natural and artificial human smell.

*Gesticulation* can give a lot of information about an interlocutor. We even can't imagine how many different gestures are used by a person during conversation, how often people use it in their communication. It's very interesting, languages are learnt since childhood but gestures are assimilated naturally. There are peoples who pay a great deal of attention to gestures due to their national peculiarities and traditions. For example, scientists calculated that during a conversation a Mexican uses at an average 180 gestures per one hour, a Frenchman – 120, an Italian – 80, a Finnish – 1, an Englishman – 0. Non-verbal language of different cultures has different meaning. As for the distance, according to the data Americans communicate on a distance from each other, they guard their personal space. L. Visson states that during communication an American, as a rule, keeps a distance of one or two meters from an interlocutor if they are not friends or close relatives, encroachment on personal space makes him very nervous and it is perceived as aggressive behavior or as a step toward sexual harassment. Behavior of the Russian who are accustomed to a smaller distance during communication and regularly violate that space is perceived as an invitation for more intimate relationships, flirting, or conversely, may be perceived as a threat to personal safety [11].

In the process of interpersonal communication a personal distance plays a very important role, i.e. personal space where a person doesn't allow entering the other people (except close people). Personal space which A. Hall figuratively names *bubble* differs in various cultures not only by its size but also takes another place in hierarchy of values. In English culture, one of the most individualistic, there is a special notion – *privacy* – to define this significant cultural value. In Russian and Ukrainian culture according to figurative comparison of L. Brosnahan, perception of “I-myself” ends in

the boundaries of body, personal space can be absent at all in comparison with the English culture is minimal. In any case, there is no special word for this notion in Russian and Ukrainian [1].

Russian people are tolerant to touches (outside, in transport, in stores) that in such situations they do not always feel the need to apologize. The presence of area *privacy* in English culture and absence in Russian culture can be seen in that fact that the English try to avoid collision with a person walking towards them much earlier than the Russian or Ukrainians do. The Russian usually apologize at physical collision directly; the English do it at “collision” of autonomy areas, with this, both apologize regardless who provoked the situation. A passer-by walking behind says “sorry” if a walking person in front of him suddenly stops. The English prefer to stand or sit at a considerable distance from each other than the Russian. In transport or during a business meeting they keep the distance. To communicate in such a situation is more difficult for Russians and Ukrainians. Distance in communication effects on the usage of signs of tactile communication. The English avoid physical touches when communicating, it is not surprising: to touch the interlocutor or clap somebody on the shoulder is complicated and inconvenient at arm’s length. The British practically do not do it; they do not embrace, do not kiss, and do not touch each other. Even such a common gesture (not only among Russian or Ukrainian people) as handshake is used during the meeting, as a rule. And handshake of the British is shorter than in Russian or Ukrainian culture, and it is done at full length arm and without any attempt to hold the hand of the interlocutor [11].

As for the gestures and facial expression, they are used very limitedly in the English culture. And it is not incidental: the more the distance which is typical for the certain culture, the more norms and restriction of people behavior are in it. Limited gesticulation as well as reserved, moderate face expressions is the sign of politeness and good manners in some cultures. The Italians, Swedish, Russians, Ukrainians use gestures frequently. As well as in other European cultures, direct look is a sign of attention and interest for the British. In this case the eyes are usually fixed, not moving

do not pass from subject to subject, and focused at one point. To let the other person realize what they hear and understand, the British often do not nod but blink. At the same time looking directly into the interlocutor's eyes is not accepted. In Russian culture, which the researchers call "glazing" in comparison with Anglo-Saxon culture, the custom to look straight in the eyes means self-disclosure in front of the interlocutor that witnesses the direct dependence between the eye contact and sincerity in relationships. Long direct visual contact can be accepted as a challenge in oriental cultures. Russian people use gestures more frequently, they nod their head when they agree; shake their head when they disagree; and hand gestures have great amplitude in comparison with people from Western Europe, and also Russians take more space communicating. There are essential differences in behavior of the British and Russians which are manifested in smile and that has great national peculiarity. In intercultural communication of the British and Russians a range of contradictions can be noticed. One of them – "reserved British people" constantly smile in the communication process while "emotional Russian people" are often sullen and unsmiling. Smile, the national character of which was paid attention to by many researchers (Larina T., Ter-Minasova S., Sampson E., Visson. L. Kreydlin) is a very interesting and visual example of how emotions are demonstrated and which feelings are experienced, as it was mentioned above not always coincide [11].

It's widely known that smile is characteristic for Americans where it is an essential attribute of communication is a sign of success and prosperity. Comparing English and Russian smile S. Ter-Minasova confirms that in English-speaking world smile is not only biological reaction on positive emotions but also a formal sign of culture which has nothing common with sincere disposition to the person you are smiling to: it is a sign that you have no aggressive intentions, a way of formal demonstration of your belonging to certain society [13]. Speaking about different types of smile, S.G. Ter-Minasova defines formal smile as a type of greeting with strange people, as attempt to provide security in an unfamiliar place with strangers. Such smile brings social information and performs a social function or a function of social

interaction; it is an obligatory communicative signal. But even the ever-smiling British can not help but astonish at the sight of the Chinese and Japanese who smile telling about strained even tragic events, for instance, about death of their close people. Similar smile is shocking and might seem cruel if it is understood incorrectly, if people do not know the real meaning of this smile. Smiling, representatives of these cultures want to reduce negative effect on their interlocutor, not to upset him with this, i.e. it is socially directed smile. Smile of the Japanese and Chinese is perceived by Europeans as a manifestation of consent and satisfaction, but embarrassment or confusion can be hidden under this smile caused by the difficulties in communication. Misinterpretation of smile leads to a serious communicative failures, including those in business. In the studies of intercultural communication, there are examples how American businessmen having negotiated with the Japanese successfully to their opinion where the latter were smiling (as if they agree) found out with surprise about the sudden departure of the Japanese delegation before the signing of the agreement without realizing that their smile meant confusion and abashment but not contentment [13].

The fact that a smile in Japanese culture is social and performs various functions in communication shows that there are many different types of smiles in the Japanese language. In Russia, Ukraine smile is often a natural expression of natural and sincere disposition, interest, and good attitude towards others. Russian people smile less frequently, mainly in situations where they really feel positive emotions, i.e. smile expresses emotional information. In Russia a smile should inevitably be meaningful and have emotional reasons to express feelings: warmth, trust and friendship. In cross-cultural communication in the eyes of Russians, redundant smiling is often perceived negatively and sometimes produces aggression. This is the feature of Russian smile which transmits more often human emotions, and unlike the British or American which is aimed at fulfilling a social function. Relatively para-verbal means of communication should be noted that in general meaning peculiarities of their usage can be formulated as follows: the British prefer speaking in a low voice, at an average pace (faster than the Finnish, but slower than, for example, the French), without interrupting each other and



strictly follow the rule of turn-taking without long pauses, they are not tolerant to keeping silence (a good method of filling pauses in English communication is *small talk*) [11].

Turn-taking rule is very important in English culture. The British react painfully to violation of this rule. When learning signs, gestures of non-verbal communication the main gestures and signs of agreement and disagreement turned out to be the same in different cultures. To express agreement people in many cultures (including Russia, Ukraine, and Sweden) wink or give a grunt. So, to express approval and agreement the following gestures indicate: a fist with a thumb up (“excellent”); a nod ahead from up to down as a sign of agreement; clapping hands express agreement and excitement, shaking head is a sign of disagreement; to pat a recipient’s hand or clap somebody’s hand expressing agreement; handshake, thumbs up/down and a vast range of other gestures, many of which will be culture-specific. A *high five* is an example of communicative touch. The high five that most people credit as the first took place in 1977. It was exchanged between Dusty Baker and Glen Burke at a Los Angeles Dodgers game. Burke gave Baker a raised hand to slap in celebration after Baker scored a home run. Murray State University basketball player Lamont Sleets has challenged this story though, claiming that he developed the gesture while playing on his college team in the 1960’s. This isn’t the only high five challenge between basketball and baseball players. A number of basketball players claim to have started using the term “high five” during their 1979/1980 season. University of Louisville baseball player Derek Smith disputes this though and claims that he is the originator of the term. No matter who originated or named it though, the gesture was an immediate success in sports circles as soon as Baker and Burke’s slap was seen around the country. It was soon being used by teams across the country, most notably the 1980 Louisville Cardinals basketball team, who high fived each other throughout their run for the title and helped bring it to the forefront of American consciousness. By 1980, the noun “high five” was in the Oxford English Dictionary and by 1981, it was added as a verb as well [12].

Face expressions express agreement and disagreement. As with the physical body, information may be sent voluntarily or involuntarily. Signs of agreement are smiling, winking, and disagreement: pursing one's lips (as in irritation or disapproval) or frowning. Nodding a head means approval "yes" all over the world. This seems to be an inborn gesture, as it is also used by deaf and blind people. Shaking head to express disapproval or disagreement is universal and can be one of the gestures invented in childhood. When a baby is satiated with mother's milk, he refuses the breast making a move of his head from side to side. When a small child had eaten, he turns his head from side to side to evade the spoon with which the parents are trying to feed him. Thus, very quickly he learns to use his head to express disagreement and negative attitude. To trace the origin of some gestures can be an example of our primitive past. Grinning preserved from the act of attacking the enemy and is still used by a modern man when a man grins wickedly or shows his anger in some other way. Smile was originally a symbol of threat, but today, combined with friendly gestures, it means pleasure or kindness. Like verbal languages differ from each other, depending on the type of culture, so as a non-verbal language of one nation is different from the non-verbal language of another nation. At the time as a gesture can be recognized and have a clear interpretation of one nation and it may have no any sign in another, or it can have a completely opposite meaning. For example, let's have a look at the difference in interpretation of the different nations of these typical gestures as the ring of fingers raised up the thumb and V - shaped gesture with the fingers. *"OK" gesture or "a ring" formed by fingers*. In France it means "zero" or "nothing", in Japan it mean "money" and in some countries of the Mediterranean Sea this gesture is used to refer to homosexual men [7].

*Raised up thumb*. In Britain, North America, Australia and New Zealand it has three meanings. Usually it is used at hitchhiking trying to catch a passing car. The second meaning is "all is OK", but when a thumb sharply rises up it becomes an abusive sign. In some countries, for example, in Greece this gesture means "shut up", consequently one can imagine the position of an American trying to catch a passing car

with this gesture on a highway in Greece. When Italians count from one to five this gesture means number “1”, and an indicative finger means “2”. When the English and Americans count the indicative finger means “1”, and the middle finger means “2” at this rate a thumb means number “5”. The gesture with “thumb-up” with combination with other gestures is used as a symbol of power and superiority and also in situations when someone wants “to crush with a thumb” Below we consider the usage of this gesture in the specific context. V – Shaped sign with the fingers. This sign is very popular in Great Britain and Australia but it has abusive interpretation. During the Second World War Winston Churchill popularized sign “V” for denomination of victory, but for this denomination a hand is turned backside to the speaker. If using this gesture when a palm is turned to the speaker so this gesture acquires abusive meaning. If an Englishman wants to tell the Europeans to shut up using this gesture, a European will wonder what victory is meant. However, in most European countries, V- gesture means victory; also this gesture means number “2” [11].

These examples state about which misunderstandings can be caused by wrong interpretations of gestures without taking into account national peculiarities of the speaker. So, before you make any conclusions about the meaning of gestures and body language, it is necessary to take into account the nationality of the person. National peculiarities of handshake manifestations appear when people from Great Britain, Australia, New Zealand, German, and the USA usually shake hands at greeting and farewell. Most Europeans shake hands several times during the day. It was calculated that an average Frenchman shake hands a half an hour a day. Residents of India and other Asian countries and also Arabs hold the hand after a handshake is completed. German and Frenchmen vigorously shake hands once or twice. Englishmen shake hands at a handshake three or five times, Americans – from five to seven times. It’s interesting to observe handshakes of delegates from different countries at international conferences. Americans think than German with their short handshakes seem to be unfriendly and isolated. German, on the contrary, astonish the habit of Americans to shake hands of the interlocutor as if pumping an air mattress [8].

When it comes to a complimentary kiss, inhabitants of Scandinavian countries they limit themselves to one kiss, Frenchmen - two, and the Dutch, Belgians and Arabs - three. Residents of Australia, New Zealand and countries of North America are shy when at meeting they have to kiss that leads to a comical clash of noses. The British are trying all means to avoid kissing, stepping back. In Saudi Arabia men may hold hands in public. It's a sign of mutual respect. But it's not good to behave in a similar way in Australia, Texas or Liverpool [7].

**Conclusion.** Thus, efficiency of communication is determined not only by understanding of the words of interlocutors, but also by the ability to evaluate non-verbal behavior of communication participants. Non-verbal language in different nations has different meanings. The communication distance of the English and Americans is big, that can not be said about Russians and Ukrainians. As for the gestures and face expression in English culture they are used very seldom. Russians use gestures frequently; and hand gestures have greater amplitude than people from Western Europe and they take up more space. Essential difference in behavior of the English and Russians are visualized in smile which has a great national singularity. A range of contradictions can be observed between the English and Russians in cross-cultural communication. One of them is "reserved Englishmen" constantly smile when "emotional Russians" are often sullen and unsmiling. In the study of signs, gestures non-verbal communication it turned out to be clear that the basic gestures and signs of agreement and disagreement expressed by representatives of different cultures are the same. As verbal languages differ from each other depending on the type of culture as well as non-verbal language of one nation differs from non-verbal language of another nation. One gesture can be universally received and have a clear interpretation in one culture, in another nation it can have no notation or it can have a completely opposite meaning.

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