

EXTRALINGUISTIC ISSUES IN CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION: BODY LANGUAGE, TABOOS

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Abstracts: This article gives information about extralinguistic issues in cross-cultural communication: body language, taboos.

Key words: cultures, right hand, OK, characteristics of a culture.

Introduction: If we look at communication as a process of coding and decoding of messages (see handout for more details), it is obvious that there are many points in the process where the communication can break down. In particular, successful communication depends crucially on shared culture. When you have communication between people of different cultures, even if they share a common language, things can go wrong. In particular, knowledge of a language does not automatically give you the background knowledge that native speakers assume you share. Some cultures, like the Italians, use the arms freely. Others, like the Japanese, are more reserved; it is considered impolite to gesticulate with broad movements of the arms.

Folding arms are interpreted by some social observers as a form of excluding self, "I am taking a defensive posture," or "I disagree with what I am hearing."

- Of all the body parts, the hands are probably used most for communicating non-verbally.
- Hand waves are used for greetings, beckoning, or farewells.
- The Italian "good-bye" wave can be interpreted by Americans as the gesture of "come here."
- The American "good-bye" wave can be interpreted in many parts of Europe and Latin America as the signal for "no."
- Handshaking is a form of greeting in most Western cultures.
- In the Middle East, a gentle grip is appropriate.
- In most Asian cultures, a gentle grip and an avoidance of direct eye contact is appropriate.
- Hand-holding among the same gender is a custom of special friendship and respect in several Middle Eastern and Asian countries.
- Right hand. The right hand has special significance in many societies. In certain countries in the Middle East and in Asia, it is best to present business cards or gifts, or to pass dishes of food, to get an attention, using only the right hand or both.
- Left hand is considered unclean in much of the Middle East and in parts of Indonesia.
- Hang loose. (thumb and little finger extended) could convey different meanings:
 - in Hawaii, it's a way of saying, "Stay cool," or "Relax."
 - in Japan, it means six.
 - In Mexico (do vertically), it means, "Would you like a drink?"
- Clapping hands.

- Russians and Chinese may use applause to greet someone.
- In many central and eastern Europe, audience frequently clap in rhythm.
- The “O.K.” signal. (the thumb and forefinger form a circle) means
- “fine,” or “O.K.” in most cultures,
- “zero” or “worthless” in some parts of Europe
- “money” in Japan
- an insult in Greece, Brazil, Italy, Turkey, Russia and some other countries

Head

- Nodding the head
- “Yes” in most societies
- “No” in some parts of Greece, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, and Turkey
- Tossing the head backward
- “yes” in Thailand, the Philippines, India, Laos
- Rocking head slowly, back and forth
- “yes, I’m listening” in most Asian cultures
- Face
- Facial expressions reflect emotion, feelings and attitudes, but.....
- The Asians are sometimes known as
- emotionless
- mixed-up emotion

Eyes

- Eye contacts
- Encouraged in America, Canada, Europe
- Rude in most Asian countries and in Africa
- Raising eyebrows
- “Yes” in Thailand and some Asian countries
- “Hello” in the Philippines
- Winking eye
- Sharing secret in America and Europe
- flirtatious gesture in other countries

Legs and feet

- In Asia, do not point with your toes.
- In Asia and some European countries, putting feet up on a desk or any other piece of furniture is very disrespectful.
- Sitting cross-legged, while common in North America and some European countries, is very impolite in other parts of the world.
- Walking
- Walking can reflect many characteristics of a culture. For example,
- In parts of Asia and some of the Middle Eastern countries, men who are friends may walk holding each other’s hand.
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- In parts of Asia and some of the Middle Eastern countries, men who are friends may walk holding each other's hand.
- In Japan and Korea, older women commonly walk a pace or two behind male companion.
- Asians often regard Western women as bold and aggressive, for they walk with a longer gait and a more upright posture.

-Becoming sensitive to the clues of body language can help us communicate more effectively with students.

-We can understand what students are saying even when they are not talking.

-We can share feelings too strong or too difficult to be expressed in words

CHINA

- Don't cut long noodles
- Never point your chopsticks

JAPAN

- While eating at the dinner table in Japan, chopsticks should never be used to pass food between two people
- In the home, families stick chopsticks vertically into bowls of rice as ...

UNITED KINGDOM

- Tilt a bowl of soup away from you
- You should never begin eating at the dinner table until the eldest or most senior person has begun eating.

UNITED STATES

- It's illegal to eat watermelon
- Gainesville, Georgia
- It's illegal to eat fried chicken with anything but your bare hands
- ITALY
- While dining in Italy, you should never ask for extra cheese unless it is offered to you.

TANZANIA

- It is actually rude to show up early for dinner in Tanzania

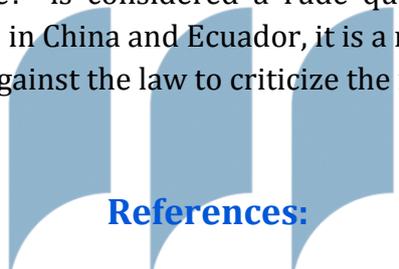
RUSSIA

- If you finish a bottle of vodka, the empty bottle should always be placed on the ground.
- Food should never, ever be licked off of a knife or any other eating utensil.

There are certain things you just shouldn't talk about. (Taboos)

- In some countries, including the United States, Indonesia, and Sierra Leone, asking adults about their age is generally considered taboo. In Vietnam, however, it is an important inquiry. The way you address someone older than you is different from how you address people younger than you.

- “Are you married?” is a harmless question most places, but, in Afghanistan, it is considered rude to ask a woman this question.
- Politics, religion, economic and social issues? Many avoid these topics when first meeting someone. In Nigeria, people love to discuss these topics and more—and strangers will join right in conversations to share their opinions.
- Have a good joke? In places like Venezuela and Uganda, simple jokes are welcome. But if you are a man meeting a Yemeni woman in a business situation, jokes will not only fall flat, but they may also be seen as inappropriate and strain the meeting.
- In many places like Taiwan, Sudan, and Syria, asking about one’s family is a welcome topic, but, in rural Thailand, it should be avoided until the speakers are well-acquainted.
- Discussing one’s weight is considered appropriate in Ecuador; in the Democratic Republic of Congo being overweight is a sign of good health and mentioning it can be considered a compliment. Don’t try this in the United States.
- Calling people by their names without their permission is offensive in Cambodia.
- In Costa Rica, avoid talking about investments, money, or the market.
- “How much do you make?” is considered a rude question in countries like Croatia, Germany, and the United States; in China and Ecuador, it is a normal topic of conversation.
- In Thailand, it is actually against the law to criticize the royal family.



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INNOVATIVE
ACADEMY