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CROSS CULTURAL COMMUNICATION
“Different Meaning of Gesture in Several Countries”
A PAPER

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By
RIZKY HIDAYATULLAH
1407042015

ENGLISH EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
GRADUATE PROGRAM
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2014

CROSS CULTURAL COMMUNICATION
“Different Meaning of Gesture in Several Countries”

Rizky Hidayatullah
Ahmad Dahlan University
rizky.hidayatullah17@gmail.com

Abstract

Some of countries have differentiated language especially non verbal language or body language to tell or transfer something but is not seldom some of body language that one country with others are same that is gesture .Gestures and eye contact are two areas of **nonverbal communication** that are utilized differently across cultures. Companies must train employees in the correct way to handle nonverbal communication as to not offend other cultures. For example, American workers tend to wave their hand and use a finger to point when giving nonverbal direction. Extreme gesturing is considered rude in some cultures. While pointing may be considered appropriate in some contexts in the United States, Yamato would never use a finger to point towards another person because that gesture is considered rude in Japan. Instead, he might gesture with an open hand, with his palm facing up, toward the person.

Keywords: Cross Cultural Communication, Non Verbal Communication, Gesture

A. Introduction

Cross-cultural communication has become strategically important to companies due to the growth of global business, technology and the Internet. Understanding cross-cultural communication is important for any company that has a diverse workforce or plans on conducting global business. This type of communication involves an understanding of how people from different cultures speak, communicate and perceive the world around them and not deny non verbal communication

Cross-cultural communication in an organization deals with understanding different business customs, beliefs and communication strategies. Language differences, high-context vs. low-context cultures, nonverbal differences and power distance are major factors that can affect cross-cultural communication.

a. Definition Cross Culture Communication

Cross-cultural communication endeavors to bring together such relatively unrelated areas as cultural anthropology and established areas of communication. Its core is to establish and understand how people from different cultures communicate with each other and also gesture culture. Its charge is to also produce some guidelines with which people from different cultures can better communicate with each other especially gesture.

Cross-cultural communication, as with many scholarly fields, is a combination of many other fields. These fields include anthropology, cultural studies, psychology and communication. The field has also moved both toward the treatment of interethnic relations, and toward the study of communication strategies used by co-cultural populations, i.e., communication strategies used to deal with majority or mainstream populations.

b. Definition Gesture

A **gesture** is a form of non-verbal communication or non-vocal communication in which visible bodily actions communicate particular messages, either in place of, or in conjunction with, speech. Gestures include movement of the hands, face, or other parts of the body. Gestures differ from physical non-verbal communication that does not communicate specific messages, such as purely expressive displays, proxemics, or displays of joint attention. Gestures allow individuals to communicate a variety of feelings and thoughts, from contempt and hostility to approval and affection, often together with body language in addition to words when they speak.

B. Discussion

Language differences, high-context vs. low-context, nonverbal differences and power distance are the major factors that can affect cross culture communication. Companies need to have strategies in place to educate their employees about different organizational global cultures. Diversity workshops, language classes and negotiation strategies for different cultures are all important factors in cross-cultural understanding in an organization, so how the gesture's role can unite and understanding non verbal communication in other culture?

a. Categories of Gesture

Pointing at another person with an extended finger is considered rude in many cultures. Although the scientific study of gesture is still in its infancy, some broad categories of gestures have been identified by researchers. The most familiar are the so-called emblems or quotable gestures. These are conventional, culture-specific gestures that can be used as replacement for words, such as the hand wave used in the US for "hello" and "goodbye". A single emblematic gesture can have a very different significance in different cultural contexts, ranging from complimentary to highly offensive. The page List of gestures discusses emblematic gestures made with one hand, two hands, hand and other body parts, and body and facial gestures.

Another broad category of gestures comprises those gestures used spontaneously when we speak. These gestures are closely coordinated with speech. The so-called beat gestures are used in conjunction with speech and keep time with the rhythm of speech to emphasize certain words or phrases. These types of gestures are integrally connected to speech and thought processes.

Other spontaneous gestures used during speech production known as iconic gestures are more full of content, and may echo, or elaborate, the meaning of the co-occurring speech. They depict aspects of spatial images, actions, people, or objects. For example, a gesture that depicts the act of throwing may be synchronous with the utterance, "He threw the ball right into the window. Such gestures that are used along with speech tend to be universal. For example, one describing that he/she is feeling cold due to a lack of proper clothing and/or a cold weather can accompany his/her verbal description with a visual one. This can be achieved through various gestures such as by demonstrating a shiver and/or by rubbing the hands together. In such cases, the language or verbal description of the person does not necessarily need to be understood as someone could at least take a hint at what's being communicated through the observation and interpretation of body language which serves as a gesture equivalent in meaning to what's being said through communicative speech.

b. Teaching language with gesture

Studies affirm a strong link between gesture typology and language development. Young children under the age of two seem to rely on pointing gestures to refer to objects that they do not know the names of. Once the words are learned, they eschewed those referential (pointing) gestures. One would think that the use of gesture would decrease as the child develops spoken language, but results reveal that gesture frequency increased as speaking frequency increased with age. There is however a change in gesture typology at different ages, suggesting a connection between gestures and language development. Children most often use pointing and adults rely more on iconic and beat gestures. As children begin producing sentence-like utterances, they also begin producing new kinds of gestures that adults use when speaking (iconics and beats). Evidence of this systematic organization of gesture is indicative of its association to language development.

Gestural languages such as American Sign Language and its regional siblings operate as complete natural languages that are gestural in modality. They should not be confused with finger spelling, in which a set of emblematic gestures are used to represent a written alphabet. American Sign Language is different from gesturing in that concepts are modeled by certain hand motions or expressions and has a specific established structure while gesturing is more malleable and has no specific structure rather it supplements speech. We should note, that before an established sign language was created in Nicaragua after the 1970s, deaf communities would use "home signs" in order to communicate with each other. These home signs were not part of a unified language but were still used as familiar motions and expressions used within their family still closely related to language rather than gestures with no specific structure.

c. Kinds of Different meaning of Gesture in Several Countries

1. Indonesian Body Language and Gestures

It's not only when we speak that we say things. Body language and gestures speak volumes, but only if you know how to "listen." And just like understanding Indonesian spoken language, understanding the non-verbal can sometimes be very frustrating! But, interestingly enough, Indonesian gestures are often much less vague than the spoken language.

The following guide will help you “sound” more Indonesian in manner and recognise some of the most-used gestures. It was highly inspired by *Tofugu*’s.

1) Greetings

When you meet an Indonesian person for the first time, you need to make some quick decisions! Do you refer to them formally as *Bapak* or *Ibu* or more informally as *Kakak/kak*, *Adik/dik*, *Mbak* or *Mas*? Do you shake their hand or offer both of your hands with palms together? The following guides may help but it’s often best just to let them take the lead.

2) Greeting an elder

To get an elder (a respected person in the community, like as teacher, your parent, grandmother, and so on) move their offered hand to slightly touch your forehead.

Picture

3) Shaking hands

Shake hands softly and then slightly touch your chest afterwards. Men usually give a stronger grip than women when they are shaking hands.

Touching your chest after shaking hands demonstrates respect to other person (you’re taking their greeting into your heart) It’s often OK to shake hands with someone of the opposite sex. Just use a soft grip.

4) Greeting another female friend

When female friends meet, they often greet each other by kissing cheek to cheek. This is known as *cipika cipiki* in Indonesian.

2. Japanese body language and gesture

Communicating with a Japanese can be very frustrating at times. If the rapport hasn't been developed, they tend to communicate in brief, but meaningful sentences, and a lot of times can be very ambiguous in their answers or wants.

Silence is more integrated in their customs as a form of communication than compared to Western languages. Also, the Japanese tend to be passive resistance. Therefore, it is very important that you understand the Japanese body language. Coupling the knowledge of the Japanese body language with verbal communication will help avoid misunderstandings between you and your Japanese conversationalist.

1) Eye Contact

Making eye contact is considered rude, leads to uncomfortableness, and can be construed as a sign of aggression. When speaking to or approaching a Japanese individual, make very brief eye contact to signal the individual, but then maintain appropriate eye level, such as the individual's neck.

A list of the common and not-so-common body gestures used by the Japanese. Learn these to avoid any confusion and awkward looks when communicating with your Japanese coworker, friend, or stranger!

2) Angry

Index fingers pointing out from head, like horns.

3) Asking for forgiveness; Favor, Thanking for a meal

Single clapping of the hands in front of the face.

4) Embarrassed

Open-hand behind the head.

C. Misunderstanding gesture

Sometimes gesture in all countries are same but it isn't also same because different culture factor and so on, the example misunderstanding culture about America and Europe that distinguish with Africa and Asia about eyes contact, Eye contact is the key factor in setting the tone between two individuals and greatly differs in meaning between cultures. In the Americas and Western Europe eye contact is interpreted the same way, conveying interest and honesty. People who avoid eye contact when speaking are viewed in a negative light, withholding information and lacking in general confidence. However, in the Middle East, Africa, and especially Asia eye contact is seen as disrespectful and even challenging of one's authority. People who make eye contact, but only briefly, are seen as respectful and courteous.

Other example about misunderstanding gesture, American workers tend to wave their hand and use a finger to point when giving nonverbal direction. Extreme gesturing is considered rude in some cultures. While pointing may be considered appropriate in some contexts in the United States, Yamato would never use a finger to point towards another person because that gesture is considered rude in Japan. Instead, he might gesture with an open hand, with his palm facing up, toward the person.

And especially deference between America and Indonesia about tell love use gesture this is the difference:

Indonesia people tell love

American people tell love

D. Conclusion

Cross-cultural communication has become strategically important to companies due to the growth of global business, technology and the Internet. Understanding cross-cultural communication is important for any company that has a diverse workforce or plans on conducting global business. This type of communication involves an understanding of how people from different cultures speak, communicate and perceive the world around them and not deny non verbal communication.

A **gesture** is a form of non-verbal communication or non-vocal communication in which visible bodily actions communicate particular messages, either in place of, or in conjunction with, speech. Gestures include movement of the hands, face, or other parts of the body. Gestures differ from physical non-verbal communication that does not communicate specific messages, such as purely expressive displays, proxemics, or displays of joint attention.

There are many kinds of gesture sometimes same but not seldom isn't similar with each other for example, Pointing at another person with an extended finger is considered rude in many cultures. The most familiar are the so-called emblems or quotable gestures. These are conventional, culture-specific gestures that can be used as replacement for words, such as the hand wave used in the US for "hello" and "goodbye". Gestures made with one hand, two hands, hand and other body parts, and body and facial gestures.

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