

## CULTURAL ASPECT IN THE INTERPRETATION OF NON-VERBAL COMPONENTS OF COMMUNICATION

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**Abstract.** *The scientific article is devoted to the study of the influence of culture on determining the meanings of non-verbal elements of communication. The points of view of scientists regarding the relationship between culture and communication are provided, and examples of the interpretation of similar non-verbal components in different cultures are highlighted.*

**Key Words:** *culture, nonverbal communication, worldview, meaning, gestures, gaze, smile.*

**Аннотация.** *Научная статья посвящается изучению влияния культуры на определение значений невербальных элементов общения. Приводятся точки зрения ученых касательно взаимосвязи культуры и коммуникации, а также освещаются примеры интерпретации схожих невербальных компонентов в различных культурах.*

**Ключевые Слова:** *культура, невербальная коммуникация, мировидение, значение, жесты, взгляд, улыбка.*

Culture and communication are closely related to each other, their relationship has a significant impact on every aspect of human life. E.B. Tyler defines culture as the complex of knowledge, beliefs, traditions and customs necessary for an individual as a member of society [10,40]. Culture is a system of generally accepted values, beliefs, norms and customs that are formed and transmitted through communication. In turn, communication serves as the main mechanism for transmitting, strengthening and changing cultural values and norms.

Even in the works of W. Humboldt, the idea is expressed that each native speaker forms his own vision of the world based on the experience of linguistic ancestors, enshrined in the concepts of language, such as myths and archetypes. [8,20] Only by mastering this experience we can apply or improve it. But by exploring the world, we make changes ourselves in society by using language. And if languages differ in the way they highlight meanings, then they also differ in the very way they perceive and comprehend the world. Humboldt's teaching states that "different languages are different worldviews and the specificity of

each language is determined by the linguistic consciousness of the people speaking it.” [4,21]

However, communication includes not only the verbal side, but also non-verbal units. Considering that language is a tool for transmitting thoughts, it is only a vision of reality with the help of which speakers understand the world. Consequently, nonverbal communication in all cultures can have different meanings, since it is fixed in the mind with the help of language.

The importance of nonverbal components of communication was mentioned in his work “The Art and Science of Communication: Nonverbal Communication” by Russian physiologist V.P. Morozov. In his opinion, speech is usually identified with a word, but audible speech as a means of communication carries the listener between words, regardless of the semantics of the word, non-verbally significant and important information about the speaker, his attitude towards the interlocutor and the subject of the conversation. [9,18] That is, nonverbal elements of communication carry additional meaning, showing the intentions of the interlocutors and their interest in the dialogue, representing a second channel of communication.

Therefore, for effective interaction between representatives of two different cultures, it is important to pay attention not only to the verbal difference in the components of communication, but also to the nonverbal component. Dmitry Borisovich Gudkov explains that “one of the main reasons for failures in intercultural communication is the poor knowledge of one of the communicants about the culture of the other, ... the system of values and norms of culture sets the rules for the verbal (speech) and non-verbal behavior of the verbal personality.” [5, 287]

Thus, gestures that are similar in form and execution can have different meanings in different cultures. In the article Ph.D. A.T. Onalbaeva describes three types of gestures: real gestures, which are unique to a particular nation and can only be understood by its representatives; areal gestures that have the same form and meaning in different cultures (for example, negative head shaking among Russians and Germans); equivalent gestures that have the same form but a different meaning (for example, the farewell gesture in Russia - waving the hand from top to bottom - can be perceived by Arabs or Japanese as an invitation to come over). [6,635] Using similar gestures often leads to their misinterpretation. A familiar gesture can cause misunderstandings, make it difficult to learn a language, or lead to comical and dangerous situations when communicating with foreign people.

One more example is the interpretation of a smile in Russian and American cultures. In Russian culture, excessive smiling during communication is

perceived as a frivolous, stupid gesture “not a signal of politeness.” [6,636] However, in the English-speaking world, a smile is mandatory when greeting and communicating, as it is a sign of politeness and the absence of aggressive intentions.

Another nonverbal element is the gaze, which can also be interpreted in different ways. Thus, many Western countries have a habit of making eye contact, while in China this can be considered disrespectful, and even staring can be regarded as an insult.

The distance between people during communication varies greatly depending on cultural norms. Some cultures prefer greater distance between interlocutors, while in other cultures closeness and physical contact are expected. When communicating, representatives of different countries prefer the following distance:[7]

- Close to each other - Italians, Spaniards, French, Arabs, Greeks, Japanese, South Americans.
- The average distance is preferred by the British, Austrians, Germans, Swedes, Russians, and residents of Switzerland.
- At a considerable distance from each other are New Zealanders, Australians, and the white population of North America.

Thus, it can be concluded that different cultures have different norms and expectations regarding how to use and interpret these nonverbal cues. Cultural differences in the interpretation of nonverbal communication can lead to misunderstandings and conflicts between members of different cultures. Understanding these differences allows people to avoid negative consequences when communicating with representatives of other cultures and promotes more harmonious intercultural relationships.

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