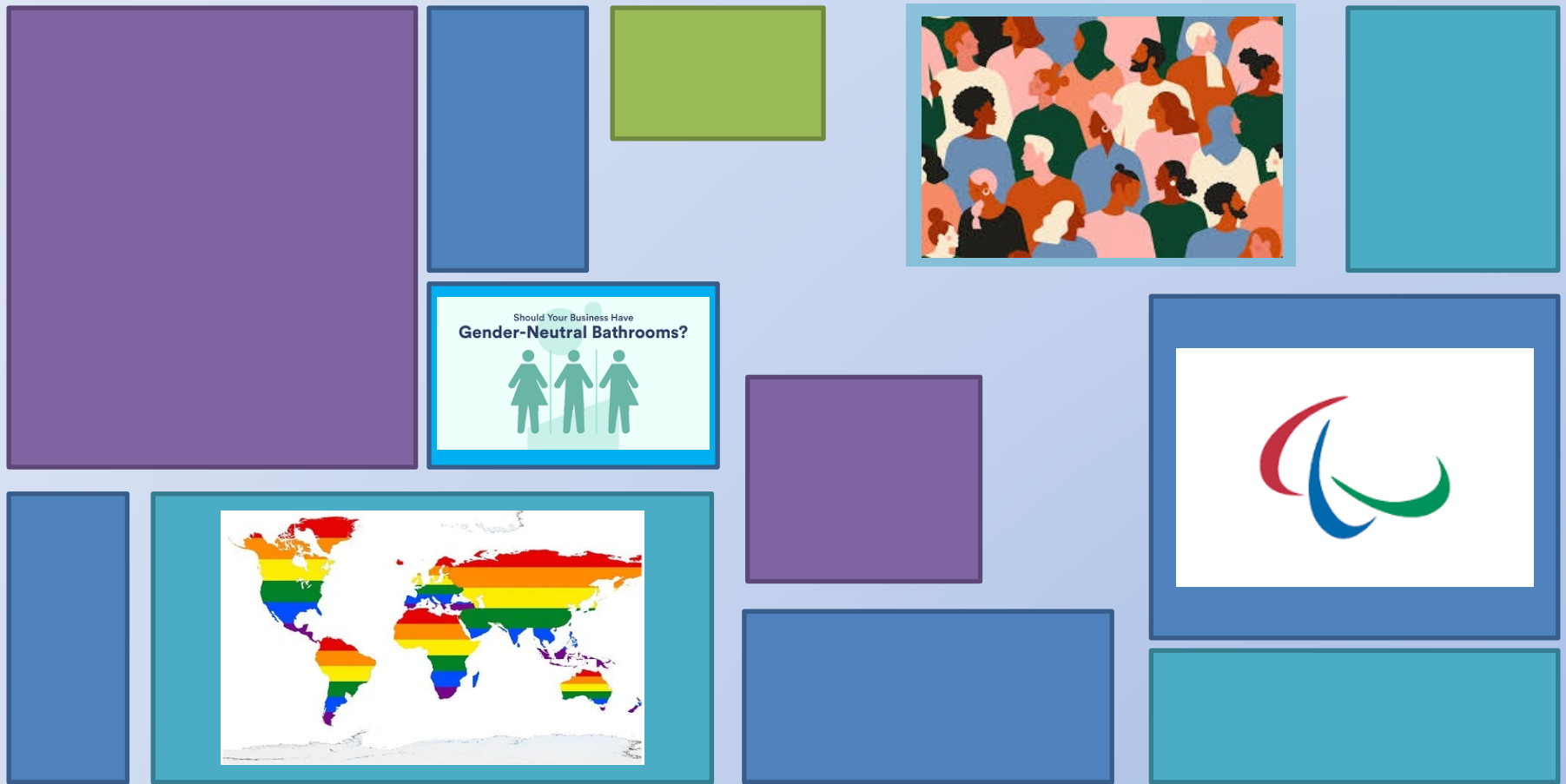




EC5001: Diversity & Difference in a Modern World

Theme 9: Culture & Communication (Part 2) Non-verbal Communication



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Learning objectives

At the end of this section, we will have:

- Defined nonverbal communication.
- Identified characteristics and functions of nonverbal communication.
- Evaluated different types of nonverbal codes.
- Explained the influence of culture on nonverbal communication.

Different cultures- different meanings

This video was created for International Students by the Hague University.

What strikes you as interesting about this video? (N.B. you should consider both the content and the presentation whilst watching the video.



1.



Defining nonverbal communication

- The term nonverbal communication refers to the use of non-spoken symbols which communicate a specific message.
- It can refer to both intentional and unintentional messages that are sent out by an individual.
- It is generally considered to include:
 - The use of space (proxemics)
 - Body language (as in the Hague University video)
 - The use of touch (haptics)
 - Paralanguage
 - Appearance and dress

Variation of nonverbal communication

- Research has shown that there is a degree of universality amongst some nonverbal communication, e.g. the expression of sadness or fear.
- However, the 'rules' governing the displays of nonverbal communication vary across cultures and are learned through socialisation.

Characteristics of nonverbal communication

- Verbal and nonverbal communication is often simultaneous and are inextricably intertwined.
- *Cognitive content* is conveyed through the verbal part of a message; *affective content* is conveyed through the nonverbal component. Most meaning is derived from the *affective content*.
- If the nonverbal message contradicts the verbal, the nonverbal message is given greater credence because nonverbal messages are perceived as less conscious and therefore more honest.



Difference between verbal and nonverbal codes

Neuliep (2006) identified three ways in which verbal and nonverbal codes differ:

(1) Verbal language is based on symbols; nonverbal communication is sign or signal based.

E.g. A 'shrug'

- Verbal language relies on sound symbols (in spoken language) and letter/word symbols (in written language)
- Non-verbal language relies on 'signs' or signals created using our bodies and other factors.



For example;



Functions of nonverbal codes

Knapp and Hall (1997) identified the following six primary functions of nonverbal communication:

1. To repeat a verbal message
2. To contradict a verbal message
3. To substitute for a verbal message
4. To complement a verbal message
5. To accent a verbal message
6. To regulate verbal communication

Could you give an example of each function?

Kinesics: body language

- Kinesics refers to gestures, hand and arm movements, leg movements, facial expressions, eye contact and posture.
- Ekman and Friesen (1969) identified the following categories of kinesic behaviours:
 - (1) Emblems.
 - (2) Illustrators.
 - (3) Affect displays.
 - (4) Regulators.
 - (5) Adaptors.

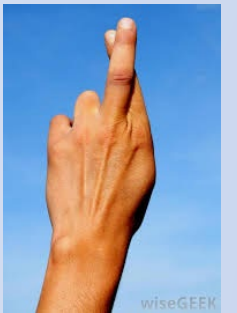
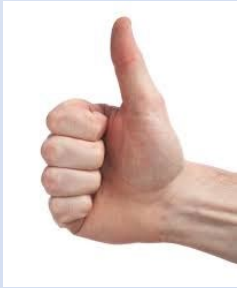
Emblems:

These are non-verbal cues that have a verbal counterpart.

- For example, the British sign for Victory (forefinger and middle finger erect) symbolises the letter V, a sign for victory often seen painted onto house walls during WWII. However, the same movement may symbolise the number two in the US and may be seen as insulting in Australia.
- There are a bewildering array of different meanings. The list of possible interpretations and different meanings is, unfortunately, nearly endless. In short, emblems are signs used to refer to certain words.

Emblems:

What would you say are the 'verbal' equivalents of these emblems?



Illustrators:

- Illustrators are used more consistently to illustrate what is being said.
- For example pointing to something that you are discussing about. It reinforces what you are saying. Again, the usage and the amount of illustrators used is different from culture to culture.
- For example Latin cultures in general make more use of illustrators than Anglo-Saxon cultures.
- And again, Anglo-Saxon cultures make more use of illustrators than many Asian cultures. In Asian culture, the use of illustrators show lack of intelligence while the absence of illustrators, indicate lack of interest in the Latin culture.

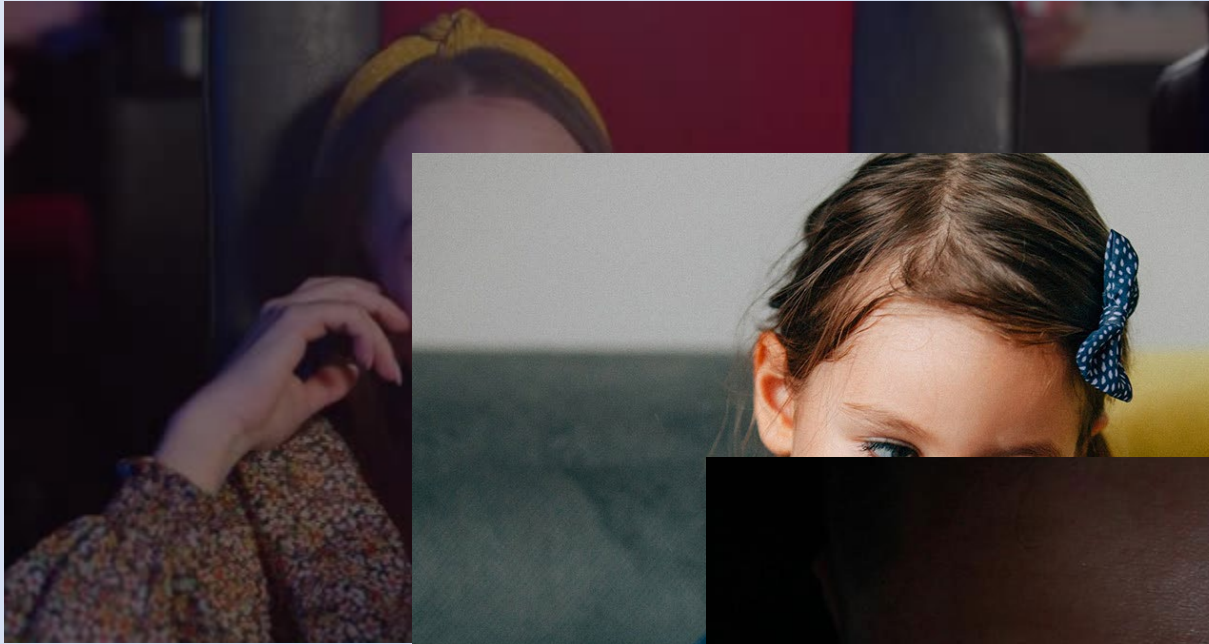
Affective Displays

- Affective displays are body, or more frequently facial, movements that display a certain affective state, i.e. emotions.
- A lack of such affective displays may well be understood as a lack of emotion, which in turn is probably wrong.
- Different cultures may practice the displaying of emotions differently.
- Although two people may be feeling just as angry, their display of anger may be totally different. One may go red in the face while the other may use silence to show displeasure. Therefore the lack of display may not indicate the lack of emotions.

Regulators:

- are non-verbal signs that regulate, modulate and maintain the flow of speech during a conversation.
- can be both kinesic, such as the nodding of a head, as well as nonkinesic, such as eye movements. They are often used as feedback to find out if one is clear of the instructions given or if the audience is interested in the speech.
- Different cultures use different forms of regulators to show confusion or understanding of a certain information.

Regulators:



Regulators

- Regulators may also modulate the flow of speech when someone who wishes to interrupt with a point, he/she raises up his/her hand to indicate that he/she has something to say.
- This action is a form of regulator as it controls the flow of speech by an interruption and changes it flow towards a new speaker.

Adaptors

- These include postural changes and other movements at a low level of awareness, frequently made to feel more comfortable or to perform a specific physical function.
- Because adaptors are usually carried out at a low level of awareness, they have been hailed as the secret to understanding what your conversation partner really thinks.

Adaptors

- A slumped posture indicates that you have low spirits, fatigued or that you feel inferior.
- Whereas, an erect posture shows high spirits and confidence. If you lean forward it implies that you are open and interested.
- Leaning away shows disinterest and defensiveness.
- Maintaining a rigid posture may mean that you are defensive, while a relaxed posture may translate to openness.
- Crossed legs and arms shows unwillingness to listen
- While uncrossed arms and leg indicates that you are approachable.

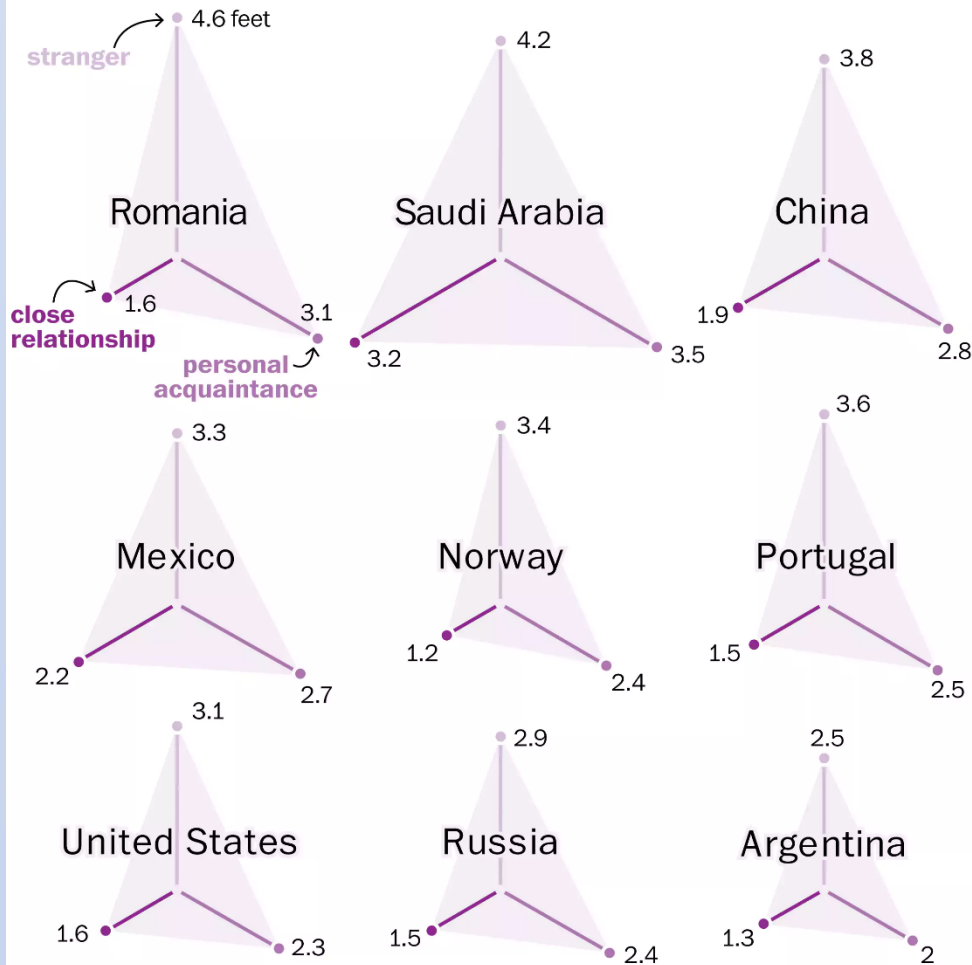
Proxemics: use of space

- *Proxemics* refers to the use of space, including territoriality. The study of proxemics includes three aspects of space:
 - (1) fixed features of space.
 - (2) semi-fixed features of space.
 - (3) personal space.
- Cultural norms and relationship between the communicators determine the use of personal space in communication (as with our earlier exercise).

Cultural Differences in Personal Space.

How close is too close? Depends on where you live.

Appropriate distance, in feet, for a ...



Source: Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology

TIM MEKO/THE WASHINGTON POST

Haptics: the use of touch

- *Haptics* refers to the use of touch, the most primitive form of communication.
- When, where, and whom we touch, and what meanings we assign when being touched by someone else differ widely across cultures, while the amount of touch varies with age, sex, situation and the relationship between the people involved.

4. What are haptics?



Is this appropriate haptics or not?

5.



Physical appearance and dress

- People wear particular type of clothes or otherwise consciously manipulate their physical appearance to communicate culture, religion, status, power, personality, modesty, self-esteem and social identity.
- Perceptions of beauty or physical attractiveness differ from culture to culture.

Paralanguage: quality and characteristics of the voice

- *Paralanguage* refers to vocal qualities that accompany speech and reflect cultural differences.

It can be divided into two broad categories:

(1) voice qualities.

(2) vocalizations.

- Could you think of an example to illustrate each?

Paralanguage

- The ways in which people show what they mean other than by the words they use, for example by their tone of voice, or by making sounds with the breath:
- The study of paralanguage deals with the non-verbal qualities of speech, which include pitch, amplitude, rate, and voice quality

6.



Influence of culture on nonverbal behaviour

- Lustig and Koester (2013) outline three cultural variations in nonverbal communication.
 - (1) Cultures differ in their specific repertoire of behaviours such as body movements, gestures, postures, vocal qualities and spatial requirements.
 - (2) All cultures have display rules which govern the contexts and uses of various nonverbal communication.
 - (3) The meaning attributed to particular nonverbal behaviours differs from culture to culture.

Nonverbal codes and intercultural communication

- Culture and nonverbal behaviours are inseparable as cultural rules and norms determine nonverbal meanings and usage.
- Consequently, when we communicate with others whose nonverbal repertoire is different from our own, as is almost always the case in intercultural communication, it can be expected that misunderstanding will occur.
- Violation of nonverbal rules or misinterpretations of nonverbal codes can lead to negative attitudes or even conflict.

Questions to think about...

- Do you think it is more difficult to learn a culture's non-verbal codes than its verbal ones?
- Is it possible to adequately learn one without the other?

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