

Non-Verbal Communication

Cultures also have non-verbal forms of communication, but there are still rules and symbols involved. **Kinesics** is the study of communication through body language, including gestures, facial expressions, body movement, and stances. Hand gestures add emphasis; a facial expression may contradict verbal communication. Voice level and tone add to our communication. Even silence can be an effective form of communication.



Brazil vs. Chile in Mineirão 17

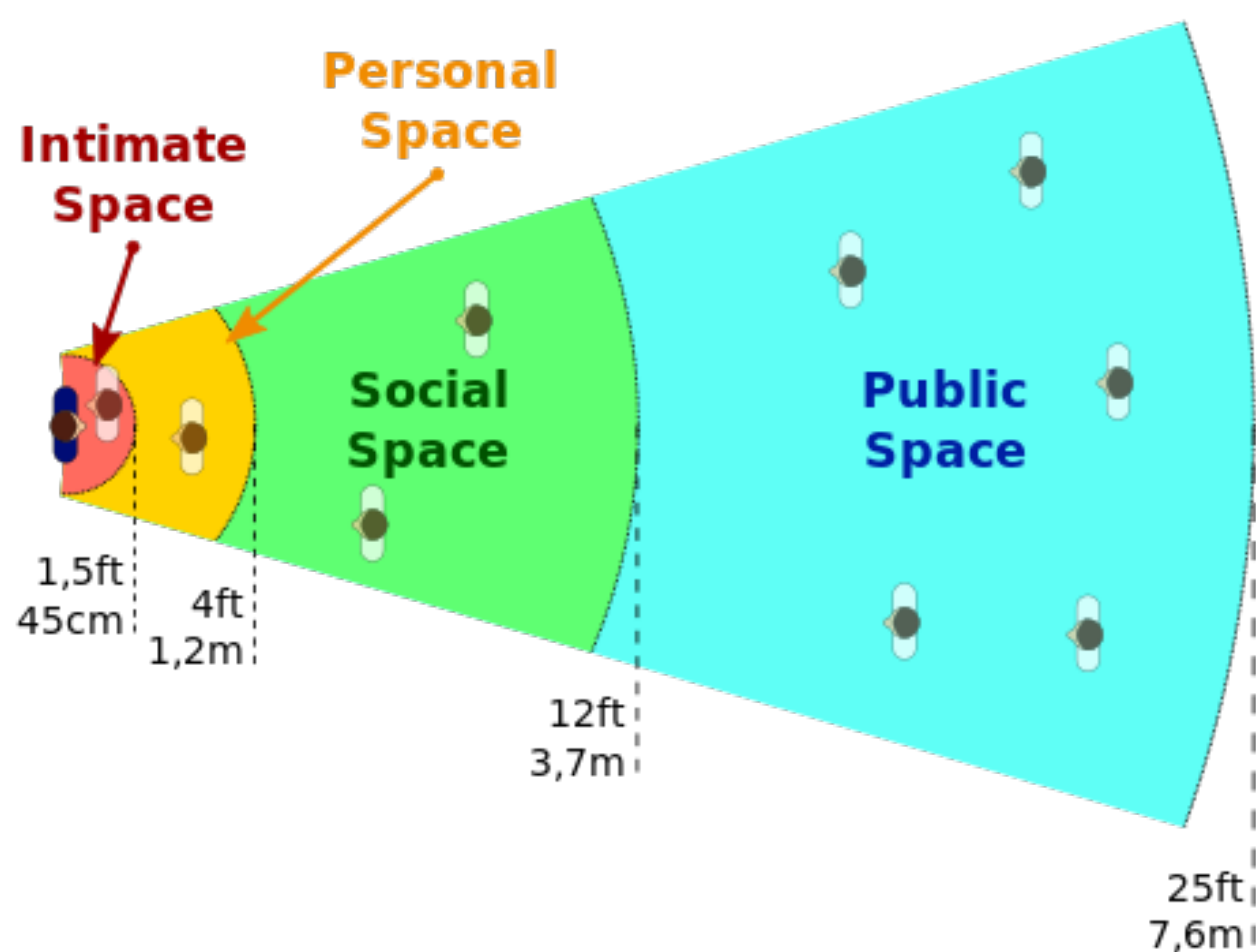
Body language is culture specific. The same body postures and gestures can have different meanings in different cultures. For instance, holding your hand out, fingers together, and palm facing outward is a symbol for stop in North America. In Greece, the same gesture is highly insulting. Crossing your fingers for luck in North America is an obscene gesture in Vietnam where the crossed fingers are thought to resemble female genitalia. A thumbs-up in North America might mean approval, but in Thailand it is a sign of condemnation usually used by children similar to how children in the United States stick out their tongue. The A-OK symbol gesture of index finger placed on the thumb might mean everything is OK in the United Kingdom and United States, but in some Mediterranean countries, Germany, and Brazil it is the equivalent of calling someone an ass.

Bowing in Japan communicates many things depending on how it is done. *Ojigi*, or Japanese bowing, is used as a greeting, a way to apologize, and a way to show respect. The degree of the bow indicates the amount of respect. Fifteen degrees is the common greeting bow for those you already know or are on an equal social level. A thirty-degree bow is used for people who have a higher social rank, such as a boss, but not someone to whom you are related. The highest respect bow is forty-five degrees and used when you apologize.



Woman bowing to an orca.

Other forms of non-verbal communication include clothing, hairstyles, eye contact, even how close we stand to one another. **Proxemics** is the study of cultural aspects of the use of space. This can be both in an individual's personal and physical territory. The use of color in one's physical space is an example of proxemics of physical territory. A health spa is more likely to use soothing, cool greens and blues rather than reds and oranges to create a relaxing atmosphere. Personal territory refers to the “bubble” of space we keep between others and ourselves. This varies depending on the other person and the situation, for instance, in the United States public space is defined as somewhere between twelve to twenty-five feet, and is generally adhered to in public speaking situations. Social space, used between business associates and social space such as bus stops, varies between four and ten feet. Personal space is reserved for friends and family, and queues, and ranges between two and four feet. Intimate space is less than a foot and usually involves a high probability of touching. We generally feel uncomfortable or violated if any of these spaces are “invaded” without an invitation.



Personal Spaces in Proxemics

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