

Differences and Effects of Eye Contact in Chinese and Foreign Non-Verbal Communication

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Abstract

With the accelerated development of China's economy and society, China and other countries in various areas of fruitful exchanges and cooperation, China's citizens to cross-cultural exchanges are also increasingly frequent, the correct treatment of cultural differences between Chinese and Western non-verbal communication not only to a certain extent to avoid conflicts in the interaction, but also more importantly, it can lead to further exchanges between the two cultures, and complement each other's strengths and weaknesses. As business English majors, they need to study not only from the aspect of language communication, but also from the aspect of non-verbal communication to study the differences, influences and cultural characteristics in cross-cultural communication between China and the West. In addition to verbal behavioral communication, body language and eye contact in non-verbal behavioral communication are also very important. This paper starts from the eye contact in non-verbal communication, seeks for an angle that can be borrowed and learned, which can help the development of the individual, and contribute to the effective cross-cultural communication.

Keywords

Nonverbal communication, cultural differences, eye contact.

1. Introduction

With economic globalization and the development of the "Belt and Road", exchanges between countries, nations and regions are becoming more frequent, bringing people more opportunities for intercultural communication. The process of communication between people with different cultural backgrounds is intercultural communication. However, we are very different from people in different countries in terms of culture, customs and communication. Along with the concept of "community of human destiny", understanding, respect, tolerance and adaptability of cross-cultural communication awareness and competence have become the core qualities of every citizen in an open society. When people from different countries communicate with each other, language is the most important communication tool and the medium for people to exchange ideas. However, in cross-cultural communication, when communicating with people of different cultures, in addition to knowing the language of other countries, understanding the etiquette and culture of other countries is also an indispensable part, and non-verbal communication is also an important means of communication between people of different cultures. Studying the differences and effects of cross-cultural communication between Chinese and foreigners can help to understand and use appropriate verbal and non-verbal communication behaviors, thus laying a foundation for smooth and effective communication between Chinese and foreigners, and is of practical significance for strengthening friendly exchanges between China and foreigners.

2. Importance of non-verbal communication

2.1. Supplementary language communication

In the process of daily communication with people, when people encounter the situation that they can't express their ideas precisely in words, they will also help to express them through some non-verbal communication behaviors, and then non-verbal communication plays the role of supplementing verbal communication. For example, when a teacher teaches new content, in addition to explaining it verbally, he or she can also point to the content on the blackboard to attract students' attention and enhance the effect of memorization; another example is that when we meet someone for the first time, in addition to verbal greetings, we usually put on a smile and shake hands with someone to convey a friendly message. As a matter of fact, all these non-verbal communicative behaviors complement verbal communication, thus helping communicators to express their meanings better.

2.2. Regulating verbal communication

Nonverbal communication is essential in daily life. In addition to the substitution and supplementation mentioned above, sometimes nonverbal communication behaviors are also used to regulate verbal communication. For example, in a conversation between two people, one person obviously looks embarrassed, or make a yawn, the other party will feel the content of the conversation is the other party feel embarrassed or bored, then he will promptly adjust the verbal communication behavior, change the direction of the topic of conversation. That is to say, both parties can receive information from each other's nonverbal communication behavior, so as to adjust the next language communication.

2.3. Creating a communicative impression

Good appearance, polite speech and behavior, suitable for their own makeup, can improve their own impression in the eyes of others. For example, wearing proper suits and dresses on formal occasions and speaking in a civilized and elegant manner will leave a good impression on other people, thus improving one's communicative ability. When people of different nationalities interact with each other, they will have different understandings because of the differences in the meaning of nonverbal communication. When talking, the correct non-verbal communication can promote the communication and exchange between the two sides, let each other's feelings further warm up, and get a pleasant mood. Inappropriate nonverbal communication hinders the communication between the two parties, causes misunderstanding between them, and destroys the relationship between them. For example, Japanese people like to be silent when communicating with others. When talking with Americans, Japanese silence can be misinterpreted as listening to the other side and agreeing with the other side's point of view.

3. Analysis of Cultural Differences in Eye Contact in Nonverbal Communication

It is often said that "the eyes are the windows of the soul", which shows that in the daily communication, the eyes can convey a rich and profound message. However, due to cultural background differences, there are many differences between Chinese and Western communication in the process of eye expression. China has always been a country that emphasizes on etiquette, paying attention to the respect of elders and juniors. In the process of talking with others, juniors and subordinates usually cannot look directly into the eyes of elders and superiors, on the contrary, it will leave an impression of arrogance and rebelliousness. When peers talk to each other, their eyes usually only see each other's necks as a sign of respect; while in Western countries, when two people talk, if the listener cannot keep a direct line of

sight with the speaker during the conversation, he or she is regarded as uninterested and unconcerned with what the speaker is saying, and is labeled as impolite.

3.1. Different values

Confucianism has almost always maintained a dominant position in the development of Chinese society, and to this day Confucianism still has an indelible influence on the values of the Chinese people. One of the basic characteristics is the "middle way", therefore, in the process of getting along with others, the Chinese people do not emphasize on competitiveness and highlighting themselves, as can be seen in the popular proverbs, "It is good to suffer," "Do not do unto others what you would not have them do unto you. In some widely spread proverbs, "it is good to suffer", "do not do unto others what you would not have them do to you", it can also be seen that the Chinese people pay more attention to dedication to their own and safeguard the interests of the collective; and from the Western film and television works, it is not difficult to find that the West is more advocate of individual heroism, advocate self-reliance, self-improvement, development of the self and safeguard personal interests, so in the social activities, the Western countries tend to be more concerned about their own feelings and thoughts, rather than the other side of the people.

3.2. Religious and cultural differences

Some foreign countries are located in multi-religious regions, such as Central Asia, where Islam has been practiced for about 1,000 years and has a serious religious coloration, so there are many taboos in various aspects. For example, a foreign student from Uzbekistan once mentioned that Chinese friends would habitually shake their hands after washing their hands, but for foreign students who believe in Islam, water is a symbol of purity in the region, and the water after washing hands is already contaminated.

Facial expressions are both consistent and distinctive across cultures. Due to physiological commonalities, people in different cultures express their emotions in similar ways, but due to the fact that people are unique individuals and in different cultures, they express their emotions in different ways. People in Central Asian countries are wary of the gaze of others, believing that the gaze of jealousy, envy of other things or talents has a supernatural evil power that can bring disaster to their family, friends, or the work they do.

4. Suggestions for the Cultivation of Non-verbal Communication Skills of Business English Majors

4.1. Improve their own professional quality and accumulate the theoretical knowledge of non-verbal communication

Intercultural communicators shoulder more responsibilities as the disseminator, demonstrator and guide of Chinese culture out of the country, and the words and deeds of intercultural communicators in communication will affect the enthusiasm and emotion of foreigners of different cultures. Therefore, intercultural communicators should improve their professionalism and strengthen the learning and accumulation of non-verbal communication theories, especially for the intercultural workers who first go to other countries for negotiation, they should constantly strengthen their heart to be a qualified intercultural communicator. Intercultural communicators can study and reflect after work so that their theories and skills can be improved in both breadth and depth. In addition, intercultural communicators should have a correct understanding of the importance of nonverbal communication, study the basic content and theoretical system of intercultural nonverbal communication in depth, and combine with their own practical experience and learning experience to apply the theory of nonverbal communication correctly and flexibly in communication.

4.2. Learning and Strengthening the Norms of Using Nonverbal Communication

The correct use of nonverbal communication is a compulsory course in intercultural communication, and intercultural communicators should have a correct cognition of nonverbal communication and strengthen the norms of using nonverbal communication in practical communication.

4.2.1. Body language

Body language, which can also be called gesture language, is an inseparable part of non-verbal communication, which includes eyes, body gestures, hand gestures, facial expressions and so on. Some simple body language is universal, such as some imitation movements. Expressing gestures such as eating, sleeping, etc. are not affected by race, culture, etc., and can be easily understood and widely used. However, there are still many complex body gestures that vary greatly due to cultural backgrounds, for example, young women holding hands in China simply signifies a close relationship, which is often considered a dysfunctional relationship in Western countries.

4.2.2. Sublanguage

Intercultural communicators should have a clear perception of their own speed, tone and volume of voice, keep it at a moderate level in the process of communication, and adjust it in combination with the other party's response to play a good role in communication. Intercultural communicators should also learn to use pauses and silence to adjust the rhythm of communication. Appropriate pauses can buffer the thinking of both sides, leaving appropriate thinking time for both sides of communication to ensure the effectiveness of communication.

4.2.3. Object language

Intercultural communicators should pay attention to the expression of their own object language. Intercultural communicators should dress appropriately and wear clean and elegant make-up, which will establish a positive image of intercultural communicators, and should not be too unique and fancy, which will easily cause a lack of trust from the communicators.

4.2.4. Environmental language

In the process of daily communication, the distance and position between people can reflect the psychological state and the degree of intimacy between the two parties. People in different cultures have different attitudes towards the control of distance in the process of communication. American psychologists divide the distance between people into four types: private distance, intimate distance, general distance, polite distance, from these four different divisions can be seen when the distance between the two sides of the communication is generally determined by the relationship between the two sides of the communication.

4.3. Targeted non-verbal communication with people from different countries

Intercultural communication is a bridge connecting friendly exchanges between China and foreign countries, mastering the linguistic and non-linguistic knowledge in intercultural communication between China and foreign countries, and possessing the knowledge base of intercultural communication, so as to form an intercultural awareness. There are differences in the dimension of non-verbal communication with people from different countries, so it is necessary to consider the characteristics of different countries in the process of communication. Observe each other's behavioral characteristics and communication styles, and process the information exchanged, and use reasonable nonverbal communication behaviors to promote the successful completion of communication behaviors when communication cannot be met. Cultural differences are unavoidable, there are differences in culture, but there are no advantages and disadvantages, we should treat other cultures with equality and respect, and seek common ground and solve differences, and differences can enhance mutual understanding,

so as to carry out effective cross-cultural communication. In recent years, with the enhancement of China's comprehensive national strength, it is of great significance to improve China's international image, and cross-cultural communication ability has become one of the important abilities in the training of foreign language talents. In the process of communicating with other cultures, we should promote China's excellent traditional culture, introduce China's ever-changing development and changes, and show the spirit of our countrymen.

4.4. Fully understand the non-verbal communication cultures of different countries

Non-verbal communication has country-specific differences, and the same non-verbal behavior has different meanings in different countries, even if the nationalities are the same and the countries are different. A small meaningless action in communication may cause discomfort to the other party, so we should pay attention to the behavioral differences brought by cultural differences in communication with people from different countries. For Middle Eastern countries, religious beliefs bring many taboos, and it is important to understand the non-linguistic differences between the two countries to avoid culture clashes. For example, there is a difference in the transmission of eyes. In China, when communicating or talking with others, we will look straight at each other to show respect and honor, but in the Middle East, looking straight into each other's eyes is a kind of impolite performance, which needs to be understood in advance to avoid misunderstanding. For example, in China, crossing one's neck with the palm of one's hand means "to kill", but in the Middle East, it means that one has already eaten enough rice and the rice has reached one's neck, and sometimes when one is angry, one will also use this gesture, which means one has had enough of it, which is because there is no criminal punishment of decapitation in the Middle East countries. In short, it is very common for different countries to have different perceptions of non-verbal communication, and as a cultural communicator, we should pay special attention to cultural differences, create a relaxed and comfortable communication atmosphere, and better promote cultural exchanges between the two sides. At the same time, you can also regularly chat with people from different countries to understand the local non-verbal communication behavior and habits, the process of accumulating the meaning of non-verbal communication behavior can also be closer to each other to promote good communication behavior.

5. Conclusion

As globalization continues to advance, our citizens are communicating more and more closely with citizens of other countries in a cross-cultural context due to cross-border trade and other activities, and non-verbal communication behaviors have also received more attention. Although in most cases, verbal communication and non-verbal communication occur simultaneously, non-verbal communication can play an alternative, complementary and regulating role to verbal communication, and also plays an increasingly important role in the communication process. We clearly recognize that culture plays a decisive role in the field of non-verbal communication. Due to the difference in value orientation and way of thinking, the differences between Chinese and Westerners in body language, object language, paralinguistic and environment language are very significant, which also reminds us that non-verbal communication exists in every aspect of the process of cross-cultural communication, and we have to improve our own sensitivity, treat these differences with tolerance, and promote the cross-cultural communication in a friendly way.

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