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THE ROLE OF NON-LINGUISTICS AND KINESICS IN DAILY LIFE COMMUNICATIONS IN EGYPT

This article is devoted to the research of how the use of nonverbal forms of communications eases the interaction between people in daily life circumstances. The research revealed that in crowded cities or always busy work atmospheres like restaurants or offices, it turns out that the use of kinesics and body language makes it easier to communicate – saving a lot of time and thus being more productive. Taking into consideration Egypt – which is ranked 14th among the most populous countries in the world, we have done a study to analyse the effect of using nonverbal forms of communication on the overall meaning of speech, and it turned out that it complements, emphasises and strengthens the meaning, and clearly delivers the thoughts of the speaker who sometimes can't express what he needs to say using verbal forms of speech. In general, gestures offer a better representation of the person and keep a good contact with the listeners, keeping their attentiveness. It proved out that most of the emotions and feelings can't be expressed just by words, and that the use of gestures and illustrations is sometimes a must to completely deliver the intended meaning. In connection with all this, gestures open the door for the creation of new words, since not everything that can be expressed using a gesture can be explained in words. Even though there are no dictionaries or any formal references for local gestures, there is a need to involve more professional approaches to the study of gestures, thus increasing the word base of our dictionaries, which would eventually increase the general cultural level of societies.

Keywords: non-linguistics; kinesics; Egypt; nonverbal communications; gestures.

Introduction

Non-linguistic communications are one the most popular forms of interacting with other people. It could be useful for locals – to express their needs, feelings or emotions while communicating with others. While nonverbal communications have more than one form, which includes gestures, facial expressions, touch, eye contact, space, body movement and posture – one of the most effective ways that most people use in their daily life is the gestures. Gestures can explain how angry the person is, or how happily he is excited for something, can as well express agreement or disagreement. Non-linguistic forms of communications appear to be more useful in crowded cities.

Non-linguistics

In general, non-linguistics is represented by anything excluding language or spoken words. This can include whistles, crying, simulation, 3D demonstrations, or street signs. Focusing on the non-linguistic forms between two or more persons, an interesting study has confirmed that the non-verbal communication part of speech forms 38 percent of the overall meaning, leaving 55 percent to the body language and only 7 percent to the spoken content [1]. This means that non-linguistics almost contributes 90 percent of each of our daily interactions with other people.

Accordingly, let's assume a situation where someone asks, "What are you doing tonight?"

where the question itself might be easy to understand, however, there are various aspects which contribute to the intended meaning – such as the speaker's tone of voice, body posture or eye contact that could indicate different intentions and meanings [2].

Research in the field of mental kinesics is very important and relevant for the modern world, because they allow a person who finds himself in a new mental space to successfully communicate as a result of interiorization, i.e. transferring external knowledge about the world to its internal understanding, as well as exteriorization, i.e. transferring internal knowledge to external. Thus, the communicator encodes and decodes information, which brings verbal and non-verbal communication closer [3].

Kinesics

Kinesics which is also known as body language includes, but is not limited to, body posture, movements, facial expressions and gestures – whereas, by combining these, we can understand the intention of the speaker, even sometimes he didn't speak or use any kind of verbal communications at all. One of the main forms on kinesics is the gestures, which is also divided into three parts – adaptors, emblems and illustrators.

Adaptors, Emblems & Illustrators

Adaptors are whether movements or a kind of motion, or a touching behavior that describes the

state of feeling of the person using or doing it. For instance, a person wiping his lips with his tongue might indicate that he is excited for something tasty, that he just saw a good dinner or his favorite dish. Adaptors can also indicate anxiety or worry – a person shaking his legs or continuously clicking a pen is remarkably worried about something.

Where emblems and illustrators might seem similar, the difference between them is that emblems do have an agreed-on meaning within the culture they are used within or even some of them are internationally agreed upon. A good example for that is the raised thumb indicating “Ok” while a thumb down means “No” or indicates disagreement. But as for the illustrators, they occur more naturally, with no agreed-on meaning. Illustrators could be used to express size, quantity, shape or even direction. They occur subconsciously when the person needs to use them, like when someone wants to express a shape, he can do circular motion with both of his hands to refer to a spherical shape or do a square motion to refer to a square. Accordingly, opening arms wide expresses big size or distance, while pulling the index and thumb close indicates a short distance or a small size.

Verbal and Nonverbal communications in different countries

Depending on the type of culture, land, territory or even weather, people can tend to use more or less verbal communication between each other. For example, smaller villages with almost no people, tend to use verbal forms of communication more than populous cities, since in smaller villages there is a lack of noise, factors of disturbance or barriers between the people and each other.

Also in such villages, the lack of humans can cause boredom or depression in some cases – that’s why non-linguistic forms of speech are not preferable and verbal forms of speech, which include more interaction between the people are much welcomed. While on the other hand, in bigger cities that are crowded with people, it proves to be more efficient and productive to use gestures or illustrations to communicate with one another, since the city noise can sometimes be a barrier to communicate with someone, specially, if he isn’t in a close distance.

So instead of shouting, gestures can be used to deliver the message, without the need to speak. Also, gestures proved to be efficient with production line managers in big factories, who have to give commands to more than one worker at the same time, and instead of that, pointing to the worker then pointing to the desired location could mean “Go there”, or “Take care of that work”.

Advantages of using gestures

Gestures are complementary, which means that they give a complement to the speech, or the verbal message being said by someone. As an example, a person who says goodbye and waves his hands in a rapid manner can indicate a warmer goodbye or deeper feelings for the person he is farewelling, while just a goodbye with a regular intensity hand wave shows just a goodbye. In some cases, a gesture can even substitute a verbal sentence, which means that just a hand wave with no verbal sentences indicates a goodbye; this proves to be effective in reducing the waste of time in some other cases, like a big office with a lot of employers or a football stadium full of crowd.

Gestures also offer a better representation of the person and his feeling and can help emphasizing or strengthening some points of his speech and keep a good contact with the listeners, keeping their attentiveness.

The use of gestures in Egypt

Egypt has been related to the use of gestures, emblems and symbols since the era of Pharaohs – starting from the iconography, hieroglyphic symbols and letters, which Pharaohs wrote on the walls of temples and royal tombs. Their written form of the language was remarkably fascinating, since they had their own perspective of transferring information to the reader – a perspective that is completely different from the one we have now. In addition to that, they were good sculptors, mostly sculpting their royal kings – we noticed that the statue itself has its own messages to deliver by the way it stands or points a finger or gestures. In general, human postures (still positions), gestures and facial expressions embody complex culture codes and are a form of language and a mode of communication in their own right [4].

Meanwhile, in the modern era, Egypt is considered one of the most populous countries in the world, ranking the 14th among the list of the most populated countries with the population of almost 105 million [5]. Not only ranking the 14th in the list, but also a high population density of 103/km², noting that almost 90 percent of Egypt is deserts and most of the population live alongside the river Nile, which makes the population density even bigger in areas and cities close to River Nile, like Cairo, Giza and Alexandria close to the Mediterranean Sea. Where the use of gestures started to prove efficiency between Egyptians for a couple of reasons, in the first place, the crowded atmosphere doesn’t give a lot of space for the verbal kinds of communications to take place.

Secondly, Egyptians are very emotional when it comes to communicating, they always want to clearly express what they feel or need, and thanks to the non-linguistic forms, it makes the way much shorter [6].

General use of gestures

Egyptians use gestures to express agreement or disagreement, nod down means “Yes” whereas a consecutive left and right nod means “No”. While a right nod means “Let’s leave” and a left nod means “Come with me”.

It can seem complicated for a foreigner, but as for locals, they have been using such gestures in their daily life with ease. They mostly greet each other on the street by just raising up both eyebrows, which means “Hi”.

Egyptians most of the time can express what they want to say or what they need just by using gestures, so they are not only limited to expressing agreement or disagreement. A person who needs to call someone over, will use the index finger back and forth to let the other person know that he wants him to come. But if the situation is more urgent, they use the whole arm to do the same gesture back and forth, and that means “Come over as fast as you can”.

One very interesting gesture when an Egyptian wants to menace someone, he wraps the hand around the cheeks – putting the thumb on the right cheek and the other four fingers on the left cheek, then slowly pull all the fingers together, reaching the chin. This gesture shows threatening and interprets the verbal sentence “I will make you pay for that”. This gesture is usually used between parents and kids, for instance, a kid went with his mom to a family park and did some unpleasant act, instead of shouting at the kid or starting an argument on the street – which is not preferable, the mom shows this gesture to let the kid know that he did something unlikable and that they will discuss that later when they come home.

Also, there is a known gesture Egyptians use to express gratitude. An Egyptian taps his chest with one hand twice accompanied with a smile, which means “Thank you” or “I’m grateful”. In addition to that, the gesture “Wait” where the speaker bunches his fingers on one hand, facing upward, and shaking them vertically, these gestures prove efficiency on work meetings or when someone is having a conversation, then he gets interrupted by a verbal speech from a third person, the use of this gesture would let the speaker continue his verbal dialogue, and yet answering the third person, letting him know that he should wait, or that he will get back to him later.

Egyptians have a well-known idiom which, if translated into English, would mean “From my eyes”, they usually use that to express the pleasure of doing something – they consider the eyes to be the most precious body part, and when they do something “From their eyes” it means they are doing it with extreme passion and pleasure. Since Egyptians have been interpreting almost all their needs into gestures, this one is also interpreted into a gesture where they refer to both of their eyes using the index finger to point at the left eye, then sequentially pointing at the other eye – to refer to “From my eyes”. Let’s say a person asks someone to do him a favor or to complete a task or assignment, then the other person does this gesture, then it means “I will do it with pleasure”.

Also, one of the useful gestures used in Egyptian streets, is the gesture referring to the question word “What”, which is done by opening your palm – fingers apart from each other as if you are holding an invisible apple in your hand, then twisting the wrist counterclockwise from the left to the right. An example for that is two people standing in a decently far distance, then one waves to the other, and in response to the wave, the receiver does this gesture to refer to the question “What”, meaning “What do you want from me?” or “What do you need me to do?”, then accordingly by using the relevant gesture, the other person can explain what he needs, like pointing a finger to something or some place to indicate “Do this” or “Go there”.

Like the previous gesture, another similar one with the same hand movement but this time the counterclockwise twist is done while the palm faces the side of the head, which is interpreted as the question like “What is wrong with you?” or “Are you crazy?”.

As Egyptians explain most of their emotions using gestures, they also have a gesture to show “I am fed up” where a person uses his thumb, index finger and middle finger to grab his throat or exactly Adam’s apple, and move it slightly in a vertical motion, to indicate that he is fed up with something or someone.

While if you ask a person “How are you doing today?”, he will answer “Thank God, I am fine” or instead, kiss the back then the front of his hand, where this kind of gesture means “Thank God”, or “I’m satisfied”.

Use of gestures in cafes or restaurants

Egyptian local cafes are known to be very crowded, with the guests needing to be served quickly and the waiters needing to get the work done quicker, that’s why usually gestures are used.

When the customer enters the place, he can point his hand at the waiter making a gesture with his thumb and index in a vertical position – leaving a small gap between them, which will look like a “C” letter. Then surprisingly, the waiter understands that the guy needs a cup of coffee. While the same gesture but with a wider gap between the index and the thumb, refers for a cup of tea. But if he wants a Hookah, then a gesture with the thumb and little finger spread wide (rest of the fingers touching the palm) would do the job.

This means that you can enter a local cafe, nod to the waiter to greet him, order coffee and a hookah, then leave the cafe without saying a word. And as for the bill, a gesture with the palm facing up, thumb away and all other fingers close to each other, then tapping with the middle finger and index of the other hand on the palm – indicates the you need your bill and want to leave, all done without a word.

Use of gestures in transport

Egyptian streets are always full of people, no matter what time of the day it is. The main forms of transport are metros, trains, taxis and minibuses. As for the taxis, shaking the wrist up and down, means “I need a taxi”. However, when it comes to minibuses, the situation becomes more interesting, as Egyptians have really useful gestures for that. Since there are no mobile applications to track the routes or arrival times of minibuses, when people staying on the street see a minibus coming, but they are clueless which route it will take, they start exchanging gestures with the driver of the minibus. So, a minibus driver going to the first district, will show a number one gesture, and the driver going to the second district will show a number two gesture, making it clear for the passengers which route the minibus is on. There is a more interesting fact that such gestures are not only limited to show numbers but they show directions or describe places as well.

For instance, a minibus driver is heading towards a passenger, then the passenger makes a round gesture using one of his index fingers, such gesture indicates to “Ring Road”, then accordingly, the minibus driver nods his head for a yes or no, or instead, show a gesture using his arm fully extended in the horizontal position and the palm in the vertical position, shaking the hand vertically, to indicate that he is going further – not taking any lefts or rights, so by assuming that to reach the Ring Road the minibus will need to take one of the coming lefts, now the passengers understand that the minibus is going forward, not taking any rights

and lefts, and, therefore, not heading to the Ring Road. Accordingly, if the passenger is going to the same destination as the minibus route, he will use the same gesture used to stop a taxi driver – letting the minibus driver understand that the passenger is willing to get on board. This leads us to the fact that the passenger knew the route of the minibus, got in, covered tens of kilometers, arrived at his destination and left the minibus without having to say a word to the minibus driver.

This method proves efficiency, especially in crowded cities like Cairo or Giza where there are always traffic jams and no official stops for the minibuses, so, if they agreed in advance whether the passenger will get in or not, the driver doesn't have to stop and thus avoid blocking the traffic.

Disadvantages of using Gestures

Despite the nonverbal types of communications proving a lot of efficiency and having more than one benefit, there are numerous disadvantages of using that type of communication, as it lacks accuracy and precision sometimes. It is sometimes quite difficult to express the intention without using verbal speech, even though the verbal speech contributes only 10 percent to the overall meaning of speech, however, it might be irreplaceable with gestures or illustrations.

The nonverbal methods do not have a dictionary that lists them and are associated by self-learning methods or inheritably from the previous generations, thus, sometimes the gesture or illustration doesn't have a meaning to the receiver, especially, if the speaker and the receiver are of a different age category.

One other minus for that kind of communication is the lack of possibility to pause when illustrating something, unlike the verbal speech where we can stop talking and think or even change the subject, while during nonverbal illustrations by using gestures, it turns out to be very difficult to stop the illustration while maintaining the same general idea.

Also, the distortion of information is considered a major minus, for kinesics including two or more variables, like both an eye contact and a gesture, or an eye contact, a gesture and a body movement. So, the receiver might miss a gesture while he is busy with an eye contact or vice versa, which will not provide him with all the information the receiver intended to deliver and, thus, can lead to misunderstanding. Aside from that, most gestures are not agreed upon internationally, and using them while travelling abroad might lead to troubles. “Participants from western societies perceived some common behaviors in Saudi society differently: for ex-

ample, they interpreted holding hands and kissing on the cheeks between members of the same sex as indicating homosexuality, while such gestures are normal practices of friendship in Saudi society” [7].

Accordingly, various numbers of gestures and emblems can be interpreted into different meanings in cross-culture environment, which can lead to misunderstandings or the occurrence of awkward situations where someone can feel offended or insulted. One major downside for the gestures is that we can't make long conversations using the gestures and they are only limited to being complementary to the verbal speech.

Gestures also lack formality as nonverbal communication doesn't follow any rules, formality or structure like other communications. In most cases, people are unconsciously and habitually engaged in nonverbal communication by moving the various parts of the body [8].

Discussion

The use of gestures, kinesics and nonverbal communications is not a discovery or an invention. It has been embedded with the human since birth, it is not related to any kind of civilization or culture. “One of the fundamental features of human language is that it is learned through socially mediated interactions, culturally transmitted over generations, and varies substantially within and among human societies” [9].

A good example for that is the newborn babies “when the newborn baby has had enough milk, it shakes its head from side to side to reject its mother's breast. Similarly, a child who has had enough to eat uses the Head Shake to reject attempts to spoon feed him” [10]. The baby wasn't taught any kind of gestures but as a part of nature, the brain starts to send signals to the body parts to express what it wants or what it needs, then the brain starts to analyze the conclusions based on the gesture. For instance, the baby uses the head shake to refuse the attempt of spoon feeding it, the brain then confirms the gesture to be used in future for the same purpose, however, if the gesture wasn't accompanied with the expected results to stop the spoon feeding, then the brain starts to give new signals to other body parts to form other gestures to achieve the expected results.

It is interesting how the gestures and use of kinesics evolved throughout the years to be used for different purposes, starting from simple tasks like showing agreement or disagreement, to more complicated tasks like explaining the whole situation without the need to use any kind of verbal speech, just the body language and the gesture or the illustration.

As mentioned, these kinds of communication are taken advantage of in crowded places and cities, different work atmospheres, and to strengthen and emphasize the meaning of verbal speech in daily life conversations, as without the non-linguistics – most of the context of the dialogue or conversation will not transfer the intended meaning that the speaker wanted to deliver to the listener. So, the use of gestures turned out to be useful between locals. However, it can lead to troubles when used outside the country borders, since gestures might have different meanings in different countries or across different cultures.

Even though there are cross-culture gestures approved worldwide, it is still not an idea for foreigners or tourists to use nonverbal forms of communications when travelling abroad. Let's take, for instance, the “Well done” where you put the thumb and the index finger together to form a circular shape while the rest of the fingers are spread far – which is inarguably agreed-on worldwide as a cross-culture emblem to show how you are satisfied with some result, however, such emblem can get you in trouble in some other countries like Greece, Spain and Brazil where it means a direct insult, while in Turkey it refers to homosexuals [11]. To avoid such misunderstanding while being abroad, reading about the culture of the destination country seems to be useful.

Studying the nonverbal types of communications, gestures used and what are the most popular emblems in that country, would definitely get you out of trouble. It was also noted that the use of nonverbal terms of communication increases the mutual level of understanding between people and increases productivity – since understanding the silence of someone would for sure make a better opportunity to understand the words and verbal speech of the person more clearly.

Conclusion

It proved out that most of emotions and feelings can't be expressed by just words and that the use of gestures and illustrations is sometimes a must to completely deliver the intended meaning, as we can see Egyptians swinging their arms in different directions while maintaining a dialogue with someone. For a while, it might seem that they are fighting but when you get closer, you see a very deep dialogue with a lot of aspects where it is believed that in Egypt using only words while having a dialogue might be a sign of superiority. Egyptians consider that as a cold way of running a dialogue and that a proper conversation should be a mix of gestures, body language and verbal speech, otherwise,

you would be misunderstood as an arrogant person. People tend to create new words to describe what they feel or need when they use gestures, and even though there are no dictionaries or any formal references for local gestures and emblems, there is a need to involve more professional approaches to the study of gestures, thus increasing the word base of our dictionaries, which would eventually increase the general cultural level of societies.

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РОЛЬ НЕЛИНГВИСТИКИ И КИНЕСИКИ В ПОВСЕДНЕВНОЙ КОММУНИКАЦИИ В ЕГИПТЕ

Данная статья посвящена исследованию того, каким образом использование невербальных форм общения способствует облегчению взаимодействия между людьми в повседневных жизненных обстоятельствах. Исследование показало, что в многолюдных городах или постоянно загруженной рабочей атмосфере, такой как рестораны или офисы, использование кинесики и языка тела упрощает общение людей, экономит их время и, следовательно, повышает продуктивность. Принимая во внимание, что Египет занимает четырнадцатое место среди самых густонаселенных стран мира, мы провели исследование, чтобы проанализировать влияние невербальных форм общения на общее значение речи, и оказалось, что оно дополняет, подчеркивает, усиливает смысл и ясно передает мысли говорящего, который иногда оказывается не в состоянии выразить то, что ему нужно сказать, используя вербальные формы речи. В целом жесты лучше представляют человека и поддерживают контакт со слушателями, сохраняя их внимание. В ходе исследования было выявлено, что большинство эмоций и чувств нельзя выразить исключительно словами и что использование жестов иногда является обязательным для того, чтобы полностью передать то, что было задумано коммуникантами. В связи со всем этим был сделан вывод, что жесты открывают дверь для создания новых слов, поскольку не все, что можно выразить с помощью жестов, можно объяснить словами. Несмотря на то что в настоящее время не существует словарей или каких-либо официальных ссылок на локальные жесты, свойственные жителям тех или иных мест, необходимо задействовать более профессиональные подходы к изучению жестов, тем самым увеличивая словарную базу существующих словарей, что в итоге повысит общий культурный уровень общества.

Ключевые слова: нелингвистика; кинесика; Египет; невербальная коммуникация; жесты.

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