



## Mid term inc 211 - fafasfasf

Finance Management (Đại học Hà Nội)



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**HANOI UNIVERSITY**  
**FACULTY OF INTERNATIONAL STUDIES**

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**MID-TERM REPORT ON**  
**INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION**

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## **1. Introduction**

Thanks to globalization and advanced technology, people are now more connected than ever to other people all over the world. Living in this society, intercultural communication has become commonplace. In any conversation, individuals not only exchange words with others but also convey nonverbal communication. Nonverbal communication skills are vital because they allow you to better grasp what people are saying and effectively convey your thoughts and feelings through gestures, eyes, facial expressions,...that words can hardly describe. Especially when persons of different origins or cultural backgrounds may misinterpret the meaning of the other person. This report begins by examining the significance of nonverbal cues in cross-cultural interactions. It then goes into how cultural differences affect nonverbal cues and how misinterpretations might happen. Subsequently, it investigates whether nonverbal misinterpretations decrease or intensify in significance with an increase in international travel and media.

## **2. Discussion of findings**

### **2.1. The definition of nonverbal communication**

Nonverbal communication is defined as the way of expressing one's emotions and thoughts without using spoken words. It involves conveying thoughts, feelings, and ideas through various non-linguistic means, such as facial expressions, body language, gestures, eye contact, tone of voice, and other forms of communication that do not rely on verbal or written words. In the communication world, nonverbal communication has an essential and prominent role in the way humans interact with each other (Shi & Fan, 2010). As the demand for globalization rose over time, cultures from various countries tended to integrate and interfere with each other. Due to this, communication among people with different cultural backgrounds started to become more and more important, not only in verbal but also in nonverbal communication.

### **2.2. The importance of nonverbal communication in intercultural contexts**

We observe nonverbal behavior unconsciously in our daily interactions with other people. It has been common sense for us to notice nonverbal actions such as hand gestures, facial expressions, and how we agree or disagree on an idea without saying a word. The act of a variety of behaviors is the general idea of nonverbal communication; however, since cultural differences can impact the meaning of each behavior that is classified as nonverbal communication, this idea can be illustrated differently across national boundaries. For example, in some cultures, maintaining direct eye contact during a conversation is seen as a sign of respect and attentiveness, while in others it may be considered rude or confrontational. Similarly, the use of personal space and physical touch can vary greatly between cultures, with some valuing close proximity and frequent touch, while others prefer more distance and minimal physical contact.

Numerous countries have seen a shift in their demography due to widespread population movement, and new multicultural identities and groups have emerged. Intercultural issues require even greater attention in the global society of the twenty-first century due to the increasing interconnectedness of people and cultures (Aghayeva). According to Aghayeva research, people tend to focus more on verbal communication rather than nonverbal communication. However, in a setting where people from other cultures accommodate each other, nonverbal behavior should be considered since such behavior can be influenced by one's cultural background. The main purpose of intercultural communication is to have a better comprehensive understanding of communication in cross-cultural settings (Gitimu, 2007); therefore, it is also important to comprehend nonverbal acts throughout cultures.

Consider disputes between cultures. Intercultural conflicts coexist with intercultural communication; cross-cultural struggles might arise when people with different cultural perspectives misunderstand another person. These conflicts can stem from differences in values, beliefs, norms, and communication styles. As we have discussed how culture can affect verbal and nonverbal communication, people have different points of view when facing issues; therefore, they comprehend and express their behavior toward the problems in distinctive ways. For instance, in a global workplace where a significant number of employees are from diverse cultural settings with

various perspectives, apart from contributing one's idea through verbal means, one might give out his or her thought through nonverbal action unconsciously. This often leads to conflicts arising among employees since it could result in misunderstandings between employees since their actions are based on their culture. Therefore, it is important to notice the necessity of nonverbal communication in an intercultural context. Fostering the knowledge to understand the actions and behavior of a person from a different area is crucial when globalization is escalating.

### **2.3. Cultural variations in nonverbal communication cues**

It can be clarified that culture in nonverbal communication is very diverse and has many differences even though they are all expressed through the same method. Specifically, there are several nonverbal communication ways which are quite interesting and instructive.

First of all, a common culture in nonverbal communication is gestures. Every gesture has a corresponding term and a consensus interpretation. Gestures are a way to help people can communicate and easily distinguish the others from different countries accurately. However, according to Pease&Pease(2004), individuals who are oblivious of cultural differences may also get into difficulty when using their hands .

Additionally, eye contact is also a popular culture in nonverbal communication. In some countries, eye contact conveys a number of messages, include: level of interest or attention; ability to persuade or alter attitude; regulation of interaction; expression of emotion; definition of authority and position; and management of others perceptions. For examples, Western societies encourage youngsters to look others in the eyes because they view direct eye contact as positive. However, out of respect, individuals in the Caribbean, Latin America, Africa, and Japan avoid making eye contact.

Besides, according to a series of studies by Ekman (1972) for people from different countries , there are six universal expressions — anger, disgust, fear, sadness, happiness, and surprise. Eventually, contempt was introduced as the seven expression (Ekman & Heider, 1988). This proves that facial expressions are an important factor

in nonverbal communication. For instance, Asian civilizations like to hide their faces as much as possible while most American males conceal their anguish and sorrow, but many Mediterranean (Latino/Arabic) cultures emphasize it.

Moreover, people in different countries consider touching to be a form of showing affection or rudeness. People in non-contact cultures do not often touch others unless they have a close relationship. Some typical countries which apply this habit consist of: North Americans, English and many Asian countries. Otherwise, contact cultures frequently employ touch to express friendliness for others. South Americans, Arabs and Southern Europeans are included in this category.

As Bajracharya (2018) noted, another nonverbal communication channel is appearance. First impressions, snap judgements and status about personality of a person are influenced by their appearance and dress. People who do not conform to the cultural norms of a region will be judged as ridiculous and face discrimination problem.

Last but not least, paralanguage also is a remarkable type of nonverbal communication. Paralanguage contains vocal characterizers (laugh, cry, yell, etc) and qualifiers (volume, pitch, rhythm, tempo, etc). In case, giggling can be considered as a typical example because giggling is indicated a bad gesture in Japan but in Viet Nam, it shows happiness.

Obviously, there are significant cultural differences in nonverbal communication. In addition to the nonverbal communication methods are mentioned above, some other common methods include smell, proxemics, head movements, etc. In general, all nonverbal communication methods have different meanings in each culture so that people need to learn about nonverbal issues carefully and thoroughly.

## **2.4. Misinterpretations in nonverbal communications**

Misinterpretations in nonverbal communication can occur due to various reasons, leading to misunderstandings and miscommunication. Understanding these causes is crucial for effective communication. Hence, we will explore some common factors that contribute to misinterpretations in nonverbal communication.

One of the main causes is cultural differences. Different cultures have distinct norms and interpretations of nonverbal cues. Gestures, facial expressions, and body language can have diverse meanings across cultures. For example, a thumbs-up gesture is widely recognized as a positive sign in Western cultures, but it can be offensive in certain Middle Eastern countries. Cultural variations can lead to misinterpretations if nonverbal cues are not understood within their specific cultural context.

Contextual misunderstanding is another factor that can contribute to misinterpretations. Nonverbal cues heavily rely on the context in which they occur. Without considering the situation, misinterpretations can arise. For instance, a person wearing a serious facial expression may be deep in thought or concentrating, but others may misinterpret it as anger or dissatisfaction. The context of the situation provides important cues for accurately interpreting nonverbal communication.

Individual differences in communication styles and personal experiences can also lead to misinterpretations. People have different ways of expressing and interpreting nonverbal cues. What may be interpreted as aggression by one person may be seen as assertiveness by another. These individual differences can result in misinterpretations if there is a lack of understanding or awareness.

Lack of awareness or attention to nonverbal cues can also contribute to misinterpretations. Nonverbal cues are often subtle and can be easily missed if not observed attentively. People may fail to recognize or interpret these cues accurately, leading to misunderstandings. Active observation and paying close attention to nonverbal cues are important in minimizing misinterpretations.

Emotional states can also impact nonverbal communication and lead to misinterpretations. Someone's emotional state can influence their facial expressions, body language, and tone of voice. For example, a person feeling sad or upset may try to hide their emotions, but their nonverbal cues may still reflect their true feelings. Misinterpretations can occur if the receiver fails to recognize or understand the underlying emotions being conveyed.



To minimize misinterpretations in nonverbal communication, several strategies can be employed. Enhancing awareness of nonverbal cues and their significance is essential. This involves actively observing facial expressions, body language, and tone of voice to accurately interpret the intended message. Considering the context in which nonverbal communication occurs is also important. Analyzing the overall situation and relationship between verbal and nonverbal cues helps in gaining a more accurate understanding.

Avoiding stereotypes and making assumptions based on generalizations about nonverbal cues is crucial. Different cultures and individuals may have unique interpretations of nonverbal communication. Seeking feedback and asking clarifying questions when in doubt can help confirm understanding and avoid misunderstandings. Developing cultural sensitivity and being open-minded to diverse perspectives is also important in minimizing misinterpretations.

There are several reasons why misinterpretations can occur in nonverbal communication. By being aware of these causes and employing strategies such as enhancing awareness, considering context, avoiding stereotypes, seeking feedback, and developing cultural sensitivity, we can minimize misinterpretations and promote effective communication. Recognizing the importance of nonverbal cues and actively working to understand them will lead to clearer and more accurate interpretations in our interactions with others.

## **2.5. With increasing international travel and media, will nonverbal misinterpretations disappear or become more critical?**

### **2.5.1. Impact of international travel**

In recent decades, the number of tourists has increased dramatically. Aviation has made it possible to travel domestically as well as internationally. For those traveling long term and outside their home country, interacting with locals is another way to experience culture. However, visitors find it difficult to comprehend the new way of life and culture due to language barriers. As people must speak the same language to be able to understand each other so language is the key (Levy, 2022). However, since

picking up a new language takes time, nonverbal communication is used more commonly. Non-verbal communication helps visitors' activities of exchanging, buying, or communicating with local people go smoother without taking a lot of time and effort

With the increase in international travel, a huge benefit of traveling lies in expanding our horizons, exploring many things, giving opportunities to meet people, and enhancing our understanding of the world. Experiencing new locations, sampling new foods, and learning about diverse customs and traditions may help us build a greater appreciation for variety and learn about other cultures. Traveling abroad also increases one's exposure to various cultures and increases one's understanding of the variations in nonverbal communication. As a result of being exposed to a variety of cultural customs, people can have a better understanding of nonverbal cues and avoid misinterpretations.

### **2.5.2. The effects of increasing media on nonverbal misinterpretations**

Media also has a significant impact on nonverbal misinterpretations and it has become a much-debated issue. Television programs, movies, and social media platforms all play a vital part in shaping our views and comprehension of nonverbal communication. While the media can give helpful insights into nonverbal clues, it can also lead to misconceptions and misinterpretations among users.

The media often portrays unrealistic nonverbal actions, leading to misunderstandings. Characters in films or TV shows often display extreme facial expressions, gestures, or postures that are not typical in real-life situations. This can lead viewers to miss or mistake nonverbal signals in real-life situations. Additionally, media can promote cultural biases and preconceptions in nonverbal communication interpretation, as certain ethnic or cultural groups are often depicted in specific ways, leading to assumptions and misinterpretations. For example, when an ethnic group is frequently shown using open gestures and loud speech, viewers may get the false impression that this is how all people from that culture communicate. That can lead to misconceptions and stereotype reinforcement in real-life situations. The limited background of the

media also contributes to misinterpretations of nonverbal signs, as viewers only get a fragment of a character's total communication in movies or TV shows. Without a comprehensive awareness of the surrounding conditions, nonverbal cues can be misunderstood and taken out of context. For example, a character's sad facial expression in a movie may be shown without the appropriate context, leading viewers to believe the individual is unhappy.

Besides, the increasing number of social media platforms impacts nonverbal misinterpretations. Individuals can post pictures or videos emphasizing particular nonverbal cues using platforms like Instagram, Facebook, or TikTok. However, these chosen representations may not reflect the entire breadth of nonverbal communication in real life. People tend to present themselves in a positive light on social media, which can lead to misinterpretations when comparing these photos to real-life encounters. In addition, emojis are becoming increasingly popular in network communication, and ways people use them are becoming increasingly diverse (Bai et al., 2019). They transmit nonverbal indications such as respect, pleasure, and rage, which allows people from different cultures to interact and understand each other better. A smiling face emoji, for example, might represent happiness or positivism, whereas a crying face emoji can convey grief or empathy. Individuals' conceptions of emojis change when he is utilized across platforms and devices and between cultures (Sun et al., 2022). Overall, media can offer valuable insights into nonverbal communication, but it can also lead to misconceptions and misinterpretations. Media depictions can reinforce cultural biases, and limited context can complicate interpretation.

### **2.5.3. Continued relevance of nonverbal communication**

Even though international travel and media have come a long way, nonverbal communication is still important and useful in real life. Verbal conversation sends clear messages, but nonverbal cues add more layers of meaning that help people understand what is being said. Nonverbal cues like tone of voice, body language, facial expressions, and movements can tell you a lot about someone's feelings, attitudes, and cultural differences that words alone might not be able to (The importance of non-verbal communication -university of colorado Denver). For example, a smile can mean

that someone is friendly, while crossed arms can mean that someone is angry or disagrees. These body language cues help make discussion more complete and clear.

By introducing people to different cultures and ways of communicating, travel and the media can help reduce nonverbal miscommunication. However, it is still important to be aware of cultural differences and the chance of miscommunication. Different countries and areas have very different cultural norms and expectations, which affect how people communicate without words. In some cultures, what is seen as normal or right might not be seen the same way in others (Tidwell,C.(n.d.). Non Verbal Communication). People must approach encounters with people from other cultures with an open mind, empathy, and a desire to learn.

Being open-minded helps people understand and value cultural differences, which makes conversation more respectful and open to everyone. People can successfully use nonverbal communication across cultures if they refrain from judging others and are open to different points of view. Understanding other people's feelings and experiences is a big part of empathy. It helps people read nonverbal cues better and react in the right way. Active listening, which means paying attention and being interested in what is being said, helps people pick up on nonverbal cues like tone of voice and facial expressions that can communicate more than words (Skills, C. C. (2023, October 16)).

By doing these things, people can get along with others from different cultures and avoid mistakes that can happen because of differences in how people communicate without words. It's important to realize that no one can be totally free of biases or assumptions, even if they learn about other cultures. So, it's still important to keep looking at things through your own cultural lens, be open to comments, and work on improving your communication skills.

In conclusion, even though the world has become smaller, nonverbal contact is still very important. We are exposed to more cultures and ways of communicating through foreign travel and the media. However, nonverbal cues give us important information about feelings, attitudes, and cultural nuances that words alone may not show. It is very important to be aware of ethnic differences and the chance of misunderstandings.

Being open-minded, showing empathy, and actively listening are all important skills that can help people connect with people from other cultures more effectively, reducing misunderstandings and creating more welcoming communication spaces.

### **3. Conclusion**

Globalization has led to a growing emphasis on intercultural communication, including nonverbal cues such as appearance, body movement, and facial expressions. These cues can have different meanings across different regions and can be influenced by cultural differences, contextual misunderstandings, individual differences, lack of awareness, and emotional states. Misinterpretations in nonverbal communication can occur due to these factors. Besides, travel and media can also contribute to misconceptions and misinterpretations, as depictions can reinforce cultural biases and limited context can complicate interpretation. Recognizing the importance of nonverbal cues can lead to more accurate interactions. To minimize misinterpretations, strategies such as enhancing awareness, considering context, avoiding stereotypes, seeking feedback, and developing cultural sensitivity can be employed. Exposure to diverse cultural practices can improve awareness and reduce misinterpretations.

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