CHAPTER 5

Language and nonverbal communication

Fie, fie upon her!
There's language in her eye, her cheek, her lip,
Nay, her foot speaks; her wanton spirits look out
At every joint and motive of her body.

William Shakespeare

When the eyes say one thing, and the tongue another, a practiced man relies on the language of the first.

(Ralph Waldo Emerson 1930: 118)

learning objectives

By the end of this chapter, you should be able to:

1 define nonverbal communication
2 describe the relationship between verbal and nonverbal communication
3 identify the characteristics and functions of nonverbal communication
4 identify different types of nonverbal codes
5 provide examples of cultural universals in nonverbal behaviours
6 explain the influence of culture on nonverbal communication
7 discuss the relationship between nonverbal communication and power
8 explain the importance of nonverbal elements in intercultural communication
9 describe the relationship between nonverbal communication and gender
10 explain how nonverbal communication can be a barrier in intercultural interactions.

INTRODUCTION

Learning to communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural interactions requires knowledge of both verbal and nonverbal code systems. Just as our verbal behaviours (e.g. language use, linguistic norms of politeness) are influenced by the cultural socialization process that was described in Chapter 3, many of our nonverbal actions (e.g. use of space, gestures, volume of speech) are affected by our linguistic and cultural background.

In this chapter, we begin by delving into the nature and importance of nonverbal communication, and then examine the relationship between verbal and nonverbal communication and consider how they differ. Discussion then centres on the characteristics and functions of nonverbal communication. Next, we review various types of nonverbal codes and discuss the influence of culture on nonverbal behaviour, drawing attention to universal nonverbal cues as well as cultural variability. We then discuss the implications of the nonverbal expectancy violation theory for intercultural communication. The chapter concludes with a discussion of practical ways to enhance the nonverbal dimension of intercultural interactions.

THE NATURE AND IMPORTANCE OF NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION

As noted by Matsumoto and Hwang (2012: 130), 'no discussion of communication is complete without the inclusion of nonverbal behaviors'. First, it is helpful to review definitions of nonverbal communication and nonverbal behaviour. While many scholars use these terms interchangeably, there are differences between them that are useful to note. We begin by looking at how nonverbal communication is conceptualized.

Definitions of nonverbal communication and nonverbal behaviour

Similar to verbal communication, there are multiple definitions of **nonverbal communication**. Liu *et al.* (2011: 139) refer to it simply as 'communication without using words' or 'the use of non-spoken symbols to communicate a message'. For Hickson *et al.* (2004), the nonverbal dimension of communication is

> that aspect of the communication process that deals with the transmission and reception of messages that are not a part of the natural language systems . . . Any aspect of communication that does *not* include words is considered part of the nonverbal code.
>
> (pp. 8–9)

For Samovar *et al.* (2010), nonverbal communication involves 'all those nonverbal stimuli in a communication setting that are generated by both the source and his or her use of the environment and that have potential message value for the source or receiver' (p. 246). This definition draws attention to the boundaries of nonverbal communication and points to the process involved, which may include both intentional and unintentional messages.

Nonverbal communication often occurs through the interaction of the speaker (dress, voice, distance maintained), the receiver (posture, facial expression, distance kept from the speaker) and the situation as perceived by the interactants (the social context, the environment, the time of the interaction). With this in view, Hickson *et al.* (2004: 482) depict nonverbal communication as 'a process whereby people, through the intentional or unintentional manipulation of normative actions and expectations, express experiences, feelings and attitudes in order to relate to and control themselves, others, and their environments'.

What all of these definitions of nonverbal communication have in common is the notion that nonverbal acts are communicating a message, whether on purpose or not. The perception of some form of intent is sufficient for a nonverbal act to be deemed communication. 'Nonverbal

communication occurs when a message is decoded (or interpreted) as having some meaning, *regardless of the sender's intent*' (Hickson *et al.* 2004: 11–12) (emphasis in original). Since 'people who are behaving are not necessarily communicating', Hickson *et al.* (2004) distinguish between the terms nonverbal behaviour and nonverbal communication. For these nonverbal specialists, the former may consist of body movements or other nonverbal acts that are not intended to send a message and where no message is interpreted by others. For example, you may scratch your arm, bend over or squint and not aim to communicate any thoughts or ideas to others, and no particular message is interpreted by those around you. This chapter is concerned with acts of nonverbal communication, whether intentional or not.

Importance of nonverbal communication

Why study nonverbal communication? Some scholars believe that it is the single most powerful form of communication. Psychologist Albert Mehrabian (1982), for example, estimated that 93 per cent of meaning is conveyed through nonverbal communication channels (e.g. body movements, facial expressions, vocal qualities). More recently, researchers have suggested that this figure is an overestimation (Matsumoto & Hwang 2012; Moore *et al.* 2010). Even so, most agree that a significant amount of our communication is nonverbal, noting that nonverbal acts are a better indicator of the true meaning than the actual words.

Many nonverbal acts are **innate** (existing in one from birth) and **universal**, that is, people in different cultures share a similar understanding of particular cues. Other elements and dimensions of nonverbal communication vary depending on the cultural context. Considering the significance of **nonverbal codes** (all symbols that are not words, e.g. bodily movements, use of space and time, clothing and adornments and sounds other than words), intercultural communication studies are needed in a variety of contexts that consider nonverbal acts, both alone and in connection with verbal communication.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN VERBAL AND NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION

When individuals interact face-to-face, their communication may consist of verbal and/or nonverbal components. Verbal communication typically includes sound, words, speaking and language. In the transmission of messages, nonverbal codes often interact with verbal codes. For example, gestures and **facial expressions** (facial motions that convey one's emotional state) may accompany words, and language use may vary with regard to such aspects as accent, rate, tone and volume of speech, all of which are considered nonverbal features. Both verbal and nonverbal codes may communicate meaning together or separately, as Hickson *et al.* (2004: 9) explain:

> Nonverbal communication is complex because it creates communication by use of nonverbal behaviors, either by themselves or combined with words. It may be shared *between* people (interpersonally) or *within* a person (intrapersonally). It may be intentional or unintentional. It may also be used without words, or it may take on meaning only when it is used in combination with words. (emphasis in the original)

Both verbal and nonverbal channels of communication consist of symbols and patterns that are learned over time. Just as different societies and cultures may have different languages

or dialects, some of their nonverbal codes and norms of behaviour (e.g. accepted patterns or rules) may vary across cultures and differ depending on the context and situation.

During the primary socialization process, children develop the ability to appropriately use and interpret verbal and nonverbal cues in a particular cultural context. As they mature, they acquire their first language (and perhaps others), that is, they learn the meanings of words and expressions along with rules of verbal communication (e.g. the politeness norms of speech, cultural scripts for greetings/requests/refusals, grammar rules). Over time, children also become more aware of multiple forms of nonverbal cues and learn the norms for nonverbal behaviour (e.g. emotional display, use of space) that are prevalent in various situations in their environment. In contrast with language learning, however, most of the learning of nonverbal cues is implicit. While children may learn some grammar rules and vocabulary through formal language education, they learn how to use and interpret nearly all nonverbal cues by observing and imitating the actions of others rather than through direct instruction.

Many communication specialists maintain that nonverbal communication is more important than verbal communication in face-to-face situations. Why might this be the case? Even if adults are not aware they are doing so, they continuously use and observe nonverbal cues (e.g. eye movements, posture, facial expressions) and form judgments about speakers and their messages (verbal and nonverbal), drawing on what they have learned during the socialization process. (This aspect is discussed further when we turn our attention to the nonverbal expectancy violation theory.)

Nonverbal communication specialists Mark Hickson, Don Sacks and Nina-jo Moore explain that 'most verbal communication carries with it a greater amount of intent, but nonverbal communication tends to be more primitive and less controllable than its verbal counterpart' (Hickson *et al.* 2004: 11–12). As people are thought to have less control over their nonverbal actions, adults generally consider the nonverbal message to be more truthful and accurate when contradictory messages are sent through verbal and nonverbal channels. Children, however, typically rely on verbal expressions for meaning as they have not yet developed the ability to interpret nonverbal acts and read between the lines. With less awareness of nonverbal cues, young children tend to depend on the literal meaning of words and are generally more trusting of the verbal message.

FUNCTIONS OF NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION

Nonverbal communication can serve a number of functions. While many messages are conveyed nonverbally without the awareness of the senders, in other situations, nonverbal messages are intentional and purposeful. Individuals can choose to send nonverbal messages in many different forms in order to convey specific meanings in a range of situations. Some nonverbal functions are associated with verbal forms of communication (oral or written), while others do not involve words. To communicate effectively, whether in intracultural interactions (the exchange of messages between people who share the same cultural background) or intercultural situations, it is helpful to be aware of the various functions of nonverbal communication.

Self-presentation

We routinely use nonverbal signals to let other people know who we are, that is, we convey aspects of our identities and personality through nonverbal means. We disclose information

about ourselves through our physical appearance, our tone of voice, our posture, our mode of dress and our adornments (e.g. body piercings, tattoos, makeup). We also reveal personal dimensions of ourselves (e.g. our personality, degree of openness, values) through our use of time, body odour, use of space, the ways we decorate our homes (or dorm rooms) and many other nonverbal means.

At times, our nonverbal behaviour is intentionally designed to manage the impressions that others have of us. For example, the outfit you wear to a job interview may be carefully selected to send a message to the interviewer about your maturity, sense of responsibility and seriousness. When you go out on a date, your clothes and accessories may be chosen to showcase your personality, emphasize your best features and convey your interest in your romantic partner. Whether intentional or not, every day we continuously convey information about ourselves through nonverbal channels. This means we can also learn a great deal about others by paying close attention to the way they present themselves nonverbally.

Conveying relationship messages

Through nonverbal means we indicate our relationship with others, whether we realize it or not. We demonstrate how well we know or feel about someone through our facial expressions (e.g. smile, frown, raised eyebrows), speech qualities (e.g. loud voice, aggressive tone), how closely we stand or sit by him or her and so on. For example, in some cultural settings we may walk arm in arm with a romantic partner and when sitting, we may lean forward and frequently touch each other as we chat. We may also convey intimacy by using a soft tone of voice and whispering into each other's ears. Conversely, we may reveal our distrust, dislike or lack of interest in another person through other nonverbal actions, such as avoiding **eye contact** (not looking at his or her eyes), folding our arms, leaning away from him or her when talking and keeping a large physical distance between us when standing.

Nonverbal communication can also indicate and reinforce the power dimension in relationships. For example, in a work situation, an employer may stand further away from her employees than she would her close friends; to emphasize her authority, she may also talk in a louder, more assertive voice with subordinates. In a formal dinner, seating/serving arrangements may also nonverbally communicate status and **power** (authority or strength). At a formal banquet in Mainland China, for example, the attendees may gather at a round table and sit in assigned places according to their status; the guest with the highest rank is usually positioned to the right of the host and is the first person to be offered a serving from the communal dishes. In a similar event in Canada, the attendees may sit at an oblong table and be served individual dishes. The guest with the highest position is usually seated next to the host at the head of the table and is the first to be served; the other attendees may sit anywhere they like regardless of rank or status. When guests are expecting certain formalities and conventions, it can be confusing when different procedures are followed in other cultural settings. Unintentionally, hosts may not display the degree of respect and formality that guests have become accustomed to in their home environment and if individuals are not flexible, relationships can be put in jeopardy.

Replacing verbal messages

Nonverbal messages can also be used as a substitute for verbal messages. For example, instead of verbally telling students to be quiet, a primary teacher may simply hold a finger to

her lips and as long as the students understand this gesture (and are willing to comply), this simple action may be quite effective.

In some situations, using words to communicate may simply not be a viable option. When conducting an orchestra in a concert hall, for example, a conductor uses gestures (e.g. hand movements) to convey messages to a large number of musicians. If there is a major event at your university, the campus police may use hand signals to direct traffic as talking to each motorist individually would be impractical.

In electronic communication (e.g. emails, Facebook, instant messages, web forums) it is now common to insert **emoticons**, pictorial representations of facial expressions (e.g. punctuation marks and letters, images), in order to convey the tenor of a text. For example, instead of words, people often use the emoticons for a smiley face **:-)** and sad face **:-(** to alert others to their mood.

Throughout the world, a range of signs and symbols are used to regulate behaviour and draw attention to hazardous situations (e.g. steep slope ahead, kangaroo crossing, slippery road when wet). While many symbols and illustrations may clearly be associated with what they represent (e.g. pictures of related objects, lines in the shape of a particular object, a smile indicating a happy person), all symbols are basically arbitrary and may not be interpreted in the same way by people who have been socialized in a different cultural environment.

Repeating verbal messages

Nonverbal messages may also be used to repeat what we say verbally. For example, emoticons may accompany speech in emails (e.g. a statement about feeling sad may be accompanied by the image of a person with a sad face). If a visitor asks you where the cafeteria is, you may say that it is next to the campus bookstore while using your finger or arm to point in that direction. In this scenario, your nonverbal cue is repeating your words.

When using a second language that you are not fluent in, you may frequently use gestures to accompany your words, especially if you lack confidence in your oral skills and are concerned that your verbal message will not be clear. Of course, your gestures might also be misinterpreted.

Emphasizing verbal messages

Nonverbal messages may be used to emphasize the emotions or depth of feelings that lie behind the words we are speaking. For example, a furrowed brow can convey concern as you verbally tell a friend that you are sorry that her pet has died. A look of surprise (e.g. wide eyes, raised eyebrows) can emphasize your shock when you exclaim that you cannot believe that one of your friends is getting married to someone she has dated for only three weeks. In both examples, the verbal and nonverbal codes are in sync and are apt to convey a clear meaning to a close friend, who is familiar with the way you communicate nonverbally.

Relaying awkward messages

Ideas or messages that are difficult or awkward to express verbally may sometimes be communicated more easily and effectively through nonverbal means. For example, when someone has passed away, it is not easy to find exactly the right words to say to loved ones. In lieu of

Plate 5.1 In many parts of the world, attitudes towards smoking have changed significantly in recent decades. This bilingual anti-smoking message appears all over Japan. Would you understand the nonverbal message without the words? What signs, if any, are posted in your neighbourhood? How is the anti-smoking idea conveyed in your context, if at all? © Chan Sin Yu

words, sympathy and solidarity may be conveyed through a facial expression or a gentle touch on the arm, or by simply being present in a room.

In another scenario, nonverbal channels may be used to avoid an awkward verbal encounter. For example, when you come across someone you don't wish to talk to, instead of giving a lengthy verbal excuse that does not ring true, you can keep on walking slowly and indicate that you are in a rush to get somewhere. You could tap your watch, shrug your shoulders or raise your hands in the air to indicate that the situation is not in your control, smile and keep on moving without exchanging a single word.

In contexts where direct discourse (saying what's on your mind) is considered too aggressive, individuals who are asked if they agree with a suggestion may remain silent and keep their eyes downcast to avoid an unpleasant, awkward confrontation. People who have been socialized to understand this indirect form of communication are apt to quickly realize

that their suggestion has been rejected, whereas individuals who are used to direct discourse may miss these nonverbal cues and press for a verbal response. When it does not come, they may be quite perplexed and irritated!

Regulating interactions

Nonverbal codes are frequently used to regulate conversations and other communicative events. Ekman and Friesen (1969: 82) coined the term '**regulators**' to refer to

> actions which maintain and regulate the back-and-forth nature of speaking and listening between two or more interactants. They tell the speaker to continue, repeat, elaborate, hurry up, become more interesting, less salacious, give the other a chance to talk, etc. They tell the listener to pay special attention, to wait just a minute more, to talk, etc.

Through nonverbal actions (e.g. hand gestures, head nods, forward leans, gaze, other body movements) we can tell others to do or not to do something while we talk. We can give young children a stern look when we wish them to stop poking each other while we are talking with them.

Directing **turn-taking** is another common form of nonverbal communication in interactions. In a small group discussion, you may use a hand gesture to signal that you are giving the floor to someone else. Alternatively, you can nonverbally indicate you wish to speak by leaning forward or touching the arm of the person who is talking. The rules of nonverbal politeness will vary depending on the cultural setting, the situation (e.g. formal event, informal chat) and the characteristics of the interactants (e.g. age, gender, cultural background, status) and the relationship between them.

Displaying emotions

Nonverbal communication may also reveal our emotions, attitudes and mental state. The term **emotional display** refers to the expression of our emotions. For example, if we are bored in a lecture we may yawn frequently and our shoulders may slump. If we are happy, we may smile broadly. When we are very familiar with people and their habits, we may ascertain their state of mind simply by observing their nonverbal behaviour. Words are often not needed to know when a friend is depressed, sad or worried. Even if she says she is fine, we may rely more on nonverbal messages to gauge her mood. The better we know someone and the cultural context, the more likely we are to accurately interpret his or her affective state. This awareness then helps us to respond appropriately.

As noted by Keltner and Ekman (2003: 412), 'emotions are expressed in multiple channels, including the face and voice, and through words, prosody, and grammatical devices'; touch and body language (e.g. posture) may also disclose our affective state. The display of emotions (e.g. disgust, fear, guilt, pride, shame) can vary in different cultural settings (Ekman 2004; Matsumoto 2009) and this can be confusing for newcomers as we naturally look for clues about how people feel about us and our relationships. Keltner and Ekman (2003: 413) also observe that '[i]ndividuals vary, according to their personality, in how they express emotion in the face and voice'. Some aspects of emotional display are universal, while others are culturally variable and also subject to individual differences.

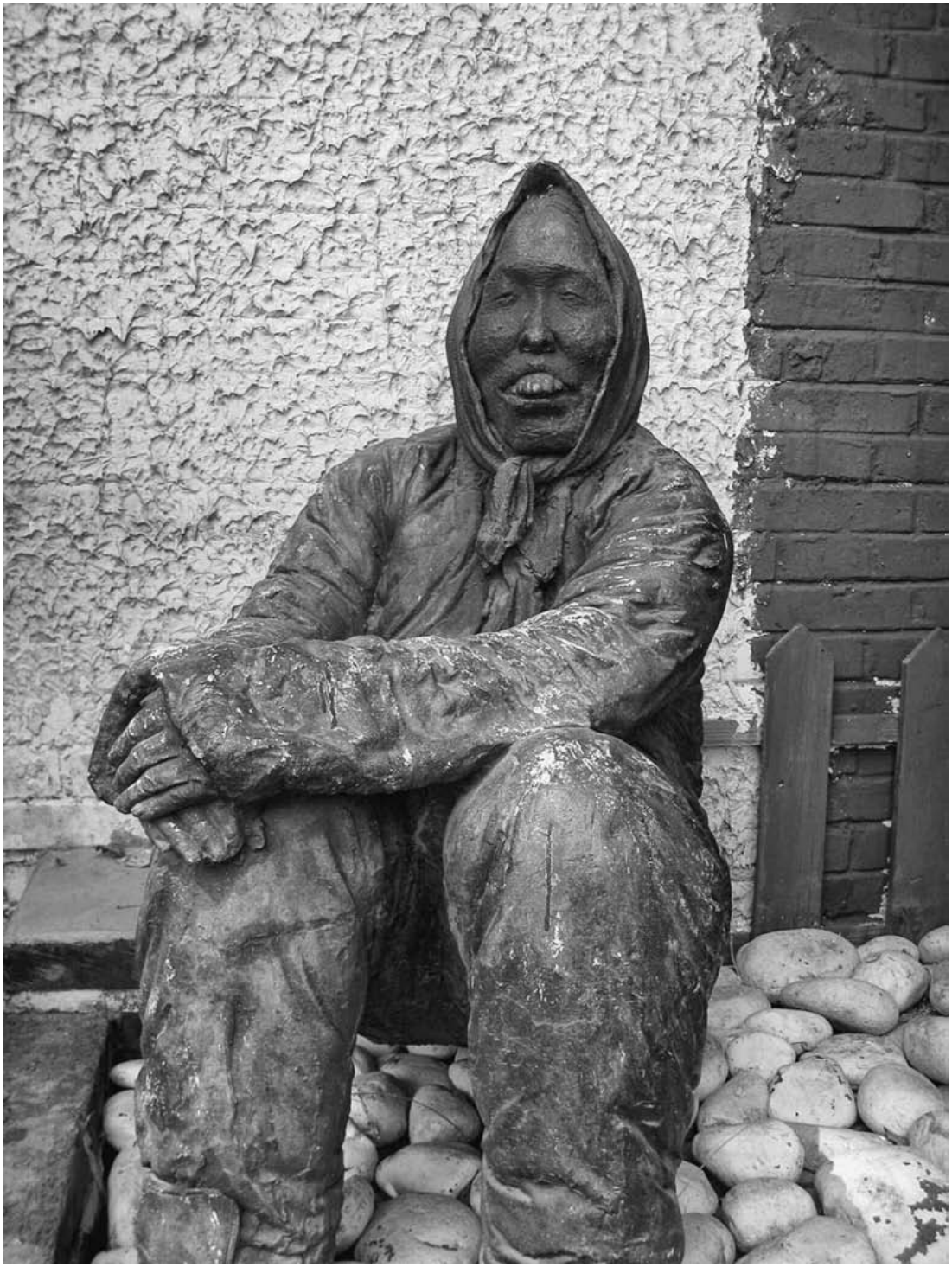


Plate 5.2 Look carefully at the statue of this Chinese peasant woman. Can you read her mood? © Jane Jackson

Rituals

All cultures have **rituals** (a set of actions or rites performed for symbolic meaning) that include nonverbal actions. It is common for nonverbal acts to feature in demonstrations of patriotism (e.g. saluting the flag), national holidays, public ceremonies, religious activities (e.g. praying, worship, baptism), weddings, etc. Over time, specific actions become routinized and passed from one generation to another through enculturation, as explained in Chapter 3.

Even the ways people greet each other often involve nonverbal codes and these may vary from one cultural setting to another. In Thailand, for example, the traditional greeting referred to as the *wai* in Thai (ไหว้, pronounced [wâ:j]) consists of a slight bow, with the palms pressed together in a prayer-like fashion. The higher the hands are held in relation to the face and the lower the bow, the more respect or reverence the giver of the *wai* is showing. This salutation is traditionally used when formally entering and leaving a house; the *wai* may also be used to convey gratitude or to apologize.

In Argentina, people usually give each other a peck on the check when they greet friends and family and even acquaintances. Men may also hug and kiss their friends, both male and female, and in a more formal situation they may shake hands, at least when meeting for the first time. In other parts of the world, different nonverbal actions or rituals may be performed to greet people.

Plate 5.3 Acts of patriotism often include nonverbal acts such as the display of national or regional flags, especially at special events such as national holidays © Jane Jackson

CULTURE AND TYPES OF NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION

There are numerous types or forms of nonverbal communication. In this chapter, we review the following:

1 Paralanguage (vocalics)
2 Kinesics (body language)
3 Oculesics (eye contact or movement)
4 Proxemics (social distance)
5 Haptics (touch)
6 Olfactics (smell)
7 Physical appearance and artifacts
8 Chronemics (time).

Paralanguage

Paralanguage (also called **vocalics**) is concerned with the study of **vocal cues**, that is, the nonphonemic qualities of language that convey meaning in verbal communication (Moore *et al.* 2010). These include such aspects as accent, cadence (melodic feature), emphasis, loudness, pause (including silence, a form of vocalic behaviour), pitch, nasality and tone, rate of speech and tempo. **Vocal qualities** may consist of a harsh voice, a tense voice, a whispery voice, a breathy voice, a raspy voice, etc. **Vocal characterizers** include belching, crying, gasping, grunting, laughing, sighing, yawning and so on, as long as these sounds transmit messages. Thus, paralanguage or vocalics is concerned with 'the nonverbal messages of the voice that add to the meaning of verbal communication, or that stand alone as a meaning-making entity' (Hickson *et al.* 2004: 258). These nonlinguistic dimensions of communication are important as they are 'often what give verbal messages their full meaning' (p. 258).

Nonverbal communication specialists Hickson *et al.* (2004) cite eight attributes of sound that contribute to the vocalic meaning associated with speech: loudness, pitch, duration, quality, regularity, articulation, pronunciation and silence. More than just volume, **loudness** refers to the degree of intensity of the voice. For example, in a meeting a speaker may lower her voice and have a loud presence. **Pitch** is the range of one's voice during conversation and is linked to the frequency of a sound. **Duration** refers to how long a particular sound is made. **Voice quality**, as noted above, refers to the specific **vocal characteristics** (e.g. degree of raspiness, harshness) of the speaker's voice. **Articulation** refers to the clarity and control of the sounds being produced, whereas **pronunciation** is concerned with the clarity and control of the sound being produced, the rhythm and the rate of speech. **Silence** refers to the absence of sound. Both positive and negative attitudes can be expressed through silence. In a face-to-face discussion, silence can communicate a lack of understanding or even disapproval in some contexts.

Paralanguage varies across cultures. **Vocal qualifiers** such as volume, pitch, rhythm and tempo may differ among people who have been socialized in different cultural settings. In some cultures, for example, speaking loudly indicates sincerity, whereas in others it is interpreted as aggressive. The practice of belching during or after a good meal is common and accepted in some cultural settings (e.g. parts of Mainland China), yet considered vulgar in others. Vocal segregates (sounds such as mmmm, uh-huh, oooo) and vocal rate (the speed at which people talk) may also differ among cultures and be interpreted differently. Even the

use and perception of the meaning of silence are influenced by culture. For example, among indigenous people in Northern Canada, it is not unusual for friends to enjoy each other's company by sitting together without talking for long periods. Visitors who are not used to this practice may feel uncomfortable and compelled to talk. Not surprisingly, variations in paralanguage can lead to miscommunication and negative valuations of people who are communicating in ways that are unfamiliar. What is deemed polite behaviour in one context, may be considered rude or weird in another.

Kinesics

Kinesics is a broad category of nonverbal actions. It encompasses the study of body movement (**body language**), e.g. body posture, gestures, facial expressions and eye movements. Basically, kinesics is concerned with the messages that are conveyed through physical movement, either by the body as a whole or by specific parts (e.g. the face, hands, arms). It also deals with **posture** (the ways people stand and sit) and **eye-related movements** (e.g. the rolling of the eyes, the arching of eyebrows), which convey meaning to others, whether intentional or not. Kinesics includes the study of **affect (affective) displays**, that is, the use of physical movement (e.g. facial expressions, posture) to convey the intensity of an emotion (Matsumoto 2009).

Plate 5.4 Emotions are expressed through many channels. The Filipina seller is making a gesture to the photographer. Can you read this nonverbal emblem and his affective state? © David Jackson

Plate 5.5 This Chinese man is riding his bicycle through an alley in Beijing. Without saying a single word, he is communicating his emotions. How would you interpret his mood? Do you think a smile is a universal marker of happiness? © Jane Jackson

Body language communication varies from one cultural setting to another. In Egyptian culture, for example, vigorous hand movements and body gestures are often used to express anger. In a Japanese context, locals may be just as furious but as their nonverbal behaviours are more contained or less expressive they may appear to be less agitated.

Kinesics also includes communication through the use of smiling, frowning, giggling and so on; these nonverbal cues may differ among and within cultures. Around the world, a smile usually signals happiness; however, in some cultural contexts it can also mask sadness or be used to conceal embarrassment. For example, in Japan and South Korea, people may smile or even laugh or giggle in situations they find awkward or overly personal (e.g. when they are embarrassed about a mistake they have made at work, when someone reveals that a close friend has just passed away). Communication partners from other cultural backgrounds who are unfamiliar with this nonverbal behaviour may mistakenly interpret the smile or laugh as uncaring, rude and a bit strange. Misunderstandings like this can negatively impact intercultural relations.

Gestures

Gestures are typically hand or facial movements that are used to illustrate speech and convey verbal meaning. Ekman and Friesen (1969) identified five types of gestures:

Illustrators: Shape/illustrate what is being said (e.g. pointing, outlining a picture of a referant).
Emblems: Direct replacements for words (e.g. OK signal in the U.S.).
Affect displays: Convey the intensity of an emotion (e.g. frown, dropping one's shoulders to signify sadness/empathy).
Regulators: For controlling the flow of conversation (e.g. hand gestures, head nods).
Adaptors: Used unintentionally to relieve tension (e.g. scratching, smoking).

Speech illustrators are gestures or movements that are directly linked to speech, that is, they illustrate or emphasize the verbal message, even though the user may not be conscious of their use (Ekman & Friesen 1969; Matsumoto & Hwang 2012). Drawing on the work of Efron (1968), Ekman (2004: 41) classified illustrators into the following categories:

Batons (movements that emphasize a particular word or phrase);
Ideographs (movements that draw a thought or outline a path);
Deictic movements (e.g. pointing to draw attention to someone or something);
Kinetographs (e.g. to illustrate bodily action);
Spatial movements (e.g. to illustrate spatial relationships);
Pictographs (e.g. to draw a picture of their referent);
Rythmic movements (e.g. to illustrate the pacing of an activity or event).

Most of these illustrative gestures are performed with the hands and all of them may be linked to verbal behaviour (e.g. volume of speech, speech context, verbal meaning) as it occurs in real time. Except for the first two types, batons and ideographs, illustrators have meaning even without language (Matsumoto & Hwang 2012).

Cultural differences are evident in the amount, type and frequency of illustrative gestures that are used in different parts of the world. In Latin and North African cultures, for example, large, illustrative gestures often accompany speech, that is, individuals in these cultural settings tend to be highly expressive in their gesticulation. In contrast, from an early age, children in East Asian cultures are discouraged from using such gestures in public so they tend to be relatively less expressive in their use of gestures (Matsumoto & Hwang 2012). Of course, there are variations within cultures and differences depending on the context and situation.

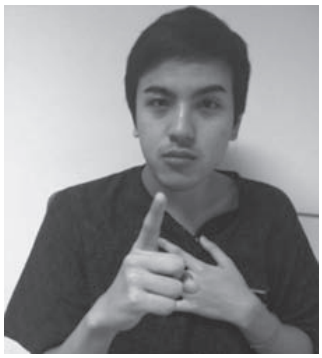
Emblems or **emblematic gestures** are used to convey messages without speech. Every culture has emblematic gestures, which are associated with particular words or phrases. Ekman (2004) maintains that '[e]mblems are the only true "body language", in that these movements have a set of precise meanings, which are understood by all members of a culture or subculture' (p. 39). Within cultures, some of these gestures are gender-specific (e.g. in traditional cultures, obscene gestures may primarily be used by males in the company of other men and if used by females they are considered very shocking). Examples of emblems are the peace sign (two fingers up, palm facing outward), and the OK sign (thumb up, hand in fist), which are generally understood by people who have been socialized in the U.S and Canada. Emblems such as these permit communication across distances when verbal messages cannot be easily heard, or when speech is not permitted or safe.

Had too much to drink (France)

Anger (Japan)

Come here (Japan)

Come here (U.S.)



No! (U.S.)

Don't do that! (France)

Money (U.S.)

Money (Japan)

Figure 5.1 Examples of culture-specific emblems

Since emblems are culture-specific, their meanings often vary in different cultural settings, and a gesture that is positive in one context may be deemed offensive in another. For example, the American A-OK sign has sexual implications in many parts of Europe and is regarded as an obscene gesture. Placing both hands at the side of one's head and pointing upwards with the forefingers signals that one is angry in Japan; in other contexts it refers to the devil; and in others it means that one wants sex. In other cultural settings, it may have no meaning at all. The inverted peace sign – two fingers up in a fist pointed inward toward oneself – is interpreted as an insult in England and Australia. (See Figure 5.1 for examples of emblems that are culture-specific.)

While emblems tend to be culture-specific, David Matsumoto and other nonverbal researchers are discovering that recent advances in technology and social media (e.g. Facebook, films, YouTube) are making it easier for people to view gestures that are common in other cultural settings, especially those that are used in the U.S. Some gestures are becoming universally recognized due to globalization and the influence of mass media (e.g. television, the Internet, the press). For example, American emblems for 'hello', 'good-bye', 'yes' and 'no' are now widely understood on all continents (Hwang *et al.* 2010; Matsumoto & Hwang 2012).

Posture

While vocal cues (e.g. tone, volume of voice) and facial expressions (e.g. frowns, smiles) can convey specific emotions (e.g. anger, fear, happiness), one's body **posture** is more apt to reveal one's general state of mind and attitude (e.g. mood, emotion, feeling). For example, the way we stand can reveal whether we are interested or disinterested in someone and whether we are being attentive or not. Our posture can indicate if we are open or closed to what our communication partner is saying. The way we stand can also signal our status in relation to another speaker (Matsumoto & Hwang 2012; Mehrabian 1969). For instance, we are apt to be more erect when communicating with someone of a higher status. Studies suggest that people from diverse cultural backgrounds interpret postures according to similar dimensions (i.e., degree of acceptance or status being conveyed) but differ in terms of the degree of importance placed on specific aspects of these dimensions (Kudoh & Matsumoto 1985; Matsumoto & Kudoh 1987).

Facial expressions and emotional display

The English naturalist Charles Darwin (1872) argued that all humans possess the ability to express emotions in exactly the same ways, primarily through their faces. Anthropologist Margaret Mead (1930), however, later argued that facial expressions of emotion are culture-specific and learned in each culture like verbal language. This issue has been debated for decades. In a series of studies conducted in the 1960s by Paul Ekman and his colleagues, participants from different parts of the world were shown images of facial expressions. Interestingly, all of them agreed on the following emotions that were conveyed in the faces they viewed: anger, disgust, fear, happiness, sadness and surprise, lending support for the notion of universal facial expressions (Ekman 1972, 1973; Ekman & Friesen 1971; Izard 1971). A seventh facial expression – contempt – was later found to be universally recognized (Ekman & Heider 1988; Matsumoto 1992). These findings led Ekman (2009:1) to the following conclusion:

> In business and in life, it doesn't matter what language you speak, where you live, what you do for a living—the facial expressions you show for anger, fear, sadness, disgust, surprise, contempt and happiness will be the same. You share these expressions with all human beings, and many of them with the great apes.

Over the past four decades, there have been well over 100 judgment studies that have demonstrated the pancultural recognition of these seven expressions (Elfenbein & Ambady 2002; Matsumoto 2001). More than 75 studies have found that these facial expressions are spontaneously produced by individuals all over the world to convey similar emotions (Matsumoto *et al.* 2008). These findings provide strong evidence for the universal facial expressions of emotions that are depicted in Figure 5.2. The implication is that these expressions are biologically innate.

Despite the existence of universal facial expressions of emotion, people around the world express certain emotions differently. Nonverbal communication specialists Ekman and Friesen (1969) coined the term **cultural display rules** to account for cultural differences in facial expressions of emotion. At a young age, we learn to manage and modify our emotional expressions in particular situations and social contexts. Ekman and Friesen (1969) identified six ways in which expressions may be managed when emotion is aroused:

1 Individuals can express emotions as they feel them with no modification.
2 They can amplify (exaggerate) their expressions, e.g. feelings of sadness may be intensified (amplification) at funerals.

Figure 5.2 The seven universal facial expressions of emotion

3 They can minimize their expressions, e.g. minimize feelings of sadness at weddings to avoid upsetting others.
4 People can mask or conceal their emotions by expressing something other than what they feel, as when physicians hide their emotions when communicating with patients with terminal illness.
5 Individuals may also learn to neutralize their expressions, expressing nothing, e.g. when playing poker.
6 They can qualify their feelings by expressing emotions in combination, e.g. when feelings of sadness are intermingled with a smile, with the smile commenting on the sadness, saying 'I'll be OK.'

When spontaneous expressive behaviours have been studied, all of the behavioural responses described have been identified (Cole 1986; Ekman & Rosenberg 1998). Based on their own work and that of other nonverbal communication specialists, Matsumoto and Hwang (2012) conclude that when emotions are aroused, displays may be *either* universal *or* culture-specific, depending, in part, on the context.

Oculesics

Oculesics is concerned with eye behaviour as an element of communication (e.g. eye contact, dynamic eye movement, pupil dilation, static/fixed gaze, gaze direction and intensity). The term **gaze** refers to a person's behaviour while looking at someone or something. It can be a powerful form of nonverbal communication and, to complicate matters, its use and interpretation may vary in different cultural settings and contexts, as well as among genders. Research on humans and non-human primates has revealed that gaze serves multiple functions; for example, it can express emotions, intentions or attitudes. Gaze can also convey group membership and empathy (Argyle & Cook 1976) as well as dominance, power, or aggression (Fehr & Exline 1987). In North America, Matsumoto and Hwang (2012) note that the power of gaze is evident in 'the staring game,' in which two people stare at each other to see who can outlast the other; the one who smiles or looks away first is the loser, whereas the one who stares the longer is declared the winner.

To foster group membership, unity and stability, cultures create unwritten rules or norms for gazing behaviour in specific situations and contexts. Not surprisingly, there are numerous cultural differences in gazing rules and visual behaviour, which can lead to misunderstandings in intercultural interactions. In North America, for example, **direct eye contact** (looking into the eyes of the other person) is common about 40 per cent of the time while talking and 70 per cent while listening, whereas in Japan, it is more common to look at the throat of the other person (Matsumoto & Hwang 2012).

In North America, from an early age, children are taught to look directly into the eyes of their older interlocutor to demonstrate respect. In North Asia, however, this same behaviour is deemed disrespectful and children are expected to look away (e.g. downward) to show deference to their elders. Intercultural misunderstandings inevitably arise due to differing norms. Individuals who are expecting direct eye contact may find it difficult to 'read' the situation when their communication partner does not make eye contact with them; they may view gaze avoidance as disrespectful, insincere or even deceitful. Conversely, individuals who are not expecting direct eye contact may judge people who gaze directly at them as aggressive or arrogant; feeling under threat, they may be unwilling to engage further.

In Arab cultures, it is common for both speakers and listeners to look directly into each other's eyes for long periods of time, indicating keen interest in the conversation. In Mediterranean society, men often look at women for long periods of time and this may be interpreted as impolite staring by women from other cultures. As norms for gazing vary among cultures, one's nonverbal behaviour may not be interpreted as intended and the consequences may be unexpected, quite bewildering and even disturbing.

Proxemics

Proxemics is concerned with the social use of space in a communication situation. As well as the effective use of space in businesses, homes and other social settings (public or private), it encompasses the arrangement of space (e.g. furniture, architecture) to encourage or inhibit communication. **Interpersonal distance** is thought to help regulate intimacy by controlling exposure to the senses (sight, smell, touch). The closer people are to each other when they interact, the greater the sensory stimulation (smells, sights, touch) (Hall 1963, 1968).

Plate 5.6 This is a hutong (narrow street or alley) in Beijing where houses are very close together. What does this use of space indicate about social relations?
© Jane Jackson

In *The Hidden Dimension* (1966), Hall proposed a theory of proxemics based on the notion that human perceptions of space are shaped and patterned by culture. He analysed both the personal spaces that people form around their bodies as well as their culturally-shaped expectations about how streets, neighbourhoods, housing estates and cities should be organized spatially. Hall (1966) concluded that the ways people in various cultures define and organize space are internalized at an unconscious level.

Hall's (1959, 1966) classic work on proxemics identified four levels of interpersonal space use in the United States, which vary depending on the type of social relationship involved: intimate, personal, social and public. He then placed these spatial zones on a continuum, ranging from **intimate space** (reserved for private situations with people who are emotionally close to us such as family members, lovers and very close friends, 0–18 inches) to **personal space** (informal distance reserved for close friends, colleagues and some acquaintances, 18 inches to 4 feet) to **social space** (formal distance between acquaintances at a social function such as a party, 4–12 feet), and **public space**/distance (less personal contact in public situations, beyond 12 feet). Violations of these zones can cause discomfort and anxiety.

Culture plays a significant role in determining what distance is deemed appropriate in certain social situations. While people from all cultural backgrounds appear to use space according to the four major distinctions proposed by Hall (1959, 1966), they differ in the amount of space or distance linked to each category. In Latin America, for example, people who are complete strangers may greet one another by kissing on the cheeks and then sit very close to each other. In contrast, North Americans may shake hands with a stranger but stand several feet apart from each other when interacting for the first time.

There are also cultural variations in interpersonal space related to gender. For example, it is acceptable in Western countries for men and women to sit or stand close to each other when talking, whereas in some Muslim countries it is taboo for there to be interaction between males and females in certain social situations. These nonverbal 'rules' vary within nations and regions and depend on the context, gender, and relationship between the interactants.

As a consequence of the primary socialization process, people from different cultural backgrounds have different expectations of what is socially acceptable in terms of interpersonal distance. Hall (1968: 88) observed that 'physical contact between two people [. . .] can be perfectly correct in one culture, and absolutely taboo in another'. Not surprisingly, then, problems can arise when people of different cultures come into contact with one another. As noted by Hall (1968), conflicting expectations of spatial behaviour can lead to 'significant misunderstandings and intensified cultural shock' (p. 87). For example, if a Northern European woman is greeted by a Latin American male she barely knows, she may feel as if her space is being invaded if he kisses her on both cheeks and stands close to her. She may feel a bit threatened and consciously or subconsciously step back to regain her physical space and sense of security. Although unintentional, her actions may be considered rude by the Latin American. If the woman does not accept the kiss and extends her hand, he might view her actions as standoffish or impolite.

As this example illustrates, individuals from different cultural backgrounds may have divergent beliefs regarding which spatial zones are appropriate in a given situation. While North Americans tend to prefer more personal distance in social interactions, Latin Americans may be more at ease with more intimate contact when interacting with others. Being sensitive to such differences is critical to successful intercultural communication. It is also important to recognize and be sensitive to individual variations.

Plate 5.7 In our home environment we become used to having a certain amount of personal space. In a small island in the Philippines, these locals are used to sharing very tight quarters in public transport. Imagine you are on board this jeepney. How might you react? © David Jackson

Haptics

Haptics refers to the use of touch in communication, including the type of contact as well as its frequency and intensity. Touch can send multiple messages, many of which are affective or emotional in nature. In a communicative event, for example, touch can disclose one's attitude towards one's communication partners, including distinct emotions such as anger, fear, disgust, love, gratitude and sympathy. Touch can also be used to provide support and encouragement, display intimacy, signal approval or, alternatively, convey dislike, distrust and rejection. As well as attachment, bonding or protection, touch can indicate compliance, and visibly mark differences in power, status and prestige.

Like many other elements of nonverbal communication, haptics is very much a function of culture. From a young age, through the process of primary socialization, we learn rules for touching in various situations (e.g. the type and amount of touching considered appropriate when interacting with parents, siblings, teachers, acquaintances of the opposite sex, romantic partners). When, how, where and whom we feel comfortable touching varies considerably in diverse cultural contexts.

Edward T. Hall (1966) drew attention to cultural differences in the use of touch and made a distinction between what he termed high-contact and low-contact cultures. In the former, people display considerable interpersonal closeness or immediacy, e.g. they encourage

touching and touch more often than those in low-contact cultures. High-contact cultures are generally located in warmer countries near the equator (e.g. Columbia, Egypt, Indonesia, Western Africa), while low-contact cultures are found in cooler climates farther from the equator (e.g. Britain, South Korea, Sweden).

In Latin American, Mediterranean and Middle Eastern contexts (high-contact or high-touch cultures), people tend to employ a lot of social touching in greetings and conversation (e.g. hugs, hand-holding, kisses) with members of the same gender. In moderate-touch cultures such as North America and Northern Europe, touching (e.g. handshakes, back slapping, sporadic shoulder or arm touching) is used less frequently. In low-contact cultures such as those in North Asia, social touching among acquaintances is more rare than in high-contact cultures.

It is important to note, however, that the cultural and social rules governing touch are situational and vary *within* cultures. Touching behaviours may also change over time due to exposure to other norms of touching (e.g. observation and firsthand experience with other cultural norms in the multicultural workplace, the mass media). The amount, type, frequency and meaning of touch may differ depending on the gender, age and situation, as well as the relationship between the people involved. For example, while people in Mainland China may be reserved when interacting with acquaintances, they may use a significant amount of social touching in conversations and interactions with family members and close friends of the same gender. This means that while classification systems can provide a general picture of nonverbal behaviours, we must be aware of and sensitive to possible variations in different situations and contexts.

Recent research in diverse cultural settings has demonstrated that the way touch is used and interpreted may differ depending on one's socialization and degree of intercultural awareness and sensitivity (Hertenstein *et al.* 2006, 2009). Violations of the cultural rules regarding touch are likely to be interpreted in the same way as those of personal space, with negative consequences. In business situations in various cultural contexts, for example, handshakes may vary in terms of the strength of the grip and arm movements. In some Asian countries, handshakes tend to be less firm than in North America and Northern Europe. Consequently, a tight grip and vigorous handshake may be considered rude and overly aggressive. Conversely, business people in Belgium or Germany who are expecting a firm handshake are apt to be surprised when they receive a weak handshake from a Japanese businessman and they may regard him as insecure or standoffish.

Olfactics

Olfactics (also known as **olfaction**) is the study of how we use and perceive odours (e.g. perfumes, spices, body scent, deodorant). Some studies indicate that there is a universal preference for some scents, which is likely due to biological make-up and evolution (Liu *et al.* 2011). For example, the fragrances jasmine, lavender and roses tend to communicate a soothing and relaxing feeling to individuals no matter the cultural background.

There are also cultural differences related to olfactics. Smell can be used to communicate position, social class and power, and this varies according to the cultural context. Synnott (1993) claims that odour is used to categorize people into social groups of different status, power and social class because of the meanings or status attributed to a specific scent. In Switzerland, for example, wearing an expensive perfume, cologne or after-shave can signal status and wealth. The strong odour of sweat, on the other hand, can indicate manual labour

and a lower status. Synnott (1993) argues that perceived foul odours are one of the criteria by which negative identities are attributed to some social or ethnic groups. For example, the smell of curry is linked to South Asians and this can sometimes be used as basis for discrimination (e.g. refusing to rent apartments to people from India and Pakistan).

People's smell preferences are not universal but vary across cultures. For example, the Dogon people of Mali find the scent of onions very attractive, and young men and women rub fried onions all over their bodies (Neuliep 2006); in stark contrast, the smell of onion from a person's mouth is considered bad breath in many other cultures and people use breath mints to conceal it (Liu *et al.* 2011: 150-51). Hence, similar to other nonverbal codes, olfactics can impact on intercultural communication and one's willingness to engage.

Physical appearance and artifacts

Physical appearance is also considered a form of nonverbal communication among human beings. As well as physical features (e.g. body type, deformities, eye shape, gender, height, skin colour, weight), this type of nonverbal code includes artifacts (objects affiliated with a particular culture), such as various forms of decorative ornamentation (e.g. accessories, body piercings, brand names and logos, choice of colour, clothes, grooming, hairstyle, jewellery, makeup, tattoos). What we choose to wear (e.g. designer watches, eyeglasses, clothes, purses) or surround ourselves with (e.g. cars) communicates something about our preferred identities. These artifacts may project gender, role or position, class or status, personality and group membership or affiliation. Our physical appearance and artifacts may send messages about us that are below our level of awareness.

Appearance messages are generally the first nonverbal codes we process and, as such, they can have a profound impact on any verbal communication that follows. When we first meet people, we often form judgments about their personality, abilities and other attributes based on the way they look and what they wear, among other things. We quickly form an impression about their degree of similarity to us (e.g. age, dress, adornments, skin colour) and assess such aspects as their social standing, credibility, financial status and general attractiveness (Hickson & Stacks 1993; Moore *et al.* 2010). These first impressions can affect our desire to interact and form personal relationships. More specifically, they can influence our comfort level and our subsequent willingness to disclose our ideas and feelings. For example, we may be less inclined to develop friendships with people we perceive as very different from ourselves. Of course, just as we are judging others, our observers are forming opinions about us (e.g. our identities, manners, positioning or status, sense of style).

Our perceptions of what is attractive, beautiful or appropriate (e.g. adornments, dress) are influenced by our culture and the media (e.g. television, magazines, social media) as well as our intercultural experience and degree of openness. Through the primary socialization process, we build up expectations of what physical appearance and attire are acceptable in certain situations and contexts. We may not be consciously aware of how we are reading visual cues (e.g. dress, body shape, weight) but the messages and our reactions can be quite powerful. For example, police and military uniforms subliminally communicate the authority of those wearing them. In some contexts, they can instill fear rather than respect. Well-groomed executives wearing tailored suits project success and credibility, whereas adults wearing wrinkled, soiled sportswear in a business setting may transmit messages of failure (e.g. limited education, a poor work ethic, low status) and a lack of credibility. People who are obese may be perceived as lazy and unproductive, while blondes may be viewed as sexually permissive

Plate 5.8
Uniforms can convey a range of emotions in people (e.g. respect, fear). When you look at this policeman what is your reaction? © Jane Jackson

and lacking in intelligence. In some quarters, Muslim women who wear the veil may be perceived as subservient, religious fanatics, whereas in others they may be accorded more respect than women who are uncovered.

Culture clashes may erupt in intercultural situations due to differing ideas about what is appropriate attire in certain social situations. In the United Arab Emirates, for example, local women launched a Twitter campaign to object to 'scantily clad' women from other countries who visit the shopping malls and other public places (e.g. foreigners wearing short shorts and halter tops). In another example, in 2004, the French law on secularity and conspicuous religious symbols in schools came into effect. It bans the wearing of conspicuous religious symbols in public (including government-operated schools in France), including the niqab, a veil that covers a woman's face so that only her eyes are exposed through a slit. Mismatches between traditional and modern values about what is appropriate attire may lead to intercultural misunderstandings and conflict.

Although subliminal messages about physical appearance are below our level of awareness, they are often more powerful than conscious, overt messages. Advertisers take advantage of this to persuade us to buy certain products to become more attractive, slimmer, whiter, etc. Young, beautiful people usually appear in advertisements to communicate the subconscious message that the advertised product is associated with youth and beauty (according to prevailing views about what this actually is). Due to globalization, many beauty brands and products are now sold around the world with implicit or explicit notions about what it means to be beautiful (usually a Western image). Influenced by these messages, some people are taking drastic steps to alter their appearance. Young models may become anorexic (develop an eating disorder) as they strive to obtain a weight well below what is normal for them. In an effort to conform to prevailing standards of beauty, in many cultural settings, strict diets and exercise programmes abound. Some Asian women are seeking plastic surgeons to add a crease to their upper eyelid so that their eyes will look larger and, in some cases, more Westernized.

The colours we wear can also send messages to others, whether intentional or not. Some colours may have a particular meaning in certain cultural contexts, while in others they may mean something completely different or signify nothing at all. If someone is dressed in black from head to toe, for example, it might indicate the person is in mourning, while in another context it might signify an individual's membership in a gang, or it might simply serve as an indicator of the person's degree of sophistication and style. The colour one chooses to wear may simply be linked to personality traits and preferences rather than cultural norms.

Chronemics

Chronemics is the study of how people use and structure time. The way that we perceive and value time, organize our time and respond to time impacts on the communication process. To complicate matters, all of these elements may vary depending on the cultural environment and what individuals have become accustomed to during the socialization process.

Time perception, which includes punctuality and willingness to wait, may play a significant role in the nonverbal communication process. The use of time can affect one's lifestyle, daily routine, rate of speech, movements and how long one is willing to listen or wait for others. Time can also be used to reinforce one's status. For example, in most companies the boss can interrupt progress to hold an impromptu meeting in the middle of the work day, yet the average worker would have to make an appointment to see the boss. The way different cultures perceive time can influence communication as well.

Monochronic and polychronic time orientations

Cultures are usually categorized into two time system categories: **monochronic** and **polychronic** (Hall & Hall 1990). The characteristics associated with each are presented in Table 5.1.

In a monochronic time orientation, tasks are done one at a time and time is segmented into precise, small units so that one's day is scheduled, arranged and managed. Time is basically like a commodity; hence, the common saying, 'Time is money'. Monochronic cultures include Canada, East Asia, England, Japan, Germany, Northern Europe and the United States. Individuals who have been socialized in these contexts typically value schedules, tasks and 'getting the job done.' In workplace situations, individuals are committed to regimented

Table 5.1 Characteristics of monochronic and polychronic time systems

In a monochronic time system, people tend to:	*In a polychronic time system, people tend to:*
do one thing at a time	do many things at once
concentrate on the job	be highly distractible and subject to interruptions
take time commitments (deadlines, schedules) seriously	consider an objective to be achieved, if possible
be low-context and need information	be high-context and already have information
be committed to the job	be committed to people and human relationships
stick to plans	change plans often and easily
be concerned about not disturbing others; follow rules of privacy and consideration	be more concerned with those who are closely related than with privacy
show great respect for private property; seldom borrow or lend	borrow and lend things often and easily
emphasize promptness	base promptness on the relationship
be accustomed to short-term relationships	have strong tendency to build lifetime relationships

schedules and may view those who do not subscribe to the same perception of time as disrespectful and disorganized.

In a polychronic time orientation, multiple tasks can be performed simultaneously, and schedules follow a more fluid approach. Latin American, African, Asian and Arabic cultures generally follow the polychronic system of time. Unlike Americans and most Northern and Western European cultures, individuals from these cultures are much less focused on the preciseness of accounting for each and every moment. In contrast with monochronic cultures, polychronic cultures prioritize tradition and relationships over tasks. Consequently, individuals are not ruled by schedules and have a more informal, elastic perception of time. They may arrive late for events with family or close friends and, as they may schedule multiple appointments simultaneously, it is difficult to keep to a tight schedule. Polychronic cultures include Egypt, India, Mexico, Pakistan, the Philippines and Saudi Arabia. As one might expect, intercultural conflict may arise when people familiar with different time systems interact.

THE NONVERBAL EXPECTANCY VIOLATION THEORY

The **nonverbal expectancy violation theory**, which was developed by Judee Burgoon (1978), suggests that during the socialization process we build up expectations (mostly subconscious) about how others should behave nonverbally in particular situations and contexts. In other words, we learn social norms of nonverbal behaviour and become comfortable with **nonverbal cues** (all potentially informative behaviours that are not purely linguistic in content) that are familiar to us, just as we become used to particular verbal expressions of politeness (e.g. greetings, cultural scripts).

When our nonverbal expectations are violated, we are apt to react in specific ways. For example, when someone stands too close to us or stares at us longer than we are used to, we

likely feel uneasy and even threatened; we may view this person and the relationship negatively. We may then extend this perception to all perceived members of this individual's culture. As nonverbal communication often takes place at a subconscious level, we likely have little awareness that we are making positive or negative judgments about others based on their violation of our expectations of certain nonverbal behaviours (Burgoon 1995; Floyd *et al.* 2008).

The expectancy violation theory, which has been applied to a wide range of nonverbal behaviour such as body movement, facial expression, eye contact, posture, touch and time management, helps explain common reactions to unexpected nonverbal behaviour in intercultural interactions (Burgoon 1978). When expectations are not met, the violation can exert a significant impact on people's impressions of one another and this in turn can influence the outcomes of their interactions. Therefore, this theory has significant implications for ways to enhance intercultural relations. In particular, it raises awareness of the importance of becoming more attuned to one's expectations for specific nonverbal behaviours and the need to recognize that differing norms may prevail in different cultural settings. Additional ways to enhance one's nonverbal interactions in intercultural interactions are explored in the next section.

NONVERBAL INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE

Although studying nonverbal communication cannot ensure competence in interpersonal communication, more awareness of the dimensions of nonverbal behaviour and the potential variations across and within cultures can help to enhance one's interaction with people who have been socialized in a different cultural environment. The following are some practical suggestions to optimize the nonverbal dimension in intercultural interactions.

1. Become more attuned to your own nonverbal behaviour and expectations in diverse settings, as well as your attitudes towards nonverbal behaviour that differs from your own.
2. Recognize that people communicate on many levels (e.g. multiple nonverbal channels). Be attentive to voice qualities (e.g. volume, tone), eye contact, facial expressions, hand and feet movements, body movement and placement, gestures, posture, gait and appearance. In a new environment carefully observe nonverbal communication in specific settings. Becoming more aware of the nonverbal communication of your hosts can help you determine what messages they are sending.
3. In intercultural interactions, note the nonverbal behaviours of your communication partners, and check to see if their nonverbal communication is telling you that they understand or misunderstand you. Your ability to read nonverbal communication can improve with practice.
4. If individuals say something verbally and their nonverbal communication conveys another message, seek verbal clarification.
5. Be aware that you are often being evaluated by your nonverbal communication. When people meet you for the first time they are observing your nonverbal behaviour (e.g. your appearance, gestures, voice qualities) and forming an impression of you. For example, in an interview (e.g. for scholarships, study abroad, a job), the interviewers are apt to assess your nonverbal behaviours as well as your verbal comments. Through nonverbal channels you are sending signals about your degree of self-confidence, level of interest and motivation, attitude towards the interview, emotional state and many other personal attributes and characteristics. Think about what messages your posture, eye contact and other nonverbal behaviours are sending.

6 Check your perceptions of others' nonverbal behaviour to see if you are accurate or if you are misreading nonverbal cues.
7 Seek verbal clarification for unexpected nonverbal behaviour instead of rushing to judgment.
8 Expand your nonverbal communication repertoire. In new cultural settings, for example, observe and practice new nonverbal behaviours and see what you are comfortable with.
9 Become more aware of your prejudicial assumptions that are linked to nonverbal behaviour. When you have an adverse reaction to someone from another cultural background, reflect on the basis for it. Is unfamiliar nonverbal behaviour the source of your discomfort? For example, is the person standing very close to you and making you feel uneasy? Has he or she been socialized to be more familiar with less personal distance between people?
10 Never assume that individuals who have a different linguistic and cultural background understand your nonverbal messages. When in doubt, use verbal checks to ensure that your meaning has been interpreted as intended.
11 Be flexible and adaptable in your nonverbal communication in intercultural encounters. Try synchronizing your behaviour to that of your communication partners as this may communicate respect and the desire to cultivate the relationship.
12 When working in a diverse group or leading a meeting with people from different cultural backgrounds, be attentive to nonverbal cues as they can tell you:

- when you've talked long enough or too long
- whether it is appropriate to interrupt a speaker as well as the accepted ways to do so
- when someone else wishes to speak or take the floor
- the mood of the group
- their feelings about your comments and suggestions.

Listen attentively and observe the nonverbal behaviour of group members and you'll be a more effective group member and communicator.
13 Whenever possible, try to accompany your nonverbal messages with some type of verbal follow up that reiterates or emphasizes your nonverbal message.
14 Be aware that your physical appearance and attire are continuously sending out messages about who you are and how you feel about the people around you.
15 Finally, remember that your cultural background plays a significant role in the nonverbal messages you send and how you interpret nonverbal messages.

Similar to verbal codes, nonverbal acts vary among people from different cultural backgrounds, and these differences can sometimes lead to misunderstandings and conflict. Making an effort to enhance one's nonverbal communication repertoire is vital for effective intercultural interactions. To become a competent intercultural communicator, it is imperative to recognize the power and multiple dimensions of nonverbal communication in interpersonal relations. One's nonverbal communication skills can improve with practice and, ultimately, strengthen relationships with individuals who have been socialized in a different cultural setting.

SUMMARY

While our language system is undeniably a vital component of communication, nonverbal actions that occur on their own or accompany spoken messages can be even more significant

and powerful. Nonverbal cues account for most of the communication we have with others in face-to-face interactions and when there is a discrepancy between verbal and nonverbal messages, adults tend to believe the latter. Although nonverbal communication and verbal communication differ in many ways, the two systems often function together. It is important to recognize that we both send and receive nonverbal information through multiple sensory channels (e.g. visual, auditory, smell, touch) with or without speech.

This chapter introduced many different functions and types of nonverbal codes (e.g. haptics, kinesics, oculesics, olfactics, physical appearance and attire, proxemics, paralanguage). While some elements appear to be universal, the use of nonverbal codes can vary among individuals from different cultural backgrounds (e.g. differing gestures as well as norms and interpretations of nonverbal actions). The nonverbal expectancy violation theory suggests that when we encounter unfamiliar nonverbal behaviours we may instinctively react in a negative way and not even realize why. To become a competent intercultural communicator in today's globalized world, it is imperative that we enhance our knowledge of nonverbal communication and expand our repertoire of nonverbal behaviours and strategies so that our communication is more appropriate and effective in diverse contexts and situations.

discussion questions

1 Why is it important to study nonverbal communication?
2 What are the major differences between verbal and nonverbal communication?
3 Identify five ways in which we communicate nonverbally and provide examples of each.
4 Explain how culture, language and nonverbal communication are connected.
5 In your home environment, how much difference is there in the ways males and females use nonverbal communication? Have you observed any gender differences in other cultural contexts? Please provide examples.
6 Through the process of primary socialization, we learn to speak at a preferred volume in certain contexts. Can you think of any situations in which you have negatively judged others who speak much louder or more softly than you are used to?
7 This chapter has identified many forms of nonverbal communication. Which ones do you think are the most problematic for you in intercultural interactions?
8 Drawing on your own experience, give examples of cultural variations in gestures and facial expressions. How do you feel when someone behaves in ways that you do not expect?
9 Consider one of the spaces where you hang out (e.g. a cafeteria, a karaoke lounge, a sports bar, a library). Note the furnishings, the décor, the architecture and the nonverbal actions of the staff. What values are conveyed by the furnishing and the décor (e.g. the ways in which tables are arranged)? What do you observe about the use of space?
10 After reading this chapter, do you think you will respond differently when someone from another linguistic and cultural background violates your expectations for nonverbal behaviour? Please explain.

further reading

Andersen, P.A. (2008) *Nonverbal Communication: Forms and Functions,* 2nd edn, Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press.

Drawing on theory and research, the author discusses the major forms, functions and uses of nonverbal communication.

Burgoon, J.K., Gurrero, L.K. and Floyd, K. (2009) *Nonverbal Communication*, Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Referring to both classic and contemporary research on nonverbal communication, this volume uses current examples to illustrate nonverbal communication.

Guerrero, L.K. and Hecht, M. (2008) *The Nonverbal Communication Reader,* 3rd edn, Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press.

This volume introduces multiple dimensions of nonverbal communication, drawing on classic and contemporary research.

Hall. E.T. (1984) *The Dance of Life: The Other Dimension of Time*, New York: Anchor Books.

This book explores the cultural nature of time.

Hall, E.T. (1990) *The Hidden Dimension*, New York: Anchor Books.

This classic explores variations in the use of space across cultures and discusses how that use reflects cultural values and norms of behaviour.

Knapp, M.L. and Hall, J.A. (2009) *Nonverbal Communication in Human Interaction,* 7th edn, Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Co.

This introductory text is designed for courses on nonverbal communication.

Matsumoto, D. and Hwang, H.S. (2012) 'Nonverbal communication: The messages of emotion, action, space, and silence', in J. Jackson (ed.) *The Routledge Handbook of Language and Intercultural Communication,* Abingdon: Routledge, pp. 130–47.

In this chapter, the authors review the key findings of research that has examined the influence of culture on various nonverbal behaviours (e.g. facial expressions, gestures, gaze, voice, interpersonal space, touch, posture, gait).

Moore, N-J, Hickson, M. and Stacks, D.W. (2010) *Nonverbal Communication: Studies and Applications,* 5th edn, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Balancing theory and practice, this volume is designed to help students understand how nonverbal communication impacts 'real world' interactions.