

РОМАНСЬКІ ТА ГЕРМАНСЬКІ МОВИ

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NONVERBAL CUES ACROSS UKRAINIAN AND AUSTRIAN CULTURES: COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

The article aims to compare the characteristics of nonverbal communication of Ukrainians and Austrians. The study is relevant because nonverbal communication plays a significant role in shaping interpersonal relationships and cultural interactions. The research focuses on interpretation of nonverbal cues as well as the cultural differences and similarities in the use of nonverbal cues such as facial expressions, gestures, eye contact, and personal space in both Ukrainian and Austrian cultures. The research methodology employed a multifaceted approach, combining a comprehensive literature review with real-world observations and in-depth interviews.

The results of the research shed light on differences and unexpected similarities in how Ukrainians and Austrians use nonverbal communication. These discoveries are viewed as academic observations which have important implications for interactions between people from different cultures. By uncovering these complexities, the study provides readers with a deep comprehension of the subtle signals that are easily overlooked but have a significant impact on how communication works.

The present study might be significant for exploring the already existent interconnected global society. As different cultures blend and intertwine, the skill to understand and honor nonverbal communication customs becomes essential, so the research provides a wide range of perspective study.

Furthermore, the paper enhances not only our academic understanding of nonverbal communication but also offers practical insights applicable in diverse situations. Understanding the intricate dynamics of gestures, expressions, and personal space equips individuals with valuable skills to navigate the complexities of our multicultural world effectively.

Key words: *nonverbal communication, nonverbal cues interpretation, cross-cultural communication, cultural differences, cultural similarities, Ukrainians, Austrians.*

Statement of the problem. Effective cross-cultural communication is essential for successful interpersonal and professional relationships in today's globalized society. However, recognizing and deciphering nonverbal signs is one of the major difficulties in cross-cultural communication [9, p. 211]. Human interactions heavily rely on nonverbal cues such as body language, gestures, facial expressions, eye contact, and tone of voice. These nonverbal cues are greatly influenced by cultural differences, which can cause misunderstandings and misinterpretations between people from various cultural backgrounds.

The complicated interaction of cultural diversity, nonverbal communication, and its effects on successful cross-cultural encounters is the main focus of this

research. The research specifically aims to address the following issues:

Cross-Cultural Communication Challenges: Different nonverbal communication patterns come from cultural variations. These variations frequently make it difficult to precisely comprehend gestures, emotions, and tones, which breaks down communication and prevents people from various cultures from understanding one another.

Impact on Interpersonal Relationships: Negative effects on interpersonal interactions might result from misinterpretations of nonverbal signs. People may unintentionally insult or misunderstand one another, which can cause conflict and stress and have a detrimental impact on both personal and professional relationships.

Need for Cultural Sensitivity: The need for people and organizations to become sensitive to and conscious of cultural differences is urgent. Fostering respect, trust, and successful communication in a variety of settings requires an understanding of the subtleties of nonverbal communication that are unique to other cultures.

Analysis of recent research and publications.

The importance of comprehending the nuances of cross-cultural communication grows as our globally connected society develops [12, p. 114]. We begin an investigation of globalization and its profound impact on communication dynamics, exploring the fusion of several global cultures and their complex interactions. In the course of the present study, we have explored the rich historical and cultural variety of Austria and Ukraine, the two countries whose fascinating histories have had a big impact on the way they communicate and organize their societies. We have tried to learn how these factors interact critically and how they affect current global relationships by navigating through recent research and publications.

Paralinguistics is the part of communication outside of the words themselves like volume, speed, intonation of a voice along with gestures and other nonverbal cues [4, p. 36] which can be further broken down into the following categories [8, p. 121]:

- Gestures.
- Facial expressions.
- Eye contact.
- Kinesics or body language.
- Proxemics.

As Ma Tiechuan [21, p. 2] astutely pointed out, the realm of nonverbal communication is profoundly intertwined with culture, serving as a potent reflection of a society's values, norms, and intricacies. Cultural values and societal norms act as powerful guiding forces, molding the contours of nonverbal behaviours and dictating what is considered appropriate and acceptable within a specific cultural context. This profound influence is pervasive, touching every aspect of human interaction, from facial expressions and gestures to body language and proxemics [6, p. 168].

When we delve into the tapestry of nonverbal communication, we find that it mirrors the diversity of cultures across the globe. Every culture has its unique set of nonverbal cues, each laden with meaning and significance [19, p. 122]. A gesture that signifies approval in one culture might convey a completely different message in another. For instance, the simple act of eye contact can denote confidence and attentiveness in some cultures, while in others, it might be perceived as disrespectful or confrontational [5, p. 497].

We might use a variety of communication techniques, as well as adjustments in various contexts and interpersonal dynamics, to achieve successful communication [7, p. 25]. What could we do to succeed? There are several suggestions for it. Firstly, getting a knowledge of some kinds of cultures is the premise undoubtedly. Then it is reasonable to understand and accept each communication style in certain cultures with its meaning [11, p. 46]. Meanwhile, it is necessary for us to learn some intercultural communication skills and pay attention to our own communication styles. Therefore, if handled properly, cultural misunderstandings brought on by different communication approaches between cultures might be resolved [15, p. 182].

Understanding these cultural differences is becoming more crucial as globalization continues to link people from all over the world, as it facilitates effective communication and fruitful social interactions. Misunderstandings, disputes, and even offenses can result from a lack of awareness and respect for culturally specific nonverbal cues. However, when people take the time to understand and respect these cultural differences, it can result in more effective and peaceful relationships and communication.

The concept of "globalization" refers to the growth in connectedness and interdependence that trade and technology have brought about on a global scale. The ensuing societal and economic changes are also covered by the definition of globalization. According to Van der Marel [23, p. 4], globalization is commonly used interchangeably with modernization or Westernization. Given the enormous impact the United States has had on the rest of the globe in recent decades, cultures are not "frozen," but rather correlate with one another, which is more visible as the cost of time and space decreases.

The enormous flow of beliefs, customs, and values made possible by globalization eliminated international borders and increased people's sense of interconnectivity. However, as we go deeper into the world of global cultures, we discover that although it brings us closer together, globalization also emphasizes how crucial it is to preserve and honour the distinctive identities and customs that each culture has to offer.

The degree to which people value the needs of the individual over the needs of the collective is one way in which cultural differences can be observed. While some cultures place a higher value on group harmony and interdependence, others place a higher value on personal autonomy and individualism [18, p. 195]. These variations can be observed in how people

interact, choose their course of action, and build relationships. In today's globally interconnected world, understanding these cultural orientations is crucial for productive communication and teamwork.

In the present study we share Nan Leaptrott's theory [14, p. 268] of the three main global cultures: pluralistic/individualistic, tribalistic and collectivistic.

In the tribal cultures (e.g. Spain, Italy, South America, Africa, as well as Ireland and Ukraine!), the primary focal point of the individual, the structure through which one derives one's identity, is the family unit; to be more exact, a clan or an extended family. This is a close-knit group whose members are associated through heredity who have a shared historical perspective. Members feel a sense of connection to the past through ancestors and to the future through children. The family and its name and honor must be defended at all costs.

The collectivistic culture (mostly Asia) engages a much broader concept of group affiliation. This can be a town, a nation or a race. The individual finds identity through affiliation with the larger group. To maintain this group identity, it is important that the group foster homogeneity. It is important to the individual's identity that he or she is not singled out and that he or she is just like everyone else. It is frightening for those who go beyond or reject the group and look for something different or personal. They are nothing without the group.

The pluralistic culture (e.g. the US, Germany, Scandinavian countries) contains a variety of institutions or groups that provide social structure. One can find personal identity through family, religious affiliation, social group, business or political organization, most likely choosing a combination of these. In a pluralistic/individualistic society, individuals have to construct their own identity. Independence is the ultimate value, groups depend on the mutual consent of individuals, and conformity is neither demanded nor assumed.

Based on the above, Austria just like Germany, represents a pluralistic society. Its post-World War II rebuilding effort was marked by the adoption of a democratic constitution, but it was not without its challenges. Nazi ideology, minority representation issues, civil rights, and political corruption all posed obstacles to progress [13, p. 37]. Nevertheless, Austria managed to achieve impressive economic growth and development, becoming one of the top exporters in the world. Joining the European Union in 1995 further solidified Austria's position within the larger European community and promoted greater cooperation. Despite its current status as a stable and prosper-

ous democracy, Austria still grapples with challenges such as immigration, xenophobia, and the rise of far-right politics.

Intriguing concerns concerning Ukraine's social structure are raised by Nan Leaptrott claim that the nation is an example of a tribalistic society [14, p. 268]. Although N. Leaptrott highlights the tribalistic component, in order to properly understand Ukraine's complex social structure, it is necessary to go further into its specifics.

A different perspective is offered by Borysenko's observation [3, p. 59], which emphasizes Ukraine's qualities as formerly individualistic society. Ukraine's history under the Soviet control calls on a separate study, though.

The change mentioned by Borysenko [3, p. 59], which took place following the collapse of the Soviet Union and the subsequent independence of Ukraine, was a turning point in the history of the country. This transformation had a significant influence on Ukraine's social dynamics in addition to catalyzing political and economic developments [10, p. 424]. The participants were encouraged to feel personal agency and self-expression by their increased independence, which exacerbated their already-present individualistic inclinations [20, p. 76].

The challenges that nations may encounter in advancing democratic values and eradicating the effects of totalitarianism, including the repression of free expression and cultural identity, are illustrated by the examples of Austria and Ukraine. But the development of democracy in these nations also serves as a reminder of the value of human rights and the capacity of democracy to advance liberty, equality, and justice. We can promote greater understanding and appreciation for the diversity of international cultures by acknowledging and respecting cultural differences in nonverbal communication.

The aim of the study is to investigate, interpret and compare the nonverbal communication patterns of Austrians and Ukrainians. The study attempts to offer thorough insights into how cultural influences affect nonverbal communication by delving into the subtle aspects of these cultural variability. The research was also supposed to identify the precise nonverbal cues that Ukrainians and Austrians implement and comprehend using a qualitative research methodology that includes techniques like observation and interviews. By addressing these problems, this study attempts to fill a gap in the literature and offer beneficial recommendations for improving the efficiency of cross-cultural communication. In the end, the study hopes to advance understanding of

cross-cultural communication and help professionals successfully negotiate the obstacles of nonverbal communication in many cultural situations.

The material of the article. Communication as a meaning generator falls apart into two distinct areas: verbal and nonverbal, both of which convey meaning and in most cases are interdependent: supporting, supplementing or contradicting each other [22, p. 14]. According to K. Betts, [2 p. 2] whose analysis is based on the Tubbs communication model [22, p. 14] and provides the list of message types as Verbal, Intentional Verbal, Unintentional Verbal, Nonverbal, Intentional Nonverbal, and Unintentional Nonverbal, stresses the importance of understanding the crucial role of nonverbal cues which affect all stages of communication, with meaning interpretation included.

The above author singles out visual, spatial and temporal cues. They are further subdivided into posture, facial expression, body gestures as Visual; use of touch to communicate as Haptics; how communicators dress and choose color and how they come across as physically appealing or negligent as Appearance; how they handle time (responsible, punctual or laid-back) as Chronemics [2, p. 3].

All of the listed above can be misleading to other culture representatives in the way they appear strange or unidentified in their own culture, as we may see further on in the present analysis of the two globally opposing Ukrainian and Austrian cultures.

Furthermore, it's important to bear in mind the role nonverbal communication plays in human interaction that claims 55% of face-to-face falls on nonverbal signals, while the rest falls on tone and words [16, p. 44].

However, the aforementioned features of any kind of communication, namely, verbal and nonverbal and the latter's fractions (visual, haptics or chronemics) do not cover the whole picture of messages behind them, for the difference across cultures may, again, interfere with the interpretation of the combined meaning of verbal and nonverbal cues. As was pointed out by J. Zhen, [24, p. 37] globalization has outlined much stricter requirements for those interacting internationally.

As cultural interaction becomes smoother and more transparent for both communicating parties due to their mutual penetration into their respective culture peculiarities, it is also acquiring some common international features in the course of economic and cultural globalization. This trend is in no way less significant to the domain of nonverbal communication [1]. Thus, among international gestures one can find 'thumbs up' and 'thumbs down' [25, p. 954]. Even

more so are the Internet symbols of heart for 'love' that have brought cultures with crucial differences together.

In this respect the authors of the study of nonverbal cues in Emoticons [17, p. 343] identified their purpose as examining how cross-cultural differences influence people's use of Emoticons on Twitter and concluded that people within individualistic cultures (US, Western Europe) and collectivistic cultures (mostly Asian) cultures express their feelings in a different way: individualistic cultures are more direct and collectivistic are more constrained even in their use of emoticons. None-the-less, it is important not to overlook the other side of the coin, that of the common culture of using emoticons as global symbols of emotion expression which supports the idea of nonverbal communication becoming closer and more understandable with the spread of globalization.

However, interpretation of nonverbal cues across cultures may be quite misleading, for the combined set of meanings seems to be more complicated and even aggravated by the impact of different factors outside communication messages. To have a better insight into the problem, let's take a specific facial expression of a 'smirk' in English. The factors to be taken into account for its interpretation in a particular situation are quite numerous:

- The communicator's global culture (individualistic, tribalistic or collectivistic);
 - The typical mode of behavior or tone of communication between the particular partners (i.e. formal/informal/nonchalant/friendly/hostile);
 - The communicators' relations;
 - The communicator's current state of mind or physical well-being;
 - The status of each communicator;
 - The general meaning of a smirk in each communicator's national culture;
 - The communicator's previous experience of intercultural communication;
 - The situational and social context of the interaction;
 - The interaction length;
 - The facial expression being intentional or unintentional;
 - The communicators' personalities and temperament;
 - The communicators' society layer, and the like.
- On constants and variables.

The background for such an analysis might be complex and **manifold**, for each factor involved may change the whole picture of interpreting a particular nonverbal message. The factors listed above

are viewed as **variables**, i.e. the typical friendly mode of communication between the sender and the receiver may turn into hostile right in the course of interaction due to another <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdSmcdZ03Uqpu0RYAD-Br0VFeungg-XVzOUvhAzFMaS-Z0R8eQ/view-form?pli=1>, so the smirk must be interpreted as a detesting sign instead of the usual nonchalant laid-back attitude between commonly friendly communicators. Or the communicator's previous experience of intercultural communication may rapidly change within a short period of time to give way to a shift in their relationship. The variables may overlap very rapidly, interfere with each other under the changing situation, so that each communicator's state of mind may also change within seconds.

In contrast to the variables, **constants** are stable factors which do not change for a long period of time or don't change at all. Here belong global and national cultures and communicators' personalities with hereditary and inborn features and temperament. They inevitably merge with the variables in the course of communication and yield instant messages of both verbal and nonverbal communication. In this respect the meanings of nonverbal behaviour across cultures serve as a more stable background for the communication act interpretation.

Another challenge of the kind is to decipher to what extent the communicators of one global culture (say, tribalistic for Ukrainian) have undergone the adaptation as a result of their immersion into a globally opposing (in this study individualistic Austrian) culture. What variables in question would change? The typical communication mode/tone? The acquired status of a refugee? The communicator's previous experience? The answer is fairly positive and supported by the results of the present study, as one would see below.

The presented here study implies that the factors indicated are of crucial importance for the research of Ukrainian-Austrian nonverbal communication differences, since it was done by Ukrainian refugees during the Russian invasion to Ukraine in 2022 who found shelter in Austria and could speak at least English to conduct the survey and make observations. They found it was sometimes hard to decipher nonverbal clues not only due to the cultural differences but to some other factors, i.e. where the communicator originally comes from (a former compatriot would bear some features typical for his/her former national culture even though speaking English in a western European country).

A qualitative research methodology was used in the course of this study to gain a more detailed and

thorough understanding of Austrian non-verbal communication patterns. Semi-structured interviews were held with two different participant groups: native Austrians and Ukrainians who had lived in Austria for a considerable amount of time, giving them the chance to integrate into the local cultural setting. These interviews were purposefully conducted in order to obtain in-depth information about the subtle aspects of non-verbal communication as they were encountered and used in the Austrian sociocultural context.

To offer an accurate viewpoint on traditional non-verbal communication methods within the Austrian cultural setting, native Austrian participants who represent the indigenous cultural group were selected. Their observations were crucial in defining the rules and customs that regulate nonverbal conduct in the Austrian culture.

Participants in the interviews selected for this study remarked that Austrians are seen as trustworthy as well as punctual; and these qualities are highly regarded in their society. This may be explained by the value put on efficiency and punctuality in Austrian culture, which is mirrored in the way they communicate. Austrians pride themselves on their timeliness and expect the same from others in various aspects of life, including work, social events, and everyday interactions.

While Austrians may engage in humor, it is primarily expressed through jokes and laughter rather than specific nonverbal cues. Silence during conversations, especially with strangers, might be perceived as awkward, but this discomfort fades as relationships deepen.

Additionally, online communication etiquette varies among individuals, with work-related messages often experiencing delays compared to responses to friends' messages.

In Austria, greetings are important. Handshakes are common and should be firm, with an eye contact and a smile. Nods and waves can also be used. Polite nonverbal gestures include smiling, nodding, using hand gestures, and bowing slightly. Impolite gestures like avoiding eye contact, frowning, shaking your head, using aggressive hand gestures, or walking away mid-conversation are not welcome.

In contrast, the group of Ukrainian participants who had acclimated to the Austrian environment through prolonged stays offered a unique perspective. These individuals were deemed particularly valuable due to their dual cultural competence, having navigated both their native Ukrainian cultural communication norms and the distinct practices encountered during their time in Austria.

It was noted that in the Ukrainian culture maintaining direct eye contact is considered a positive trait associated with trustworthiness. However, prolonged staring is considered impolite and should be avoided. Meanwhile, eye contact is highly valued in Austrian culture and is seen as a way of establishing a personal connection and building trust. It is also believed to convey honesty and sincerity.

According to cultural standards, it has been discovered that Ukrainians frequently display reserved body language and refrain from speaking loudly in front of others. This stands in stark contrast to Austrian behaviors, which is typically seen as being more vocal and lively in public settings.

It was observed that Ukrainians tend to stand closer to their interlocutors while Austrians prefer a distance of at least an arm's length. Unless one is having an intimate conversation, any closer than arm's length may be interpreted as an infringement of one's personal space.

One notable aspect of nonverbal communication in Austria is the frequency of smiling, especially towards strangers. Austrians are generally known for their friendly and approachable demeanor, often expressing warmth through smiles. Smiling at strangers is a common way to acknowledge others and create a positive atmosphere, indicating friendliness and openness. On the other hand, despite smiling less frequently, Ukrainians were seen as being more sincere and authentic. This perception might be influenced by the cultural importance Ukrainian society places on sincerity and authenticity.

The study also revealed that Austrians and Ukrainians interact and greet one another differently. No matter their gender, men and women commonly shake hands as a greeting in Austrian culture. This reflects the nation's emphasis on gender equality and pluralistic outlook.

In contrast, greetings are traditionally gender-based in Ukrainian culture. Women may nod, smile, or extend a slight curtsy as a form of greeting, whereas men typically shake hands with other men. These conventional gender roles, however, might be changing as Ukraine continues to move towards a more inclusive and diverse society.

This observation might be a reflection of the traditional gender roles and expectations in the Ukrainian society, where it is typically assumed that men will be stoic and restrained in their emotional expression. Ukrainian men may feel pressure to conform to stricter gender norms and maintain a greater sense of physical distance from other men, whereas Ukrainian women may feel more at ease with a physical touch and emotional expressions.

Despite the contrasting nonverbal communication norms between Ukrainian and Austrian cultures, the respondents reported a seamless integration experience without any notable issues or misunderstandings with the local population.

Conclusions. Effective cross-cultural communication is a crucial ability in our linked global world. The nuances of nonverbal communication, which include gestures and facial expressions, have a considerable impact on how messages are received and comprehended across different cultures.

However, it is important to learn to properly interpret the non-verbal cues taking into account both constant and variable factors that may substantially impact the signals sent through them which can be the subject of complex separate research.

As an example of a tribalistic culture, Ukraine provides a distinctive insight into cultural processes. Its customs and values, which have their roots in tribal origin, have a unique impact on ways of communicating. In contrast, Austrians approach communication with openness and acceptance because of their country's long history of plurality. Their emphasis on directness, which is demonstrated by maintaining eye contact, improves their standing as reliable and prompt.

Ukrainians, amidst a societal shift towards inclusivity, place a premium on sincerity and authenticity. While their smiles may be less frequent, the sincerity in their expressions reflects a commitment to genuine communication. This transition mirrors broader changes in Ukrainian society, emphasizing honesty and directness in their interactions.

Navigating this intricate tapestry of cultural nuances requires profound cultural sensitivity. With the expanding reach of pluralism, adapting communication methods becomes paramount. By keenly observing and respecting nonverbal cues, individuals can bridge cultural gaps and build meaningful connections. Addressing personal biases is equally crucial, enabling the development of a truly inclusive perspective.

Whereas gestures and facial expressions are slightly different in the cultures under the study, the sense of time and punctuality might be crucially opposing.

In essence, fostering effective cross-cultural communication hinges on profound cultural awareness. This awareness, combined with adaptability and respect, nurtures lasting relationships and deepens our global understanding. As our world continues to intertwine, the ability to comprehend and embrace diverse cultural perspectives remains fundamental to harmonious global interactions.

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Бадан А. А., Дудник Т. О. НЕВЕРБАЛЬНІ СИГНАЛИ В УКРАЇНСЬКІЙ ТА АВСТРІЙСЬКІЙ КУЛЬТУРАХ: ПОРІВНЯЛЬНИЙ АНАЛІЗ

Метою статті є порівняння особливостей невербальної комунікації українців та австрійців. Дослідження є актуальним, оскільки невербальна комунікація відіграє значну роль у формуванні міжособистісних стосунків і культурних взаємодій. Дослідження зосереджено на виявленні культурних

відмінностей і подібностей у використанні невербальних сигналів, таких як міміка, жести, зоровий контакт і особистий простір в українській та австрійській культурах.

Методологія дослідження застосовувала багатогранний підхід, поєднуючи комплексний огляд літератури з реальними спостереженнями та глибинними інтерв'ю.

Результати дослідження висвітлюють відмінності та несподівані схожості в невербальній комунікації між українцями та австрійцями. Наявні академічні спостереження мають важливий вплив на взаємодію між представниками різних культур. Розкриваючи ці відмінності, дослідження допомагає читачам глибше зрозуміти сигнали, які можна легко не помітити, але вони відіграють суттєву роль у процесах комунікації.

Це дослідження має величезне значення для нашого взаємопов'язаного глобального суспільства. Оскільки різні культури змішуються та переплітаються, вміння розуміти та шанувати звичаї невербального спілкування стає важливим, відтак наявне дослідження надає непересічні перспективи.

Загалом стаття не тільки розширює суто академічне розуміння невербальної комунікації, але й пропонує конкретні ідеї для її інтерпретації. Розуміння складної взаємодії жестів, виразів обличчя та особистого простору дає людям корисні навички для успішної взаємодії в сучасному багатокультурному світі.

Ключові слова: невербальна комунікація, інтерпретація невербальних сигналів, міжкультурна комунікація, культурні відмінності, культурні подібності, українці, австрійці.