Introducing non-verbal communication to Japanese university students:

Determining content

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Abstract

Non-verbal communication is an important aspect to teach Japanese English language students if they are to communicate effectively in English. The purpose of this research is to determine which aspects of non-verbal communication would be important to teach Japanese university students studying English. Literature regarding Japanese use of non-verbal communication is described and used as a basis to determine aspects of non-verbal communication which would be important to introduce Japanese university students to. These finding are also used to develop a survey which was administered to further determine which types of non-verbal communication used in communication would be important to introduce. The Pedagogical implications of this research is described and practical teaching suggestions are given. The importance of conducting classroom research regarding the introduction of cultural material is emphasized as findings in an initial search of literature regarding Japanese use of non-verbal communication often did not support responses given in the survey.

Keywords: non-verbal communication, body language, intercultural communication, cross-cultural communication, English language education, cultural differences, Japan, eye contact, personal space, touch, paralanguage, culture, teaching culture

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Introducing culture in foreign language teaching (FLT) is important in order to develop the communicative competence of students as language learners not only require a grasp of the linguistic elements of the language they are learning, but also need to understand the role culture plays in communicating with someone with a different cultural background from that of their own. As FLT methodology in recent years has focused on communicative competence such through use of the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach, culture should be included as part of such an approach in order to develop effective communication skills using a foreign language as the "communicative approach already contains potentials for culture-sensitivity" (Holliday, 1994, p. 165) . Increasing awareness of cultural differences in terms of communication would not only allow learners to become more competent communicators, but may also lead to greater awareness of aspects of their own culture and the role it may play when interacting with someone with a different cultural background from that of their own. Such a view of culture in terms of developing communicative competence differs from the notion of teaching culture in terms of the traditions and institutions of another country often defined as culture with a capital 'C' where "culture is viewed too often as an elitest collection of facts about art, literature, music, history and geography" (Seelye, 1985, p. 8). Culture in terms of developing the communicative competence of students is therefore not of the "big C" variety, but rather of the more broadly interpreted 'little c' (Seelye, 1985, p. 19) variety. This broader view of culture with may be defined as "the shared knowledge and schemes created by a set of people for perceiving, interpreting, expressing, and responding to the social realities around them" (Lederach, 1995, p. 9). Such a definition of culture in more broad terms allows consideration of those cultural aspects which may play a role in communication when they are an integral aspect of shared knowledge in responding to a particular cultural group's social realities. The importance of communicative competence as a basis of CLT methodology makes awareness of cultural elements which play a part in effective communication a priority of such a definition of culture as "certainly, mere transmission of Culture with a capital 'C' has long been consigned to the dustbin of ELT history. CLT, after all, is concerned with real language use in

the real world, and the tradition of simply transmitting information about heritage culture has had no place in the recent utilitarian climate" (Pulverness, 2000, p. 17).

Research conducted in this paper seeks to determine which cultural aspects of communication involving non-verbal communication would be important to introduce in my current teaching situation at a Japanese university. In my experience of living in Japan over the years, I have found the area of non-verbal communication to be one which is probably least understood, misinterpreted, and different from that of my own cultural background as a Canadian. It is an area where the greatest possibilities of misunderstandings and misinterpretations may take place, more so considering that such communication is non-verbal, being conducted almost without thought due to its culture bound nature. Research has shown non-verbal communication to be one of the most culturally-influenced part of behavior (Tomalin & Stempleski, 1993, p. 6). In being one of the mostly culturally-influenced part of behaviour, the study of non-verbal communication should therefore be included as part of language learning curricula as "intercultural differences play a significant role when members of the one culture learn the language of the other" (Osterloh, 1986, p. 77). The differences between Japanese and non-Japanese use of non-verbal communication in my teaching situation would therefore be an important aspect to teach students if they are to effectively communicate in English.

Research conducted in this paper focuses on an evaluation of differences in the use of non-verbal communication between native English speakers (with a North American focus) and that of Japanese people considering that "FLT has a central aim of enabling learners to use that language to interact with people for whom it is their preferred and 'natural' medium of experience, those we call 'native speaker' (Byram, 1997, p. 3). An awareness of differences in the use of non-verbal communication may contribute to greater intercultural awareness in terms of communication with not only native English speakers, but also with non-native English speakers from other countries and with different cultural backgrounds as greater sensitivity may be developed regarding these differences.

Research Methodology

An initial literature review was conducted to determine which aspects of non-verbal communication would be of significance in a cross-cultural exchange between native Japanese speakers and native English speakers (with a North American focus) with the view that "cultural analysis should be concerned initially with boundaries" (Barth, 1969, in Byram, 1989, pp. 92-93). The boundaries in this case being the distinct differences between non-verbal behaviour used by Japanese people and those of native English speakers. Where differences are apparent, these would be determined as being significant in terms of content to be dealt with as they may play a part in potential miscommunication and misunderstanding between a Japanese person and a native English speaker. This initial review of literature served to reveal descriptive aspects of the use of non-verbal behaviour (the way that non-verbal communication is used within a particular cultural community) as well as prescriptive (the aspects of non-verbal communication which Japanese speakers would need to be aware of in a cross-cultural exchange with a native English speaker). The review of literature served as a guide in developing a survey (Appendix A) investigating my Japanese students' views regarding their use of non-verbal communication. The survey comprised of questions related to culturally determined verbal and non-verbal communicative behavior in areas such as oculesics (eye contact), proxemics (personal space), haptics (touch), kinesics (body language), and paralanguage to determine where the boundaries of these differences may lie as "The critical focus of investigation from this point of view becomes the ethnic boundary that defines the group, not the cultural stuff that it encloses" (Barth, 1969, p. 15). The results of the survey were used to further clarify findings based on the review of literature as well as a basis for further understanding which aspects of non-verbal communication should be introduced to Japanese university students. Not only relying on conclusions found in the review of literature by following up such findings with a survey would allow for a clearer understanding of those aspects of non-verbal communication which Japanese students would require in that "a culture-sensitive approach to English language education is needed if the question of appropriate methodology is to be fully addressed. The type of learning about the classroom which this requires can be best carried out by ethnographic action research" (Holliday, 1994, p. 179). The administration of a survey as part of ethnographic research would also allow a means of questioning the conclusions found in the review of literature as the methodology used upon which the conclusions are based is not made clear in any of the literature surveyed. Authors such as Argyle and Cook (1976), Brosnahan (1990), and Honna (1989) do not fully explain how they

came to their particular conclusions regarding the use of non-verbal communication by the Japanese; whether their conclusions are based on a sampling of the population or whether the conclusions they reached are based on personal experience. Cross-culture related research by Hall (1989) is generally based on personal interpretation and experience and is related anecdotally rather than based on a sampling of a culturally different population. Conclusions related to non-verbal communication within their own culture such as the United States or the United Kingdom are generally based on laboratory observation in the case of Argyle and Cook (1976), or through the use of film by researchers such as Birdwhistell (1970) and Hall (1990). Often this type of research records the minutiae of such behavior without necessarily commenting on the communicative effectiveness of such behaviour, or the cultural significance of such behaviour.

Although research involving non-verbal communication generally involves field or laboratory observation (Scherer & Ekman, 1985, p. 16), a survey was chosen to gather information about the use of non-verbal communication by Japanese university students as it provides a quick and convenient way of gathering data in that "one would like to be able to look at as many people as possible in as many settings as possible, and to look at as many of these behaviors as occur within the setting. However, practical constraints usually require that we compromise on many aspects of the sampling issue" (Scherer & Ekman, 1985, p. 23). The use of a survey is also directly related to the current teaching situation. In addition, a survey provides information regarding the rationale for particular non-verbal behaviour, information which gathering information only through observation could not provide. By answering a self-report questionnaire, students are able to reflect upon and give reasons for their particular use of non-verbal behaviour. There may be limits though in generalizing the results of the survey to the general Japanese population as it focuses on a relatively small and focused sample (Japanese university students). There may also be inconsistencies between how a particular student believes non-verbal communication should be used and how it is actually used by the person in a given situation. Another limitation to the use of a self-report survey as opposed to observing the use of non-verbal population amongst the general population and in a variety of situations is that the survey deals with communicating non-verbally in a 'universal' sense. Actual behaviour may vary depending on how a person reacts to another person based upon one's own personal characteristics as well as with whom one is communicating with, given that "the study of nonverbal behavior is characterized by two major focuses of interest: the study of the individual and the study of the interaction" (Scherer & Ekman, 1985, p. 7). The survey (Appendix A) was administered in Japanese rather than English to reduce the possibility of misunderstanding. The results of the survey and student responses discussed in this thesis have been translated into English. An English translation of the survey is provided in Appendix B. The survey was administered to 125 first and second year Japanese university students who ranged between the ages of 18 and 20 years old.

Survey Results

Oculesics (eye contact)

Eye contact is a very important aspect of non-verbal communication (NVC) as "the eyes are overwhelmingly the most important part of the body of receiving NVC, and, within the range at which they can be observed, the eyes are probably the most important part of the body for sending NVC" (Brosnahan, 1990, p. 105). As an important aspect of non-verbal communication, culturally determined expectations regarding the use of eye contact may be an area leading to misunderstanding as well as be a source of cultural conflict as "each is likely to interpret the other's behavior as negative where it contrasts, Japanese eye-dropping being interpreted as intrusive or contradicting the deference shown by the bow" (Brosnahan, 1990, p. 110).

Results of the survey were surprising as they often went against views found in the review of research literature. With regard to oculesics, preliminary research indicated that Japanese use little or no eye contact. This may be found in statements such as "when Japanese talk face to face, they do not exchange eye-to-eye contacts. They tend to glance at each other somewhere from under the eyes to around the mouth tenderly or vaguely" (Honna, 1989, p. 24) and "there can be little question that English place higher value on and practice more eye contact than Japanese case for case" (Brosnahan, 1990, p. 112). Similar views in terms of Japanese lack of eye contact may also be found in Bochner's view that "Japanese must learn to have more eye-contact with westerners during conversation than is customary in

their own culture"(1982, p. 164), and in Argyle's statement that "In Japan people do not look each other in the eye much, but are taught to look at the neck" (Argyle & Cook, 1976, p. 29).

This information was incorporated in the survey in the form of the question students where students look when having a conversation such as Honna's view that the location is "around the mouth" and Argyle's view that the location is "at the neck." Survey results indicated that a vast majority of students use eye contact when holding a conversation. In terms of having a conversation with a teacher or a boss, the response was 73% in favour of eye contact. Responses in terms of conversation with a friend were even higher in favour of eye contact at 88%. Where students gave different responses in terms of eye contact between a teacher and friend, they gave reasons such as "I know my friends better", "I am not used to speaking with teachers," or "because I am shy." There was absolutely no indication that less eye contact would be considered a more polite way to behave when interacting with a teacher as is implied in the statement "younger Japanese are not supposed to look higher than the breast bone of the elder" (Argyle & Cook, 1976, p. 77).

Proxemics (personal space)

One's preferences in terms of personal space are learned informally and unconsciously. As these preferences are based on culturally determined patterns of behaviour, they are "rich sources of cross-cultural misunderstandings" (Brosnahan, 1990, p. 37). In the area of proxemics, a review of literature indicates that Americans prefer a fair degree of 'personal space' in that "for Americans, the usual distance in social conversation ranges from about an arm's length to four feet" (Levine & Adelman 1993, p. 109) with Japanese distances being slightly shorter (Brosnahan, 1990, p. 37). Brosnahan also cautions that "Probably the commonest English perception of proximity differences between English and Japanese is that Japanese seem too close (1990, p. 37). Responses to survey questions indicate similar preferences in terms of distance as Americans:

3) How close do you stand when speaking with a friend?

a) about 30 cm ----------- 23%

b) about 60 cm----------- 60%

c) about 90 cm----------- 17%

d) about 120 cm---------- 0%

4) How close do you stand when speaking with a teacher?

a) about 30 cm----------- 5%

b) about 60 cm----------- 34%

c) about 90 cm----------- 30%

d) about 120 cm---------- 31%

Responses in terms of greater proxemic space between a teacher and a student as compared to that of between friends indicate a similar response as in the area of oculesics. Students also attributed their difference in response to a lack of knowing teachers on a personal basis and in being shy. In that students are unable to get to know their teachers better on a personal basis may be due to the implied social distance between students and teachers. Students may regard teachers as authority figures and teachers may avoid personal contact due to a concept of 'professionalism' which discourages personal involvement with students. The differences in proxemic space based on students feelings of shyness, or not being able to get to know their teachers on a personal basis is therefore not one of regarding teachers with greater respect or status, but may be considered in terms of Hudson's concept of power and solidarity (1980, p. 123) where a high solidarity relationship is demonstrated by close proxemic space as found between friends. A low solidarity (high power) relationship being indicated by the greater proxemic space between a teacher and student.

Paralanguage

Paralanguage "includes the nonverbal voice qualities, modifiers, and independent sound constructs we use consciously or unconsciously supporting, contradicting, or accompanying the linguistic, kinesic, or proxemic messages mainly, either simultaneously or alternating with them" (Poyatos, 1988, p. 38). Differences in the use of "vocal nonverbal gestures" (Brosnahan, 1990, p. 122) such as "response cries, vocal segregates, non-words, and semiwords" (ibid.) may lead to miscommunication at a fundamental level as one's communicative partner may not know whether what they are attempting to communicate is being conveyed if the paralinguistic response they receive is not what they are accustomed to in their own culture, which may lead to a breakdown in rapport. Paralanguage may also be used for the purposes of strategic competence which Dörnyei and Thurrell define as "the ability to get one's meaning across successfully to communicative partners, especially when problems arise in the communication process" (1991, p. 17). Paralanguage as part of strategic competence may be used when one does not understand what one's communicative partner has said, wishes further clarification, or to gain time when considering one's thoughts before speaking. Differences between Japanese speakers and native English speakers in the use of paralinguistics for the purpose of strategic competence may therefore be a further source of communication breakdown. Results regarding the use of paralanguage indicate that Japanese students are aware of the use of body language, vocal segregates and reaction words to indicate that one is listening (and thereby actively being involved in what is being said). The response in terms of this component was as follows:

5) When listening to someone, how do you show that you are paying attention?

a) using body language such as nodding head------ 37%

b) making sounds such as umm.. ahhh...----------- 57%

c) using words such as so desu ka, naruhodo------- 22%

d) other--------------------------------------- 4%

Results indicate that Japanese university students are aware of the use of paralanguage when listening to someone speak. An awareness of the use of this area of non-verbal communication with regard to the types of phatic sounds, noises and other paralinguistic behaviour used by native English speakers would benefit students in understanding how to communicate more effectively in English.

Kinesics (body language)

Responses in terms of the use of gestures and body language indicate a good awareness of the use of kinesics in communication as found in the following results:

6) How much of your communication consists of gestures or body language?

a) about 70% or more------7% f) 20% -30%------16%

b) 60% - 70% --------------8% g) 10% - 20%------7%

c) 50% - 60%--------------12% h) 0% - 10%------- 5%

d) 40% - 50%--------------12% i) 0%------------ 3%

e) 30% - 40%--------------30% j) other----------- 0%

Student awareness of the use of kinesics in communication may be due to the importance Japanese place on the ability to understand and communicate with each other non-verbally in that "many Japanese would like to believe that if they are Japanese, they should be able to understand each other without words" (Honna, 1989, p. 164). The Japanese use of a bow which contains many subtleties regarding one's own status and position when addressing someone else is an example of an important use of body language in Japanese society. This awareness of the use of gestures and or body language in non-verbal communication may serve as a starting point in discussing differences in the use of gestures and body

language between those of Japanese speakers and those of native English speakers in that "as in many other areas of NVC, Japanese and English share much of their head gesture, but a number of gestures are specific to one or the other culture" (Brosnahan, 1990, p. 90). A student once reported an embarrassing experience where her use of the Japanese gesture to indicate 'no' (waving one's hand in front of one's face) was misinterpreted by her home stay family as there being a bad smell present (Schmidt-Fajlik, 2002, p. 12). Students may be asked to demonstrate types of gestures in Japan which may serve as an introduction to and comparison of gestures not generally used by Japanese people, such as pointing to the chest to indicate oneself, raising hands at the side of one's body if one doesn't understand, and crossing one's fingers for good luck (Schmidt-Fajlik, 2006, pp. 4-5).

Haptics (touch)

A consideration of haptics in terms of the use of touch during conversation indicates a fairly even response between those students who consider such behavior as being friendly and those who consider the use of touch as being inappropriate:

7) When speaking with someone whom you don't know very well, is it appropriate to touch them during a conversation?

1. Yes, as it's friendly---------52%

2. No, as it's impolite--------- 48%

This response was unexpected due to preliminary research indicating a lack of physical contact in that "a considerable number of Japanese teenagers reported no physical contact at all with either a parent or with a friend. The adult Japanese extends the pattern by restricting not only tactile communication but facial and gestural as well" (Morain, 1986, p. 73). The lack of such contact as proposed in this statement would seem to imply that the use of touch would be considered inappropriate, yet survey responses were fairly evenly divided between those who felt that such behavior was friendly and those who thought that it was inappropriate.

Pedagogical Implications

The survey serves to clarify those aspects of culturally determined non-verbal communicative behavior which may need to be dealt with in a Japanese classroom. A comparison of opinions expressed in initial research with survey results serves as a way to re-evaluate previously held beliefs regarding Japanese use of non-verbal communication. Although preliminary research indicates that in the area of oculesics Japanese students may be required to sustain greater eye contact, indications were that the majority of Japanese university students do feel that eye contact is an important part of communication. This aspect of non-verbal communication may thus be less cross-culturally significant then originally implied in the review of literature, although students should be made aware of the particular importance played by eye contact in American society as "little or no eye-contact is commonly interpreted by English as insincerity or dishonesty or evasion" (Brosnahan, 1990, p. 108). Student awareness of the importance of eye contact could thus be a useful stepping stone in discussing the role of eye contact in Japan and whether it is of the same duration and plays the same importance as in American society, considering the opinion of Honna that Japanese "feel uneasy about the way Americans stare. To them, it is too offensive and intimidating. Japanese feel defeated, because they cannot endure it or deal with an 'eye for an eye'" (1989, p. 24). Perhaps developing awareness of the use of eye contact in terms of positive and negative impressions which may be caused by too much or too little eye contact may be sufficient in improving student use of this aspect of non-verbal communication in that "an aversion to eye contact may give the impression of being bored, disrespectful or unfriendly; too much may appear dominating, intimidating, contemptuous or rude, whereas a shifting gaze may create an impression of being nervous, furtive, insincere or untrustworthy" (Capper, 2000, p. 21).

In the area of proxemics, Hall (1990) describes middle class American use of 'personal distance' as being between one and a half to four feet for informal contact between friends and a 'social distance' of four to twelve feet between acquaintances and strangers as used in business meetings, classrooms, and impersonal social affairs. Survey results seem to indicate that Japanese university students hold a similar concept of interpersonal space as do middle class Americans. A review of literature indicates the view

that Japanese people tend to stand at closer proximity, as may be found in Brosnahan's statement that "it seems that Japanese typically tend to shorten all the various English distances involved in intercultural contacts with English, with the predictable result that greater Japanese togetherness will appear to English as over familiar while greater English apartness will appear to Japanese over distant, cool, offish, even arrogant" (1990, p. 37). In order to avoid such misinterpretation of what is considered an appropriate distance to stand when communicating with someone in a cross-cultural exchange, it may be beneficial for students to have further opportunities to reflect on this aspect of non-verbal behaviour by comparing instances of the use of proxemic space between themselves with those between native English speakers, or with someone from a different culture then theirs.

Results concerning paralanguage in terms of the use of body language and phatic words and phrases to indicate that one is paying attention to what is being said (and understands what is being said) indicate that Japanese students are aware of the use of this competence in terms of Japanese communicative behavior and would benefit from awareness of their equivalents as used by native English speakers. For example Japanese students may be made aware that the Japanese equivalent of the use of the vocal segregate *uh* used by native English speakers "to signal that the speaker has not yielded the floor though he is searching for the proper expression" (Brosnahan, 1990, p. 122) is *'eto' or 'ano'*.

In the area of kinesics, students have good awareness of the use of gestures and body language, although this is based upon a Japanese context. An awareness of the differences in how of gestures and body language are used by English speakers would thus be an important aspect which to teach students.

Pedagogy

The pedagogical implications of research findings may serve as a basis for a number of approaches which may be taken to develop student awareness of the use non-verbal communication when communicating with native English speakers (which may also lead to greater sensitivity when communicating in other cross-cultural situations). These may be based on the use of the self-reflective survey, observation of videos involving foreign dramas as well as 'reality' shows, and student fieldwork.

Although the purpose of the survey administered to students was to further clarify findings from a review of literature, the survey may also serve as a pedagogical tool in having students reflect on their use of non-verbal communication. Reflecting on their use of non-verbal communication may allow students to not only become better aware of how they themselves use non-verbal communication, but also how others use such communication, in particular when observing the use of non-verbal communication as used by someone from a different cultural background. The survey may be administered with students filling in their responses. Upon completion students may discuss their responses with a partner or in small groups which may allow for further reflection regarding their use of non-verbal communication in comparison with that of others.

The observation of videos from English speaking countries would allow students to observe the use of non-verbal communication in the context of a particular communicative situation, whether it occurs between friends, co-workers, or with people who would be considered in a higher social position, such as a boss. The use of videos allows students to not only observe isolated instances of non-verbal communication, but also the types of non-verbal communication which may accompany speech acts. Students may be shown short clips selected for instances of the use of non-verbal communication which the teacher feels may be pertinent based on findings from a review of literature as well as the administered survey. Students may be asked to take notes of their observations regarding a particular aspect of non-verbal communication which the video clip contains such as oculesics, proxemics, paralanguage, kinesics, or haptics. The instructor may ask students to focus on one aspect of non-verbal communication or a number of different aspects. They may be asked to observe and take notes regarding any idiosyncrasies in the use of non-verbal communication by the people in the video, or differences in the use of such communication in their own culture based on the situation in the video. Students may then share their observations with a partner or in small groups. A class discussion may then follow.

Students may be asked to take part in fieldwork involving observation of the use of non-verbal communication within their own culture, between that of native English teachers and Japanese people, as well as between that of native English speakers. Although the purpose of pedagogy outlined in this paper is to improve Japanese students' ability to communicate more effectively in English using non-verbal

communication, it may be noted that the observation of foreigners who are not native English speakers may also be a source of developing student awareness of non-verbal communication and the role it may play in more effective communication. Students may find sources for such observation through observing foreign students on campus as well as interchanges between as well as with their foreign teachers. Such allowances may be necessary due to the highly homogenous character of Japanese society. In conducting fieldwork, students may base their observations on reflecting on their own as well as their partner's use of non-verbal communication during a conversational exchange. This may also lead students to re-evaluating their responses to the initially administered self-reflective survey in terms of praxis. Students may be asked to observe other students during conversation exchanges and may also video tape such exchanges for further analysis. This approach may also be used in making observations regarding exchanges with native English speakers or other foreigners. Fieldwork may include the use of 'confederates', who may use non-verbal communication in 'inappropriate' or 'unexpected' ways and to observe how one's unknowing communicative partner reacts to such behaviour. In addition to observation, the unknowing communicative partner may be interviewed after the use of such confederates regarding their reaction to the use of such 'inappropriate' or 'unexpected' use of non-verbal behaviour. Confederate use of 'inappropriate' or 'unexpected' use of non-verbal behaviour may include one or more aspects such as lack or excessive use of eye contact, standing either too close or too far, not using paralanguage during interaction, using excessive body language or no body language at all, and using touch in a 'friendly' manner but more often then what would be considered 'normal' in one's own culture.

Observations from the use of video and fieldwork may be incorporated by students during English lessons involving the study of dialogues found in student textbooks used in a particular course (especially if non-verbal communication is not addressed). The observed video clips may also be used as a basis for role-plays and dramas. Findings from observing videos and fieldwork may also be used by teachers in creating handouts where students identify the meaning of certain gestures.

Conclusion

Awareness of the use of non-verbal communication is an important factor in improving the English communication skills of Japanese students as there may be differences in how such communication is used in Japan with how it is used in English speaking countries. Awareness of the use of non-verbal communication may lead to greater rapport and fewer instances of miscommunication. Greater sensitivity to the use of non-verbal behaviour when dealing with other cultures may also be developed.

In order to determine which aspects of non-verbal communication to introduce, a review of literature was conducted and a survey was administered to a class of Japanese university students regarding their use of non-verbal behaviour. Differences were found in how Japanese use non-verbal communication as described in the literature when compared with that of findings from the survey, particularly in the area of oculesics.

Factors which may account for differences found in the review of literature may be inadequate (or non-existent) sampling where research conclusions are based on personal experience or second hand knowledge rather then the collection of data. Another factor may be that the use of certain types of previously accepted types of non-verbal behaviour may have changed over time and across generations due to changing cultural factors, an example which may be found in Argyle and Cook's statement that lack of eye used by Japanese may be partly due to the fact that "infants are carried a lot on the back, so have less visual contact with the mother's face" (1976, p. 26). In interviews and informal surveys conducted at Ibaraki University in Japan, a far greater number of respondents stated that the preferred way of carrying babies in Japan was in front, with one Japanese Professor stating "I feel carrying babies in the front is much more common. In my case, it's because I feel safe when my baby is in my front, for I can have eye-contact or I can hug her. Anyway, it's more natural to use my arms in the front than in my back." Changes in the use of non-verbal communication may also be affected by outside influences such as through the introduction of western culture through movies and other types of media.

Differences found in the review of literature and survey results demonstrates that teachers should consider determining the content of cultural material which is to be introduced based on classroom research. By doing so, teachers may gain a better understanding of beliefs that are currently held

regarding culturally determined behaviour in one's present teaching situation. This is especially important when dealing with cultural material such as non-verbal communication, as previously held assumptions may have changed or have been incorrectly interpreted in the past. In dealing with culturally held assumptions, pedagogy should be aware of current cultural practice, which will further

add to our ability to develop rapport with other cultures, decrease chances of miscommunication,

and avoid stereotyping based on past or incomplete interpretations.

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Appendices

Appendix A could not be reproduced because of typographic limitations.

Appendix B (translation of original survey Appendix A)

Nonverbal Communication Survey

Name: _____

1) Where do you look when having a conversation with a teacher?

a) in eyes

b) at mouth

c) at chest

d) at neck

e) other: _____

2) Where do you look when having a conversation with a friend?

a) in eyes

b) at mouth

c) at chest

d) at neck

e) other: _____

*note: If you answered differently in 1) and 2) please answer why.

_____

3) How close do you stand when speaking with a friend?

a) about 30 cm

b) about 60 cm

c) about 90 cm

d) about 120 cm

e) other: _____

4) How close do you stand when speaking with a teacher?

a) about 30 cm

b) about 60 cm

c) about 90 cm

d) about 120 cm

e) other: _____

*note: If you answered differently in 3) and 4) please answer why.

_____

5) When listening to someone, how do you show that you are paying attention?

a) using body language such as nodding head

b) making sounds such as umm.., ahhh...

c) using words such as so desu ka, naruhodo

d) other: _____

6) How much of your communication consists of gestures or body language?

a) about 70% or more. f) 20% -30%

b) 60% - 70% g) 10% - 20%

c) 50% - 60% h) 0% - 10%

d) 40% - 50% i) 0%

e) 30% - 40% j) other: _____

7) When speaking with someone whom you don't know very well, is it appropriate to touch them during

a conversation?

a) Yes, as it's friendly

b) No, as it's impolite

c) other: _____

About the author

Ronald Schmidt-Fajlik was born in Slovakia and grew up in Canada. He has a B.F.A. from York University (Canada), a B.Ed. from the University of Toronto, and an M.Ed. in English language teaching

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