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РАЗДЕЛ III. СОПОСТАВИТЕЛЬНОЕ ЯЗЫКОЗНАНИЕ

Issa Al-Qaderi,
Ahmed Alduais,
Sui Li Wang

NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION ACROSS CULTURES: A CASE STUDY OF CHINESE, POLISH, TURKISH AND (YEMENI) ARABIC CULTURES

University of Warsaw, Warsaw, Poland Email: issaalqaderi@gmail.com Department of Applied Linguistic
Corresponding author
Institute of International & Comparative Education
Faculty of Education, Beijing Normal University (BNU), Beijing, P.R. China Tel: 00-86-132-600-80-166
Email: ibnalduais@gmail.com
Wuhan Donghu University, Wuhan, P. R. China Tel: 00-86-18811727214
Email: wsl123456www@163.com

Abstract

Purpose: To establish for a further study examining the degree of similarity and dissimilarity across cultures through four selected cultures (Chinese, Polish, Turkish and Yemeni) in fifteen identified paralanguage features.

Methods: A non-experimental study was conducted where four participants from the four different countries took part in the study. Each was either interviewed or engaged in a guided discussion towards collecting the required data. Both reliability and validity within the qualitative research framework – credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability have meet the basic requirements.

Results: The collected data were analysed in terms of three criteria: identical paralanguage items (I), different ones (D) or similar ones (S). Most of the items among the four cultures were reported as (S) – indicating the practise of the behaviour in each culture – with being different in the performance/attitude/reaction towards each. For instance, there were major similarities in laughing, yawning, spitting, nodding, whispering, knocking the door and eye contact as opposed to major differences in crying, shouting, sneezing, clapping, appointing, waving goodbye, handshaking and greetings.

Conclusions: Cultures are different yet alike! Paralanguage features among cultures are inextricably linked. And the similarities and dissimilarities among cultures in paralanguage features are inexorably relative.

Key words: Paralanguage features; Non-verbal communication; Chinese culture; Polish culture; Turkish culture; Yemeni culture.

Introduction

People nowadays live under the umbrella of globalisation that has eliminated the boundaries between cultures and made the aspects of each culture relatively known to other people. Yano (2006) illustrates that with the advent of the transportation means and communication media, people have become able to move worldwide and communicate globally. The interaction and coexistence of people from different backgrounds and ethnicities have led our societies to be multicultural ones. Kirch (1979) highlights that interaction is a complex process which encompasses verbal and non-verbal elements that are inextricably bound up with culture.

Wankhede (2013) points out that language, as we all know, is not merely a means of

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communication but it has various functions to perform in the human society. Communication can be either oral/written communications or non-verbal communication—termed by some experts as 'kinesics' as this kind of communication taking place through body movements. Putting the point in plainer language, the oral or written communications are considered to be easier to learn rather than paralanguage which is supposed to be a difficult one (See Alduais, 2012; Alduais, 2013a-b). Wankhede has made a clear-cut distinction between language and paralanguage by saying that "[l]anguage refers to what is said, paralanguage refers to how it is said. Even though, logically, the same words should convey the same meaning, the volume, rate and emphasis placed on those words can change the meaning of those words" (2013, p. 136).

Diachronically speaking, Pennycook (1985, p. 259) states that "[t]he term paralanguage was first used by Trager (1958) as a synthesis of the linguistic and psychological material collected on the kinds and categories of voice modification which could be applied to different situational contexts". For Jianghong (2009, p. 1) paralanguage can be obscure in meaning and be acquired after being born. The author (2009, p. 1) points out that the differences between the East and the West in body language illustrates the properties of multicultural communication which are caused by the various culture backgrounds between nations. Misunderstanding can be avoided by improving our observational abilities and by having a good knowledge of these properties.

Yue (2005, p. 1) substantiates that nonverbal behaviour differs in meaning in different cultures. For instance, during the intercultural communication between East and West, there are some misunderstandings because of the different cultures that have different understanding on nonverbal behaviour. Nonverbal communication was thought of as the same as body language and studying it may lead to the discovery of the underlying attitudes and values of a culture.

Another example of paralanguage was provided by Zhu (2013, p. 53) who underscores that South Asians, such as Vietnamese, speak in a very light and gentle voice. Low volume of voice is considered to represent good social manners and a sign of higher education. Voices are only raised when someone is angry or needs to unleash his or her excitement. For example, Vietnamese, when encountering Americans, they might feel offended due to their loudness.

Moreover, Weirzbicka (1994, p. 2) highlights that to understand a society's ways of speaking, one has to identify and articulate its implicit cultural scripts. The author (1994, pp 6-10) maintains that even though societies differ according to the value they place on silence and nonverbal communication as opposed to speech, there is also a considerable level of intra-societal similarity.

Culture was defined by Wankhede (2013, p. 136) as the concept that encompasses "knowledge, language, rules, customs, rituals, habits, attitudes, beliefs which give a common identity to a particular group of people living at a place at a particular time". It differs from one country to another. For instance, the Chinese culture is considered one of the world's oldest cultures. Ma (1996, p. 4) points out that "I don't understand you Asians! You say 'no' when you are supposed to say 'yes' and say 'yes' when you are supposed to say 'no." However, it seems that the East Asians expect their communication partners to understand and read between the lines or decode messages from a holistic, context-based perspective.

As far as this study is concerned, the Yemeni culture is two of the eastern cultures (Yemeni and Chinese), Turkish (a mixture of eastern and western) and Polish (a western culture). We recommend referring to (Alduais, 2012; Alduais 2013a-b; Al-Qaderi, 2015a-e) who conducted a number of studies about pragmatics and its application to Arabic, mainly on the Yemeni Arabic.

Gannon (2013, p. 112) states that Poland is such a traditional and conservative society. The author (2013, pp 131-143) comments that the Polish culture is influenced by three prime forces; the nation's peasant roots, a history of foreign power domination (including communism), and Catholicism. These three

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forces tell how the Polish people see themselves, their behaviours, and their institutions.

Based on this, we intend to establish for a further study though this initial study-examining the possible differences and similarities among Chinese, Polish, Turkish and Yemeni cultures in terms of fifteen paralanguage features.

Methods

Sampling

The population of our study are native speakers of Chinese, Polish, Turkish and Yemeni Arabic languages. The study population are those who can successfully communicate in English either as a second or foreign language (i.e. undergraduates, graduates, postgraduates). The sampling frame for our study is those who are available in the university where one of the

contributing researchers is working. Random sampling is followed in this study where the selected languages (i.e. cultures) represent different cultures (Arab, Chinese, Polish and Turkish). Since the study has only four cases, so it does not have any purpose of generalizable data about the cultures of the four targeted countries. It rather serves as a pilot study towards a large-scale study approaching such an issue with a larger population. The four targeted languages (cultures) are illustrated below.

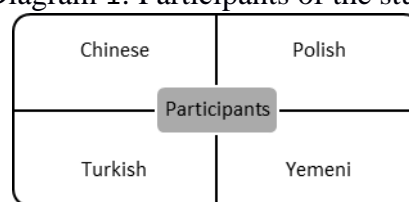Diagram 1: Participants of the study

Table 1: Charactersitics of the particpants of the study

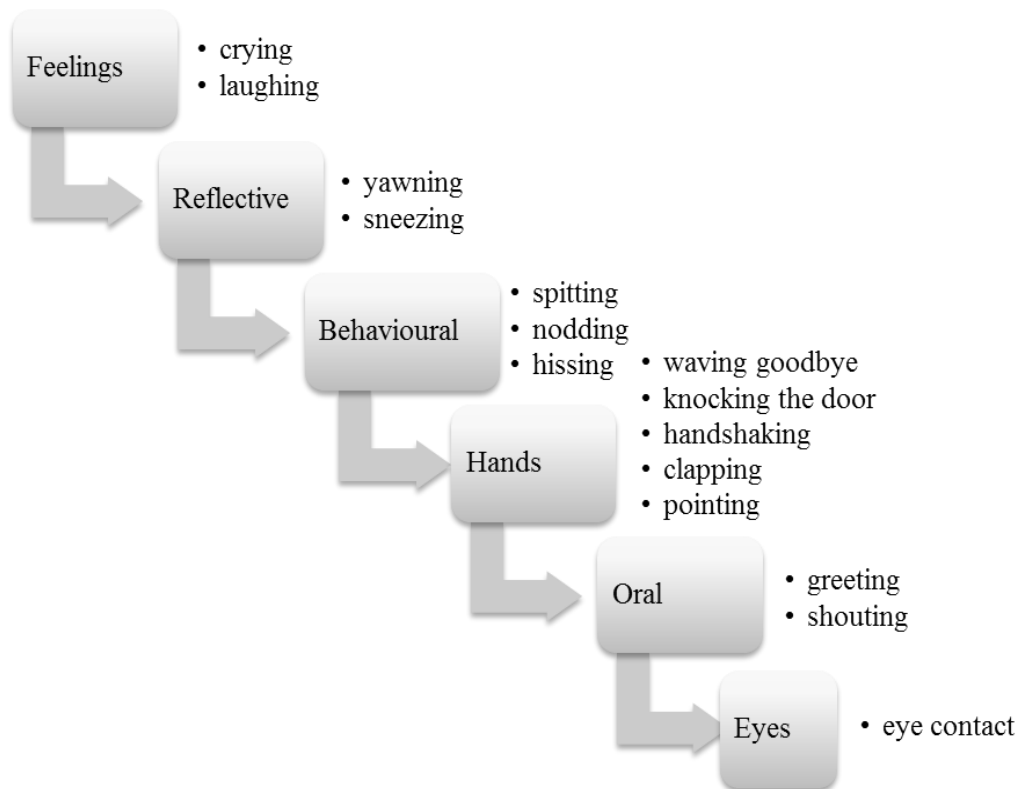| Participant	Age	Gender	Nationality	L1(s)	L2	L3
1	Adult	Female	Chinese	Mandarin Chinese	English	NA
2	Adult	Male	Polish	Polish	English	Russian
				Gwara warszawska		
3	Adult	Male	Turkish	Turkish	English	Arabic
4	Adult	Male	Yemeni	Yemeni Arabic	English	NA

Measures

A structured interview was used in this study where the 15 identified paralanguage features were targeted. A researcher asks the participant about the type of reaction or behaviour towards each one of the 15 listed communicative features. These 15 features are illustrated below.

In spite of the fact that our study serves as an initial study testing our hypothesis – measuring the level of difference among cultures in selected paralanguage features, we considered both reliability and validity issues in our study. These can be explained through: credibility (internal validity), transferability (external validity), dependability (reliability) and confirmability (objectivity). Since the participant is the dominating factor for the credibility of the data so the researchers made their best selecting a case that would take the research questions seriously. And this was done according to each of the research's social connections. As for the second factor (i.e. transferability), we have

mentioned so far that our research does aim at any generalizability even at the level of each culture. There are many reasons that make generalizability out of our research purposes. First, the data is very limited (i.e. four cases where each case represents a country). Second, we intended to initiate the study with this trial study towards a detailed study based on the findings of this study. We don't think that our collected data has a high degree of dependability, yet we assume that it fulfilled the requirements of our objectives and intentions while data collection. Besides, yet considering the fact that we wanted to conduct a pilot study, there was no intention to account for reliability issues. Finally, since the pilot study was conducted by a number of researchers, so the confirmability of our procedures and collected data seems to be unified. While this might not be the perfect way to measure this factor, but again, at least for the purpose of this pilot study, it is not within our major purposes.

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Diagram 2: Selected fifteen paralanguage items included in the study

Feelings
- crying
- laughing

Reflective
- yawning
- sneezing

Behavioural
- spitting
- nodding
- hissing

Hands
- waving goodbye
- knocking the door
- handshaking
- clapping
- pointing

Oral
- greeting
- shouting

Eyes
- eye contact

Design

A non-experimental study design was followed in this study. It can be depicted in a notational form as it follows:

R⁻ O   X₁   X₂   X₃   X₄

where:

R⁻= non-random sampling

O= structured interview

X=culture or more specifically paralanguage features

1-4=each one stands for one culture (Chinese, Polish, Turkish and Yemeni Arabic)

The main assumption behind this design is that the degrees of similarity and/or dissimilarity among the four cultures are relative and might be impacted by sociolinguistic factors (the further the distance the more the differences or vice versa).

Procedures

Four participants who speak the four targeted languages (i.e. Chinese, Polish, Turkish and Yemeni Arabic) as mother tongues were identified by the researchers to take part in the study as interviewees. Each interviewee was informed of the main objective of the study and agreed to be either tape-recorded or provide oral answers to the researcher as an open discussion about the fifteen listed non-verbal communication features. A Yemeni student and a Polish student were interviewed and tape-recorded in their dorm, in the University of Warsaw in Poland. The Turkish and the Chinese participants are in China and provided answers orally to the researcher (oral discussion). All the participants speak English as a second language and the interviews were conducted in English. Each interview lasted for about 15 minutes.

Having collected the data, then they are transcribed and summarized into tables. Then the data are analysed in terms of similar/dissimilar paralanguage features among the four languages according to the provided data.

Results

The results are summarised in tables, described then accounted for in the discussion.

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Table 2: A summary of the collected data for fifteen paralanguage features of Chinese, Polish, Turkish and Yemeni Arabic

Paralanguage item	Associated situations			
	Chinese	**Polish**	**Turkish**	**Yemeni Arabic**
Crying	Very sad		Sadness	Serious situation
	Very excited		Tears of happiness	Disastrous situation
	Do not approach unless very close	Do not approach unless very close	Possibly approach	Approach anyone
Laughing	Situation-based	Reaction should be based on relationship	Situation-based	Natural instinct
	Formal in public places	A good behaviour	A good behaviour	A good behaviour
Yawning	Turn your face	instinct behaviour	instinct behaviour	instinct behaviour
	Cover mouth with a hand			
	Impolite in formal situations	Impolite if mouth is not covered	Impolite if mouth is not covered	Impolite if mouth is not covered
	Sleepy and not interested			
Sneezing	Use tissues	Natural instinct	Natural instinct	Natural instinct
	Cover a mouth and nose with a hand	Saying something when a friend	Saying something when a friend	Saying something when a friend
	Be concerned if a close friend or family member	Annoying if mouth and nose are not covered	Annoying if mouth and nose are not covered	Annoying if mouth and nose are not covered
Spitting	Very common	Disgusting behaviour	Disgusting behaviour	Disgusting behaviour
	So frequent			Common in the countryside
	Impolite			
Nodding	Showing agreement	Agreeing: up and down	Agreeing: up and down	Agreeing: up and down
	Showing total agreement with repeated nodding	Disagreeing: right-left	Disagreeing: right-left	Disagreeing: right-left
Hissing/whispering	Polite in front of strangers	Situation-based	Situation-based	Situation-based
	Impolite in front of close friends	Annoyed if they whisper and look at you	Annoyed if they whisper and look at you	Annoyed if they whisper and look at you
Waving	To say goodbye	Normal to say goodbye	Normal to say goodbye	Western behaviour
	To draw someone's attention			
Knocking the door	Back of the middle finger	A must	A must	A must
	Three times			
	Back of the hand (fingers)	Gentle knocking	Gentle knocking	Gentle knocking

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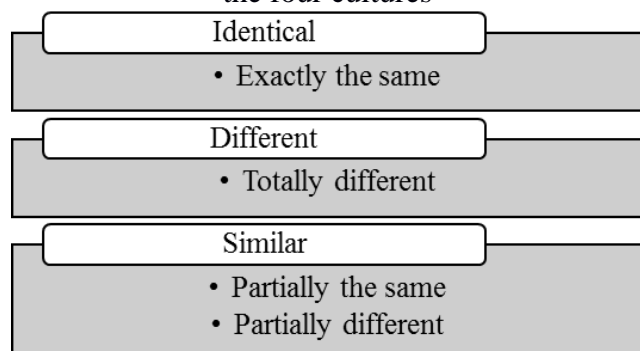| Paralanguage item	Associated situations			
	Chinese	**Polish**	**Turkish**	**Yemeni Arabic**
	Very important regardless of relationship type	Two fingers	Mixed	A finger
Handshaking	Only with strangers	Among boys in daily life	Among boys in daily life	Among boys in daily life
	Ladies should approach first	Normal among all in formal life	Normal among all in formal life	Normal among all in formal life
Clapping	Celebrating success	Celebrating success	Celebrating success	Celebrating success
	Showing appreciation	Indicating happiness	Indicating happiness	Indicating happiness
		Impolite in a restaurant	Situation-based	Sounds normal in a restaurant
Pointing	Generally rude	Generally rude	Generally rude	Situation-based
			Pointing up to mean wait	
Greeting	Hugging for girls	Kissing among close friends and family members	Kissing among close friends and family members	Greeting with kisses among all
	Oral and rarely hugging for boys			
	Patting shoulders for boys			
Shouting	Anger	Weird	Misbehaviour	not good in public
	Noise	For help	For help	
Eye contact	Eye contact is part of the speech	Eye contact is part of the speech	Eye contact is part of the speech	Eye contact is part of the speech
	Blinking an eye impolite for strangers			
	Blinking an eye normal for friend to reveal a secret	Being suspicious of the person of avoided		
	Impolite to speak with no eye contact			

The above table summarises the responses collected from the four participants in regard to their reactions or attitudes towards fifteen non-verbal communication items. As is seen, the differences among the four cultures are relative. At one level, the fifteen non-verbal communication items are practiced among the four cultures. However, the performance of every and each paralanguage feature is neither identical nor different. Instead, they are similar – sharing some aspects and being unique in some other aspects.

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Table 3: A comparison of fifteen paralanguage items among four languages: Chinese, Polish, Turkish and Yemeni Arabic

Paralanguage item	Similar and dissimilar items across cultures											
	Chinese			Polish			Turkish			Yemeni Arabic		
Crying	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S
Laughing	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S
Yawning	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S
Sneezing	S	S	S	S	I	I	S	I	I	S	I	I
Spitting	D	D	S	D	I	D	D	I	D	I	D	D
Nodding	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S
Hissing/whispering	D	D	D	D	I	I	D	I	I	D	I	I
Waving goodbye	I	I	S	I	I	S	I	I	S	S	S	S
Knocking the door	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S
Handshaking	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S
Clapping	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S
Pointing	I	S	S	I	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S
Greeting	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S
Shouting	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S
Eye contact	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S

In this table, we made an attempt to reach a relative decision about the total or partial similarity/dissimilarity among the four cultures in terms of the fifteen identified paralanguage items. For this purpose, three criteria are used: Similar (S), Different (D) or Identical (I). These are further clarified in the following diagram.

Diagram 3: Data categorisation criteria among the four cultures

Identical
• Exactly the same

Different
• Totally different

Similar
• Partially the same
• Partially different

Discussion

Starting with shouting, it seems that all reported responses are similar. For instance, the Yemeni culture, shouting in public is not good. According to the Polish people, it sounds weird.

The second body movement is concerned with crying. As for the Yemeni culture, crying indicates something serious or disastrous is happening. Therefore, they approach each other, investigate what is going on and offer help if needed. On the other hand, the Polish people do not care and they will ignore the one who is crying unless he or she is one of their friends – similar to the Chinese culture.

As for laughing, it can be inferred that the four cultures have the same reaction to such a behaviour. For Kirch (1979, p. 417) laughter in some cultures is regarded as a sign of amusement, but in Africa, it is sometimes used to express surprise, wonder, or embarrassment. The Japanese child is taught to smile as a social duty. He must always show a kind of happiness to avoid reflecting his sorrow upon his friends.

When talking about yawning, it seems that the four cultures have somewhat the same reaction. It is stated that such a behaviour is normal especially in the morning. However, it is considered impolite if one does not cover one's mouth.

Spitting in all cultures is a disgusting behaviour though it is in real life common in both Chinese and Yemeni cultures.

The reaction to sneezing differs in the four cultures. In Yemen, they consider sneezing as something normal and healthy but it is annoying if the sneezing person does not cover his or her

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mouth. The same is the case in Poland and the other two cultures. Nevertheless, the different thing is that they just react differently. For instance, the Polish people and Turkish (according to religion) say, "Bless you" (Na zdrowie in Polish) just to those who are friends. Otherwise, the sneezing person will be totally ignored. Whereas the Yemeni people say, "Bless you" (Yarhamuka Allah in Arabic) for everyone who sneezes.

Clapping in the four cultures represents a kind of applauding for those who are good and successful. It is also a sign of being happy. There are some differences, for example, according to the Polish culture; it is impolite to clap in the restaurant, whereas according to the Yemeni culture, it is normal and popular to clap in the restaurant. Kirch (1979, p. 417) supports this idea by saying that clapping is regarded as a way of applauding, but in Spain, it is a means of summoning the waiter.

As for nodding, it seems that it is one of the common behaviours in all cultures. In the four cultures, the Yemeni and the Polish, nodding can be used as a sign for agreeing or disagreeing. Kirch (1979, p. 417) points out that northern Europeans usually indicate agreement by nodding their heads up and down, and they shake the head from side to side to indicate disagreement. The Greeks use the upward for disagreement and the downward nod for agreement.

Pointing and using one's fingers seems to be different in the four cultures. For instance, it is generally rude in both Chinese and Polish cultures but situation and/or context-based in both the Turkish and Yemeni cultures. For Kirch (1979, p. 417) Americans point with the forefinger, but this is considered in many parts of the world a taboo. The Kiowa Indian, for example, points with the lips. As for Zhu (2013, p. 52) in the United States, moving the fingers pointing up toward someone with the palm facing one's own body is used to indicate, "*Come here*.". However, the same gesture in the Arab world is regarded as inappropriate. Even worse, in Singapore it might symbolize death.

As for whispering, in both Polish and Turkish, it is situation and/or context based. In Chinese, it is very normal to happen in front of strangers and will be considered rude only when

it happens with close friends or family members. For Kirch (1979, p. 417) in the United States and England hissing indicates rudeness and public disapproval. In Japan it is a sign of polite deference to one's superiors while the Basuto use hissing to applaud.

In waving goodbye, it seems that for the Yemeni people this behaviour was not popular in the past. Now it has become popular because of the continual influence of the West over the East. For the Chinese, Polish and Turkish people, it is a normal behaviour. They use the full hand and they sometimes cross their hands toward the one who is going to depart. Kirch (1979, p. 418) underscores that Americans wave goodbye by holding the hand, palm out and fingers up in front of the face and moving it from side to side. The Italians hold the palm toward the face and move the fingers toward the other party, a movement that could mean to us "*come back*". The French and the Germans hold the hand horizontally, palm down and move the fingers toward the departing person.

In knocking the door, participants from the four countries agree on the importance of knocking the door before opening it and they consider opening the door without knocking a rude behaviour. In addition, they all do it gently. However, the difference lies in the way of knocking the door. For instance, the Yemeni people use two fingers in knocking the door. Whereas the Polish people use just a finger or may be two fingers. Kirch (1979, p. 418) states that when we knock a door, we clench the fist, turn the palm toward the door and knock with one or more fingers on the door. The French and Germans also clench the fist, but they keep the palm toward the person knocking and frequently knock only one finger.

Handshaking seems to be different in the four cultures. For Chinese people, it is common only with strangers but among Chinese community. It is common among males only in Polish, Turkish and Yemeni cultures. When it comes to business purposes, it is common among the four cultures and for both females and males. Zhu (2013, p. 52) points out that handshaking, in many cultures, is regarded as a polite gesture when people greet each other. It differs only in how firm it is. For example, in the United States, a firm handshake is expected. In China on the other hand, a gentle handshake is more appropriate. While in Muslim

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cultures, it is regarded as impolite if a man intends to shake the hand with a woman. The same is true with Muslim women who will not shake hands with men.

Related to handshaking, greetings by using kisses seems to be different in the four cultures. In Yemen, it seems that they prefer waving or saying Hi to greeting by using kisses. In Poland, on the other hand, it seems that greeting by using kisses is common among close friends, or members of the family. But normally, they do not use kisses in greetings. Zhu (2013, p. 53) states that greeting people has various forms in different cultures. For instance, Thai people greet each other by putting their palms together which indicates their humility. The Japanese are rather more formal. They bow their upper body up to 90 degrees to show politeness and respect. In China or Vietnam, they form a fist with the right hand and then hold it in the left hand in front of the chest to greet or congratulate someone. This was originated from an ancient Chinese ritual, performed by two warriors to show their mutual respect before a combat. For Zhu (2013, p. 54) in many Western countries, greeting someone by having facial contact or kissing is common. In France and Switzerland for instance, people tend to kiss three times on the face. In Eastern countries such as China, this would be too intimate or would be considered aggressive to a lady. Moreover, between men in Arab culture, the gesture of kissing could be seen. However, this is not observed between a man and a woman.

The last aspect of body movements examined here is eye contact. It is the most important factor and part of the speech in communication in the four cultures. For Pennycook (1985, p. 264) eye contact may differ extensively among cultures. For instance, in the US, prolonged eye contact indicates readiness to yield a turn. While many Western cultures regard people as being suspicious or shifty if they avoid eye contact with a partner in face to face conversation. In many Eastern cultures, downcast eyes are regarded as a sign of respect, which can lead to misinterpretation in the West. For example, The Japanese children are taught to abstain from direct eye contact with others.

Zhu (2013, p. 12) states that "communication and culture cannot be separated but they exist in a dynamic and interactive relationship with each other". Moreover, Kirch (1979, p. 417) demonstrates that the most obvious form of non-verbal communication is by gesture. Since gestures are produced and received consciously, we become aware of foreign gestures and the foreign accent they generate.

To put it in a nutshell, cultures are like fingers. They are different in different societies. This study has reported that paralanguage differs partially among Chinese, Polish, Turkish and (Yemeni) Arabic cultures. The data elaborated above showed that the four cultures seem to be similar in the following non-verbal communications: laughing, yawning, spitting, nodding, hissing, knocking the door and eye contact. On the other hand, they four cultures seem to be different in the following non-verbal communications: crying, shouting, sneezing, clapping, appointing, waving goodbye, handshaking and greetings.

Conclusion

Similarity and dissimilarity among cultures is apparently relative even when considering some sociolinguistic aspects (i.e. Wes vs. East, Continent-based categorisation, Regional categorisation, etc.). Given this, we conducted a non-experimental study with a small size for four cultures: Chinese, Polish, Turkish and Yemeni cultures. The participant from each culture was either interviewed and tape-recorded or involved in an open structured discussion towards the fifteen selected paralanguage items. The collected data from the four participants was analysed in terms of similar items, different items or identical ones. Most of the included items were reported as similar—sharing some aspects and being different in some others.

Our study has two major limitations. First, the sample size is very small and is not representative. On the basis of this, the results of this study could be considered as a base for a further detailed study considering the initial findings and drawbacks. The second limitation is there was no standardized measures for the data collection concerning the fifteen paralanguage items. In other words, while is some cases, the reaction towards the fifteen paralanguage items

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was given more consideration as in the case of the Polish and Yemeni participants, the behaviour itself was examined in the data provided by the Chinese and Turkish participants.

Future research should basically consider two vital research issues. First, the study should include a larger sample size. Second, the sampling should be stratified random sampling where different regions of a certain a country are included especially when seeking for generalization about a certain culture.

Информация о конфликте интересов: авторы не имеют конфликтов интересов для декларации.

Information of conflict of interests: authors have no conflicts of interests to declare.

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Issa Al-Qaderi, PhD candidate, University of Warsaw

Ahmed Alduais, PhD in Linguistics, Beijing Normal University

Sui Li Wang, DC in Linguistics, Wuhan Donghu University