

# Other Communication Styles

*by Sophia Tutorial*



## WHAT'S COVERED

In this lesson, we'll discuss several more nonverbal communication styles, and how they are impacted by culture. The particular areas of focus include:

1. Non-verbal Communication Across Cultures
  - a. Physiognomics
  - b. Haptics
  - c. Kinesics

## 1. Non-verbal Communication Across Cultures

We are communicating all the time, whether we know it or not. It's almost impossible not to communicate something through our non-verbals, whether these are gestures, facial expressions, or body movements.

As you've learned in previous lessons, different cultures can attribute very different meanings to a wide range of nonverbal symbols.

Three ways in which **non-verbal communication** is used:

- Physiognomics (facial expressions)
- Kinesics (body movement)
- Haptics (touch)

These are all symbols that people use to communicate messages, and the reaction to these non-verbal ways of communication is instantaneous and emotional because as human beings we tend to interpret the signal that we get in terms of our own culture.

We have very strong meanings for particular ways of communicating, whether it be through body language, touch, or facial expression.

However, it's interesting to note that some elements of non-verbal communication are pretty consistent around the world.

Research has shown that the following emotions are expressed in a pretty similar manner, no matter where you go:

- Enjoyment

- Fear
- Anger
- Sadness
- Disgust

The difference lies in when it's acceptable to display these emotions in various cultural settings and by whom.

### IN CONTEXT

In various settings within United States, it's considered more appropriate for women to display fear but not anger. Conversely, it's often considered more appropriate for men to display the emotion of anger but not fear.

We have these built-in cultural biases toward who can express what emotion and in what setting.



### TERM TO KNOW

#### Non-Verbal Communication

Communication using a variety of physical codes.

##### 1a. Physiognomics

Differences can present themselves when emotions are tied to **physiognomics**, or facial expressions.

The expression of an emotion like happiness is often manifested in a smiling facial expression that might be recognized as happy around the world.

However, in certain cultures, that facial expression might actually be masking sadness or even anger.

### IN CONTEXT

In some Asian cultures, both sadness and anger are not considered appropriate to express overtly. This is just one illustration of why it's important to remember that when you make facial expressions, you could be sending signals that you don't intend, or you could be misinterpreting the signals of others.

Eye contact is another form of facial expression, and the appropriate use of eye contact varies depending on culture.

### IN CONTEXT

People tend to make very direct eye contact here in the United States, but then look away after a few seconds. Whereas in some cultures, prolonged eye contact is considered a sign of respect and interest. In other cultures, it would be disrespectful to make eye contact with someone who is in a position of authority.

Facial expressions can be interpreted in a variety of ways depending on culture.



## TERM TO KNOW

### Physiognomics

The communication style which uses facial expression as a symbol.

### 1b. Haptics

**Haptics** is a form of non-verbal communication pertaining to touch, and how this is used will depend on what is considered appropriate in a given culture.

#### IN CONTEXT

People in the United States tend to like their personal space and reserve touching for people they are close to, such as relatives. However, it's common in many cultures for women who are just friends to walk down the street holding hands. Likewise, it would be considered very normal for men to casually embrace as they walk down the street.

In some other cultures, being more affectionate (e.g., kissing someone on the cheek or perhaps on both cheeks) is considered an acceptable way to greet someone.

How people touch one another, and how close they will stand to one another in conversation varies among different cultures.



## TERM TO KNOW

### Haptics

The communication style which uses touch as a symbol.

### 1c. Kinesics

The overall way people display emotion, or **kinesics**, also varies by culture.



**EXAMPLE** In some cultures, when you're discussing or debating an issue, becoming very emotional and exhibiting those feelings openly is appropriate. In other cultures, it is more appropriate to hide the emotion, and share only facts or rational information involved with a particular issue.

Kinesics is all about the differences in terms of how we use our bodies and how we express ourselves through gestures. Naturally, there are gestures that could be misinterpreted between cultures as well.

Therefore, you want to keep these differences in mind when you make any sort of strong gesture, even if it's intended as positive. While you may know it as something positive, it might mean the opposite in a different culture.



## TERM TO KNOW

### Kinesics

The communication style which uses body movement/gesture as a symbol.



## SUMMARY

In this lesson, you learned more about the differences in **non-verbal communication across cultures**.

Specifically, you learned about three additional methods of non-verbal communication: physiognomics (communication through facial expressions), haptics (communication through touch), and kinesics (communication through body movement). Good luck!

Source: Adapted from Sophia tutorial by Marlene Johnson.



## TERMS TO KNOW

**Haptics**

The communication style which uses touch as a symbol.

**Kinesics**

The communication style which uses body movement/gesture as a symbol.

**Non-Verbal Communication**

Communication using a variety of physical codes.

**Physiognomics**

The communication style which uses facial expression as a symbol.