

**THE NORTH CAUCASIAN PECULIARITIES OF VERBAL
AND NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION
IN COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS WITH OTHER ETHNIC GROUPS**

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The object of our research is the North Caucasian peculiarities of verbal and nonverbal communication which assists to understand the overall concept of communication and its specificities in a cross-cultural environment among other ethnic groups in different countries. Very often we face such question as – "why do different things have different meanings for people in various countries". The message is sent through a filter of different elements by which culture is defined, known as "cultural noise". Noise in cross-cultural communication is described as "impediments to communication that occur when people from different cultures interact". The concept of "personal space" which is determined by cultural background was studied by American anthropologist E.T. Hall, which helped him to introduce the term "Proxemics" in 1963. Proxemics can be defined as: "The interrelated observations and theories of man's use of space as a specialized elaboration of culture". According to B.H. Bgazhnokov «proxemics is – a special layer of the culture during the communication process». Studying people in the North Caucasus with other ethnic groups has allowed us to make a comparative analysis and determine that the same "action" can be interpreted in a different way in unlike cultures.

Key words: the North Caucasus, language, body language, verbal and nonverbal communication.

Communication and language are different. *Language* helps us to communicate. *Communication* is a broader concept than language [6]. If we try to characterize the communication between two different groups of people, the problem with which we may face is – intercultural communication problems among two interlocutors, between sender and receiver and encoding and decoding the messages. Due to invisible cultural differences, in our article we studied the *North Caucasian peculiarities of verbal and nonverbal communication* which will help us to understand the overall concept of communication and its specificities in a cross-cultural environment among other ethnic groups. Communication plays the vital role in our everyday life. Usually, the sender encodes the verbal and nonverbal message and sends it via a channel to the receiver, who is able to decode it because they share the same cultural background [7; p. 46]. The message is sent through a filter of different elements by which culture is defined, here referred to as cultural noise. Noise in *cross-cultural communication* is described as "impediments to communication that occur when people from different cultures interact" [4; p. 60].

To engage in the speech event, interlocutors disclose personal information and validate the other's images of self. Speech about one's unique self and experiences not only informs the listener about those experiences, but gives the speaker an opportunity to express (and thereby develop or enhance) his or her personal uniqueness. The examples in our article suggest not only that something more than information transmission is being accomplished with speech, but also a difference, across groups, in what is accomplished and what values are transmitted through language use both verbally and non-verbally.

Ethnographic studies of speech communities have described ways of speaking and language codes as definitive of social group boundaries. Such researches are often presented as a series of accounts of the speech practices of a given community [5]. Each country is rich and diverse not only according to traditions, habits and cultures; the peculiarities of our verbal and nonverbal communications make us the most sentient beings on the Earth. We are all unique in our communication styles. Very often we face such question as – "why do different things have different meanings for people in various countries". It may seem obvious, but it's important to keep in mind while you are abroad. For example, in some cultures we can't disturb person's private space, because it is considered rude and intrusive to speak in close proximity to another person. On other hand, it may be considered very rude or standoffish to keep one's distance during the conversation. The knowledge

of some peculiarities of our verbal and nonverbal communication can help us to build more effective communication with native speakers when we are abroad. Anthropologists and communication experts have studied cultural aspects of communication in depth, but let's take a look at some of the scientific basis of the intercultural communication.

An American anthropologist and cross-cultural researcher *Edward T. Hall* introduced the term "*Proxemics*" in 1963. In his investigations he studied the use of space, and related it to the interpersonal communication. Proxemics can be defined as, "The interrelated observations and theories of man's use of space as a specialized elaboration of culture" [3; p. 1]. The main idea is that people from different cultures have their own concept of "personal space" which is determined by cultural background.

Considering the non-verbal behavior of the ethnic groups in the *North Caucasus* from proxemics' point of view during the communication process, we may emphasize that the most nationalities, living on this territory are regulated and subjected by various taboos. According to *B.H. Bgazhnokov* proxemics is – "a special layer of the culture during the communication process" [12; p. 72]. In his comparative analysis of several ethnic groups in the *North Caucasus*, the author points out all the elements of the spatial organization of communication, studying the distance between men and women during the communication [12; p. 74]. His research shows that the distance between man and woman should be not less than half a meter long between interlocutors, without any forms of body contact. This restriction applies equally to the unfamiliar persons, close friends, couples – in general, all during any kind of typical situations of social interaction. There are some common taboos in the North Caucasus between men and women, parents and children, relatives, wife and husband. Thus considered indecent to express feelings in front of others, this taboo is widely distributed and appreciated in most of the families living in the *North Caucasus*. Some elements of these special feelings in public lead to a violation of the rules, which as a result may cause the difficulties inside the ethnic group and interethnic dialogue. Most researchers point out an important role in determining the rank in a social hierarchy, social status and age of the interlocutor in the *North Caucasus* [8, 9, 11, 12, 13, 15,].

Mostly, people living in the *United States, Canada, the UK, Nordic countries* and the *North Caucasus of the Russian Federation* need more personal space during their communication process. On the contrary individuals from *South America* and *Europe* have lower standards of personal space. For instance, when a person takes a step back during the communication process, it means that an interlocutor is too close, which interferes *individual's private space*. That explains that everybody has different concepts of personal space, and we should not forget about this, in order not to have cultural problems during the communication process.

Another interesting peculiarity is that in densely populated cities, people are often more accustomed to having less personal space than those in lesser-populated areas. In understanding of space, we should mention that one can find the diversity of differences, which reflect our cultural peculiarities. *Americans* work highly effective in their huge skyscrapers built of glass because they allow everyone, without exception from the director to the courier to be "in front of everyone". This makes *Americans* feel that they "work for the common cause". *Germans* have a quite different situation in their organization of workspace. They prefer to work in a small space behind the closed doors because for *Germans*, an open door is associated with a deep discomfort and interference into their personal space.

Such aspects of the communication style as "farewells & greetings" also reflect cultural peculiarities of a certain ethnic group. A special role in the regulation of the interaction between ethnic groups in the North Caucasus depends on touch gestures during the communication process in the situation of farewells & greetings. Among them, an important place takes a "handshake". *A.K. Baidurin* and *A.L. Toporkov* [14] point out that "the cultural traditions, which were used as the etiquette of differences in body language of handshaking, depending on several aspects: emotional reaction and function of this kind of greetings" [10, p. 33], emotional basis of a hierarchical society, which are strictly emphasized in the *Caucasian culture*.

Comparing with *Americans*, who often greet each other by saying "How are you?" or "How's it going?" and pass by you without giving a chance to respond. Such indifference may confuse, but for Americans it is a typical question when they see the face of a common person, and in such a manner they just say "hello".

In many countries, including *the North Caucasus of the Russian Federation*, it is considered rude, when a person whom you didn't meet before, involve you into the conversation, which *Americans* call "small talk". This conversation is less about the content and more about establishing a positive interaction [1; p. 32]. Common "*small talk*" includes talking about the weather or recent sports games or other recreation activities, or even political aspects of the country, etc. Small talk for Americans is just the way to minimize any awkward silence and demonstrate friendly intentions. Representatives living in *Asia* and *Russia* in the Northern *Caucasus* region protect their personal space, which means that they would not talk with people whom they do not know well, especially if they are not informed about the social background of the interlocutor, which plays a very important role during the conversation.

In conclusion we would like to mention that people should always pay attention to how they "present themselves to others", as the same actions can be interpreted differently in unlike countries and cultures. We should also remember that "tolerance governs the world", and our awareness of verbal and nonverbal communication of people from other cultures, makes us more competent interlocutor and increases our cross-cultural understanding.

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