

COMPARISON OF WESTERN AND INDONESIAN GESTURES IN COMMUNICATION : SOCIOLINGUISTICS STUDY

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Abstract

Gestures serve different purposes in language. Nevertheless people find difficulties to learn and to understand the gestures due to the speakers of languages in certain cultures that use “gestures” can change the meaning or the meaning conveyed. This study deals with non-verbal communication strategies named gesture used in Indonesian and Western communication. The objectives of study are to describe the meaning of gestures and to find out the types of gestures used by Indonesian and Western people when communicating in Talk Show. This study applied descriptive qualitative method. The research instrument was video recorder. The data analysis showed that there were 5 types of symbolic movement, 11 types of illustrative movement, 7 types of emotion revealing movement, 3 types of modulation movement, 3 types of adaptable movement. The result of descriptive analysis showed that gestures have big roles in communication either in Indonesian and Western People. Some gestures have similar meaning both of cultures. However sometimes every country has their different meaning of gestures. Therefore, it is necessary to take care before using gestures in other cultures.

Keywords: *gesture, communication, culture, sociolinguistics*

INTRODUCTION

Language and culture cannot be separated because the function of language is a medium of communication used by every human being in establishing social interactions. In these days, the interaction process is not only in one culture but people can also interact with other culture. In a process of interaction, communication is one of the most important things to convey a message either directly or indirectly.

Good communication is the foundation of successful relationships, both personally and professionally. In the process of communication, people are not only communicating each other with oral, but also nonverbal communication. In other words, if people communicate each other, people do verbal and non-verbal communication. However people communicate with much more than words. Based on the research indicates that the majority of communication is nonverbal. Nonverbal communication is communication without words (Devito, 2002). People can communicate nonverbally by using gesture, smile or frown, widen eyes, move chair closer to someone, wear jewelry, touch someone, or raise vocal volume. The problem is sometimes verbal stimuli and non-verbal stimuli have different messages, even though they are transmitted simultaneously (Verderber, 1980).

Gestures are defined as a visible action of any body part, when it is used as an utterance, or as part of an utterance (Kendon, 2004). They refer to spontaneous bodily movements that accompany speech. The most common body parts used are the hands, fingers, arms, head, face, eyes, eyebrows, and trunk. Gesture, does not include movement that does not accompany speech. (Kendon in McNeill , 2000). They are performed to convey meaning and structure. Gullberg (2013) states that gestures reflect and interact with cultural, linguistic, cognitive, and more general aspects of communication, showing systematic variation across a range of measures in each of these domains. Researchers also have found a close relationship between kinesics behaviour and certain linguistic features (i.e., intonation, rhythm, stresses patterns) in different language (Kendon, 1984). In other words, gestures are actions that help one to organize thoughts and facilitate their expressions.

It is crucial to bear in mind that gestures have different meanings in different cultures.

Some preliminary researches have conducted such as Puspakirana, I., & Setiawan, S. (2014) who analyzed non verbal communication between Indonesia and Australia. They found that the way of family showing anger in Indonesia and Australia is different, meanwhile the expressions of anger between children and parents is almost similar. Yelling, screaming, stomping and slamming are very common in Australian families as their anger expressions, both from parents to the children and the opposite. They are free to show what they think and feel and they do not have the same respect with Indonesian, especially children to parents. In Indonesia, both parents and children tend to talk calmly and solve the problem privately when they are angry. Parents always talk to the children and sometimes give advices to the children about what is polite and impolite. So, children in Indonesia tend to express their anger through face and body language because they respect each other. However, this behavior will be always like this in both countries because their culture is really different. Australian has freedom as the culture, while Indonesian respecting each other. Another study by Sekine,et.al. (2015) who examined people's views on spontaneous gestures in different countries found that most participants in this study believe that Italian, Spanish, and American English speakers produce larger gestures more frequently than other language speakers. They also showed that each culture group, even within Europe, put weight on a slightly different aspect of gestures.

In education, gesture also facilitate L2 learners such as study by (Cao and Chen, 2017) found that gestures are used as effective teaching strategies in L2 teaching and classroom management. The study by Broaders et al. (2007) aimed to determine whether forcing speakers to gesture encouraged them to express their knowledge. 106 children were asked to solve six mathematical problems. The results revealed that asking children to gesture encouraged them to convey previously unexpected but correct information, proving a positive effect of gestures on the learning process. Gestures also

found out that have contribution in various areas. The results of study by Iriskhanova and Cienki (2018) indicates that gestures should be considered as proper signs and analyzed in terms of a multi-vector model. Unlike language signs, gestures are characterized by highly variable semiotic profiles that are shaped in multimodal usage events, and they form a fluid system with unique qualities.

This study aims to analyze the difference gestures in intracultural contexts. This study compares Western gestures and Indonesian gestures. In this case, it is analyzed based on comparing gesture in Ellen talkshows with Adele as a guest star and Sarah Sechan talkshow with Titi DJ as a guest star. Although in different culture, there are some similarities of both talkshows. Both talkshows have same genre, namely comedian talk show and the guest stars have same background, that is as a singer.

Types of Gestures

Ekman in (Ozourcun , 2013) has divided the entire facial and body movements into five categories.

1. Symbolic movements are said to be used as a substitute to verbal language and they have different culture characters. For example, the gesture to express OK and victory with ones hand. Another example is the body language used to refer to “suicide”. Japanese people would perform an act like stabbing a dagger in the stomach while an American would perform an act like a gun in ones hand and pretending to shoot himself from the temple. Both actions in both cultures are used to refer to the word “suicide”.
2. Illustrative movements are used together withverbal language and they intend to clarify the point which is said, like characterizing a thing’s rhythm and speed or describe a body movement.
3. Emotion revealing movements are normally facial expressions that reflect emotion or mood.
4. Modulation movements are used to maintain or adjust the face to face talk. For example, using the head or eye movement to let somebody know that you have finished your turn of talking and now it is the other side’s turn to speak.
5. Adaptable movement contain movements like wiping eyes, shaking hands or feet.

Cultural Differences

Grant and Lei in Sugirin (2009) claim that cultural differences are the main issues in education. Different culture is going to show the uniqueness of a country.

Culture is not only about characteristics, values, beliefs, and behavior, but it is also about the language, specifically the use of language itself. There are two kinds of culture in communication. Intra-cultural communication describes communication between at least two people who are from the same culture or have culturally similar backgrounds” (Lustig and Koester, 2010). On the other side, “*Inter-cultural* communication describes communication between at least two people who are different in significant ways culturally” (Lustig and Koester, 2010). People study about culture to help people acquire attitudes, knowledge, and skills needed to successfully function within their micro-culture, mainstream culture, and the global community.

Non Verbal Gestures

The following are the examples of non-verbal gestures which have the same and different meaning between United States and Indonesia (Pease,1990).

- a. When we are happy, we usually smile. In other words, smiling is typically an expression of pleasure. It can also show affection, convey politeness or even disguise true feelings. But, it depends on the situations and relationships. A woman’s smile at a police officer does not carry the same meaning when she smiles to a young child. In Asian cultures including Indonesia, smiling is also used to cover emotional pain or embarrassment. When the students are late to come to the class or they can’t answer the questions from the teacher, they are possible to smile to cover their embarrassment.
- b. When we are sad or angry, we can frown, scowl, or even cry. In Arab and Iranian cultures, people express grief openly. They mourn out loud, while people from China, Japan, and Indonesia are more subdued.
- c. When we indicate “no” or negation, we usually shake our head from side to side. Shaking head from side to side is also used to show disagreement or have negative attitude. If we have a friend who is arrested by the police officer for the third time because of his crime, we may shake our head from side to side to show the disagreement or negative attitude towards his crime.
- d. When we do not know or understand what people are talking about, we usually shrug our shoulders.
- e. The “Ring” or “OK” gesture has different meaning in different countries. In the USA and in English speaking countries, the ring or OK gesture means “Everything is OK”. In France it can also mean zero or nothing. In Japan it can mean ‘money, in some Mediterranean countries, it is used to infer that a man is homosexual. In Indonesia, the ring gesture means zero.
- f. The thumb-up gesture has three meanings in Britain, Australia, and New Zealand. It is commonly used by hitch-hikers who are thumbing a lift, it is an OK signal, it is probably an insult signal meaning “up yours” or “sit on this” when the thumb is jerked sharply upwards. In Greece, its main meaning is “get stuffed”. In Italy, when people count from one to five, they use the thumb to mean “one” and the index finger becomes “two”. In Australia, America,

England and Indonesia, people count “one” on the index finger and two on the middle finger, hence, the thumb will be number five. In Indonesia, the thumb gesture means good job or response to someone who has completed an excellent job. It also means “delicious” when we taste delicious food. In Indonesia, if we want to stop the public transportation to take us to a certain place, we use the index finger to stop it, not the thumb.

- g. The V sign has an “up yours” interpretation in Australia, New Zealand, and Great Britain. The palm faces towards the speaker for the insult version. In USA, the V sign means victory but the two fingers and the palm face out. In Indonesia, whether the palm faces towards the speaker or the palm faces out, the V sign means number two.
- h. Scratching the head can mean a number of things-dandruff, fleas, sweating, uncertainty, forgetfulness or lying. It depends on the other gestures or the situations that happen at the same time. If the student scratches his head when he answers the question given by the teacher, scratching the head can mean that he forgets or he is not sure about the answer.
- i. Someone is sitting at a bus terminal with arms and legs tightly crossed and chin down and it is raining, it may mean that he feels cold, not defensive. If the person uses the same gesture while we are sitting across a table from him trying to sell him an idea or product, it can mean that he is negative or defensive about the situation.
- j. If a boy is introduced to a pretty and charming girl and he winks one of his eyes, it can be interpreted that the boy likes her or the boy is interested in further relationship with her.
- k. If we feel disappointed, we usually put our fist under our chin.
- l. If we want to get the attention of a pretty or charming girl who passes in front of us (a group of boys), we can whistle.
- m. In USA, beckoning people to come with the palm up is common or acceptable, however, in the Philippines, Korea, and parts of Latin America as well as other countries the same gesture is considered rude. In some countries, only an animal which can be beckoned with the palm up. In Indonesia, when we want to beckon someone we extend one arm in front of us and, with the palm down, wave to the person to come.
- n. Eye contact is important because it shows intimacy, attention, and influence. In general, Indonesian makes less eye contact with strangers in big cities than in small towns. In Indonesian small town, it usual for two strangers walking each other to make eye contact, smile and perhaps say “Hi !”, “Good Morning” or even “Where are you going”.

The figure below illustrates that Indonesian and Western people interact each other by using one kind of intra-cultural aspects, which is non-verbal communication in

certain context, namely Talk Show. It is necessary to find out the differences of gestures that both culture used in communication.

METHODOLOGY

This study used descriptive qualitative method. The method includes collecting, classifying, analyzing, and interpreting the data. The instrument of data collection in this research was video-recorder. The source of data were video of Ellen talk show with Adele as a guest star, and Indonesian talk show was Sarah Sechan talk show with Titi DJ as a guest star. The data were taken from video of West talk show namely Ellen talk show with Adele as a guest star, and Indonesian talk show was Sarah Sechan talk show with Titi DJ as a guest star. The technique of data analysis of this study used interactive model by Miles, Huberman and Saldana (2014) with three steps used to analyze the data, they are data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing or verification.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

From the analysis, it was found that there are five types of gestures using in conversation of talk shows, they are symbolic movement, illustrative movement, emotion revealing movement, modulation movement, adaptable movement. Some types of gestures are described as follows.

No	Types of gestures	Ellen Talk Show with Adele	Sarah Sechan Talk Show with Titi DJ
1	symbolic movement		<p>Titi : hai [waving both hands to the audience]</p> <p>Sarah : sempat adanya zaman, rocker rocker hitam, boots gitu ya [Titi raising her right hand and extend little, index finger and thumbs as rock sign].</p> <p>Titi : aduh, paling nggak tahan kalau bau deh [waving hands to the left and right]</p> <p>Sarah : alhamdulillah [raising both hands such praying]</p> <p>Titi : film, musik dan</p>

			sebagainya [counting numbers with little finger, ring finger then middle finger]
2	illustrative movement	Adele : We still love you, don't worry and I didn't ask you if you still loved me [pointing with index finger towards the audience] Ellen : so oddly, you cried to your own song? [pointing with index finger towards the audience]	Sarah : Umur berapa waktu itu ? [pointing with open palm hand]
3	emotion revealing movement	Adele : Sound check was great, went really well. I was really excited [raising eyebrows and smiling happily] Adele : Yeah, I cried pretty much all day yesterday [showing sad face with nodding the head]	Titi : Ti, kamu berangkat ni ke London. Ngapain? Ikut Miss World. Hah ? koq bisa? [frowning] Yah, kamu terpilih dari sekian banyak. Oh... uh...uh.. [low screaming, raising both hands with hands clasped then shaking hands, smiling] Titi : Ia , itik buruk rupa gue waktu sekolah [smiling] Titi : [grining] nggak, yang dipermak cuma bagian ekpermitas [smiling]
4	modulation movement	Adele : We are in great terms and it just kind of put the whole thing off, really and yeah. [shrugging the shoulders, open palm hand]	
5	adaptable		Titi : Ia , itik buruk rupa gue

movement	waktu sekolah [holding hands]
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There is similarity gesture among countries because of assimilation other cultures. For instance, in Sarah Sechan talk show, Titi DJ used the sign of the horns with extending little, index finger and thumb while holding middle and ring finger down to say rock or rocker. The sign was not different from western gesture.

However there are some differences gestures between Western and Indonesian gestures. Related emotion revealing movement, western people smile to show gratitude. On the other hand, in Indonesian gesture smile is not only used for revealing happiness but also for covering embarrassment. It can be seen when Titi explained that she was very ugly when she was still student she was ashamed but she smiled.

Related to symbolic movement, Indonesian people prefer to used upraised hands such as doing pray while saying thanks God. Meanwhile, some western people when saying thanks God did not used any movement and some pointed up their index finger toward the sky as sign of faith. Another symbolic movement is using finger related to numbers. While in western gesture commonly used index finger to represent one. However in Indonesian gesture, it was found that Titi DJ used little finger, ring finger, and middle finger to represent one, two and three. Furthermore, Western people showing the chest by using palm hand is used for referring feeling while mostly Indonesian people showing the chest by using palm hand refers to their own self or saying 'I or myself'.

Related to illustrative movement, there is difference between two cultures. Indonesian people when pointing at other people used palm hand as politeness while western people used to pointing at other people by using index finger.

CONCLUSION

Culture is something unique in each region, it adds the beautifulness of human life interaction. This study was comparing two models of culture, Indonesian and western culture especially in communicating by gestures. Gestures or body movements played important roles in conversation since it help the speakers to communicate their intention and feeling. Based on data analysis showed that all five types of gestures were found out in both Talk Shows, Ellen Talk Show and Sarah Sechan Talk Show. However, for symbolic movement and adaptable movement were not used by Adele when communicating in that talk show. On the contrary, Titi DJ did not used modulation movement when communicating in that talk show. For whole types of gestures, there were 5 types of symbolic movement, 11 types of illustrative movement, 7 types of emotion revealing movement, 3 types of modulation movement, 3 types of adaptable movement. The result of descriptive analysis showed that gestures have big roles in communication either in Indonesian and Western People. Some gestures have similar meaning both of cultures. However sometimes every country has their different meaning of gestures. Therefore, it is necessary to take care before using gestures in other cultures.

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