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Preddiplomski studij engleskog jezika i književnosti

Ivana Gavran

Neverbalna komunikacija

Završni rad

Mentor: izv.prof.dr.sc. Tanja Gradečak Erdeljić

Osijek, 2016

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Nonverbal Communication

BA Thesis

Supervisor: Tanja Gradečak Erdeljić, Associate Professor

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Content

- 1. Introduction 1
- 2. Defining Nonverbal Communication.....2
 - 2.1. History.....3
 - 2.2. Approaches To Nonverbal Communication.....4
- 3. Nonverbal Functions and Subcodes.....5
 - 3.1. Haptics.....6
 - 3.2. Proxemics.....7
 - 3.3. Kinesics.....8
- 4. Physical Appearance.....9
 - 4.1. Body Alterations and Coverings.....11
 - 4.2. Clothing.....12
- 5. Conclusion.....15

Abstract

Nonverbal communication is the norm of human communication because it makes up around its two thirds. About the complexity of nonverbal communication witness numerous definitions that exist on the topic; possibly as many as there are textbooks. The simplest definition is that it is an elaborate code written nowhere, known to none, and understood by all. Because of its complexity, it is important and the best to use the multidisciplinary approach to study and understand nonverbal communication. A multidisciplinary approach explores different cues of nonverbal communication. Nonverbal communication is also referred to as body language because it involves haptics, proxemics, kinesics, eye behaviour, facial expressions. These are the subcodes of nonverbal communication discussed in this paper. The subcodes represent how we communicate through space and territory, our physical appearance and dress, kinesics, the voice, the use of time and olfaction. Among dealing with such subcodes as proxemics, tactics, and haptic, this paper also dealt with physical appearance as a subcode. It appears to be that we communicate much more through our clothes and overall physical appearance than we might think. Physical appearance is influenced culturally, psychologically, socioeconomically, by sex/gender, by age etc. thus revealing these kind of information to our surroundings.

Key words

Nonverbal communication, Haptics, Kinesics, Proxemics, body image

Sažetak

Neverbalna komunikacija čini oko dvije trećine ljudske komunikacije zbog čega bismo ju mogli nazvati normom komunikacije među ljudima. Brojne definicije neverbalne komunikacije, kojih je otprilike jednako koliko i udžbenika na tu temu, svjedoče o njezinoj složenosti. Najjednostavnija definicija bi bila da je neverbalna komunikacija složeni kod koji nije nigdje zapisan, nikome poznat, ali je svima razumljiv. Zbog složenosti neverbalne komunikacije, najbolje bi bilo koristiti multidisciplinarni pristup istraživanja kako bismo ju što bolje istražili i razumjeli. Multidisciplinarni pristup istražuje različite znakove neverbalne komunikacije. Neverbalna komunikacija još se naziva i govor tijela zato što uključuje dodir, proksemiku i izraze lica. To su podkodovi neverbalne komunikacije koji su razrađeni u ovom radu. Ti podkodovi predstavljaju kako čovjek komunicira kroz prostor i teritorij, svoj fizički izgled i odjeću, glasom i korištenjem prostora. Osim proučavanjem spomenutih kodova, u ovom radu smo se bavili i proučavanjem fizičkog izgleda kao tipa neverbalne komunikacije. Čini se kako odjećom i fizičkim izgledom komuniciramo mnogo više nego što to zapravo mislimo. Na fizički izgled utječu kultura, naše psihofizičko stanje, socioekonomski status, spol, dob itd., na taj način otkrivajući upravo te informacije našoj okolini.

Ključne riječi

Neverbalna komunikacija, dodir, kineziologija, proksemika, slika tijela

1. Introduction

Communication is a reciprocal, dynamic, ongoing process in which people create and share thoughts and meanings by sending and receiving messages via generally understood codes and rules.

Since people communicate with each other in numerous ways that depend on the intended message and its context, it is easy to conclude that there is a variety of types of communication. Verbal, nonverbal, and written are the three types of communication based on the communication channels used. Nonverbal communication could be considered, or viewed as a norm of communication because it was the first form of communicating among humans; speech and languages developed later. According to many psychological studies, nonverbal communication (body language – gestures, body movements, physical appearance...) makes up around 70% of total human communication.

This paper deals with, and gives an overview of nonverbal communication, its history and foundations, the approaches to nonverbal communication, its functions and subcodes, but it mainly targets physical appearance as a communicator; how and what people communicate through their physical appearance and how clothing and body alterations are culturally influenced.

2. Defining Nonverbal Communication

As previously mentioned, nonverbal communication makes up a great part of human communication; according to Birdwhistell's (1970) and Philpott's (1983) approximations which say that nonverbal communication accounts for 60 to 70 percent (or approximately two thirds) of what we communicate to one another.¹ The simplest 'definition' of nonverbal communication is, as Sapir (1949) once suggested, "an elaborate code that is written nowhere, known to none, and understood by all."² But there are much definitions of nonverbal communication (possibly as many as there are textbooks on the topic) that suggest that nonverbal communication is more complex than one would think and defining it is not an easy task. For example: Jerold L. Hale, a professor from the University of Georgia described nonverbal communication as "the study of behaviors other than words that create shared meaning between people who are interacting with one another" (Hale, 2003), Brant Bureson, a professor from Purdue University described it as "any kind of expression, gesture or symbolic behaviour that is either intended to convey meaning or happens to convey meaning" (Bureson, 2003), Daniel Canary, a professor of communication from Arizona State University described it as "intentional behaviour that's used to symbolically convey an idea" (Canary, 2003), and finally, John Greene, also a communication professor from Purdue University said

"it is everything we do except the words that we use in our face to face interactions, so it includes facial expressions, gestures, eye contact...even our artifacts, the clothes that we wear, the rings and the jewelry that we carry around with us" (Greene, 2003).³

Nonverbal communication can be shared interpersonally (between people), intrapersonally (within oneself), and it can be intentional or unintentional. When intentionality is concerned, verbal communication is mostly intentional because people think before they say something, unlike the nonverbal communication which mostly occurs unintentionally; head scratch for example: if one scratches their head it could mean a number of things such as that they are confused or puzzled or that their head actually itches (numerous reasons could be involved). It means that nonverbal communication occurs when a message has some meaning regardless of the sender's intent; nonverbal communication seems to be a bit more primitive and far less controllable than verbal communication. The body of information is so vast and diverse that making sense of it is not a small task, especially given that scholars from different fields approach nonverbal behaviour with different perspectives, assumptions, and methodologies. Consequently, nonverbal

¹ Hickson, M., Stacks, Don W., Moore, N. *Nonverbal Communication: Studies and Applications* (Fourth Edition) // Roxbury Publishing Company, 2004 p. 7

² Hickson, M., Stacks, Don W., Moore, N. *Nonverbal Communication: Studies and Applications* (Fourth Edition) // Roxbury Publishing Company, 2004 p. 9

³Burgoon, J.K., Guerro, L.K., Floyd, K. *Nonverbal Communication* // Routledge, 2016 p. 11

communication is best understood by taking a multidisciplinary approach (the exploration of different cues of nonverbal communication).⁴

2.1. History

It could be said that the study of nonverbal communication started with the publishing of Charles Darwin's book *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* in 1872. In his book, Darwin argues that all mammals (humans and animals) show their emotions through facial expressions; for example: people wrinkle their nose when they are disgusted and both humans and animals bare their teeth when they are enraged (possibly as a sign of warning before making an attack). According to Darwin, people apply facial expressions as an external evidence of their internal state. The ideas he gave in the book initiated a great number of research on nonverbal communication and behaviour. This research was paused for a while between 1920s and 1955 when Adam Kendon, Albert Scheflen, and Ray Birdwhistell again started the research on nonverbal communication by analyzing film. Their joint expertise led to an analytic method called *context analysis*, in which all observed behaviors of the people in the film are transcribed in excruciating detail onto a coding sheet that resembles a musical score. Context analysis was later used to study such events as the structure and sequence of human greetings, social behavior at an outdoor party, and the function of posture during family therapy.⁵ But the history of the research may not be so long as psychologists have not written many books on the topic and the majority of studies have been done by communication scholars. The nonverbal communication studies were at their peak in the 1960s when most of the textbooks were written. It was the cognitive revolution of the 1950s that pressed pause or was the obstacle to behaviorism and the nonverbal communication studies. The behavioral revolution transformed experimental psychology in the US. Perception became discrimination, memory became learning, language became verbal behavior, intelligence became what intelligence tests *test*.⁶ It may be that a part of the reason why this cognitive revolution put aside the nonverbal studies is because for some reason at the time (1970s or 1980s possibly), it was hard to be considered a "serious" researcher if studying nonverbal

⁴ Burgoon, J.K., Guerro, L.K., Floyd, K. *Nonverbal Communication* // Routledge, 2016 p. 2

⁵ Ambady, N., Hecht, M. A. *Nonverbal Communication and Psychology: Past and Future* // *The New Jersey Journal of Communication*, Volume 7, No. 2, Fall 1999 (web page visited 16.8.16
<http://ambadylab.stanford.edu/pubs/1999Hecht.pdf>)

⁶ Miller, G. A. *The Cognitive Revolution: A Historical Perspective* // *TRENDS in Cognitive Sciences* Vol.7 No.3 March 2003, Department of Psychology, Princeton University, p. 1 (web page visited 17.8.16,
<http://www.cs.princeton.edu/~rit/geo/Miller.pdf>)

communication. Even though more researches have been done recently, most of them date from the period from 1950s to 1990s.

2.2. Approaches to Nonverbal Communication

According to Hickson, Moore, and Stacks (2004), an approach means to get close to a particular subject, which is, in this case, nonverbal communication. In their textbook *Nonverbal Communication: Studies and Applications* they introduce several approaches to clarify the concept of nonverbal communication. Theoretical approaches, disciplinary approaches, and methodological approaches are approaches briefly discussed and introduced in the mentioned textbook. *The theoretical approach* represents a few types of approaches such as the *nurture approach* according to which nonverbal communication is learned (anthropologists and sociologists such as Birdwhistell, Hall, Montagu and Goffman have used this approach), the *nature approach* (opposite to the nurture approach) which was developed by Darwin in his already mentioned book *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (1871), in which Darwin postulated that nonverbal behavior was a part of the genetic structure of humans and animals, i.e. that nonverbal behavior is innate. The third approach is the *functional approach* which is focused on the types and functions that nonverbal communication performs (Mehrabian, Burgoon, Knapp, and other communication researchers and psychologists have emphasized this approach). The second type, *the disciplinary approach* gives us two subtypes depending on the discipline used to consider the effects of nonverbal communication. The prescriptive and biological science approach are the two approaches discussed in the textbook. *The prescriptive approach* probably dates from the early Greek and Roman culture and it is about the public speech delivery; management of the voice and gestures was a focus in the consideration of delivery (Borbet, 1971)⁷. This approach could be considered as performance/elocutionary approach and today it is antiquated and rarely taught, except for the theatre and broadcasting programs where speech delivery is pretty important. *The biological science approach* is more concerned with the comparing and contrasting human behavior with that of other animals. The third are *the methodological approaches* that are concerned with the methods used in the study of nonverbal communication and behavior. The methods used help us understand the above mentioned

⁷ Hickson, M., Stacks, Don W., Moore, N. *Nonverbal Communication: Studies and Applications* (Fourth Edition) // Roxbury Publishing Company, 2004 p. 17

approaches. Having these approaches in mind, it is easy to conclude that there is no a correct or wrong way to study nonverbal communication.

3. Nonverbal Functions and Subcodes

To many people, nonverbal communication focuses primarily on *kinesics* (gestures and facial expressions) that are frequently referred to as body language. Few realize that nonverbal communication also includes the use of time, space, and territory, physical appearance, the use of the voice, touching behavior, and olfaction (the sense of smell). It is largely responsible for the emotional “meaning” attributed to a message.⁸ The *subcodes* could be looked at as the different components of the overall nonverbal code, and according to Hickson, M., Moore, N., and Stacks, D. (2004) could be divided in five areas: touch and space, physical appearance, gestures, vocalics, and covert body/temporal communication (nonverbal issues that are not seen or heard). These subcodes represent how we communicate through space and territory, our physical appearance and dress, kinesics, the voice, the use of time and olfaction. The relationship between these subcodes can be explained in several ways, from a functional approach whereby we look how each operate to a social approach that begins with self-presentation and moves to “larger” venues, such as space and territory or time.⁹ As it could be concluded, nonverbal communication does not operate in a void, which means that it often performs some kind of a function in relationship to verbal communication. Functions are the purposes, motives, or goals of communication. An analysis of functions answers the question, what does the nonverbal communication *do*?¹⁰ We could classify six nonverbal functions: identification and self-presentation, control of the interaction, relationship of the interactants, display of cognitive information, display of affective (emotional) information, and display of deception. In addition to nonverbal functions and subcodes, it is important to mention that we send and receive the

⁸ Deyo, J., Hickson, M. III, Stacks, D.W., Walt, P. Nonverbal Communication. In R. L. Miller, E. Balcetis, S. R. Burns, D. B. Daniel, B.K. Saville, & W. D. Woody (Eds.), Promoting student engagement (Vol. 2, pp. 230-237). Retrieved from the Society for the Teaching of Psychology Web site: <http://teachpsych.org/ebooks/pse2011/index.php>, p. 230

⁹ Deyo, J., Hickson, M. III, Stacks, D.W., Walt, P. Nonverbal Communication. In R. L. Miller, E. Balcetis, S. R. Burns, D. B. Daniel, B.K. Saville, & W. D. Woody (Eds.), Promoting student engagement (Vol. 2, pp. 230-237). Retrieved from the Society for the Teaching of Psychology Web site: <http://teachpsych.org/ebooks/pse2011/index.php>, p. 230

¹⁰ Burgoon, J.K., Guerrero, L.K., Floyd, K. Nonverbal Communication // Routledge, 2016, p. 20

nonverbal code through a number of filters. The filters assist us in interpreting the various stimuli that we sense. These filters include the purpose of interaction, the sex or gender of the interactants, the brain processing of the nonverbal code, and the age, culture, race, and status of interactants.

3.1. Haptics

Although some researchers call it *tactics*, the study of touch and touching is also known as *haptics*. Haptics can also be referred to as “zero-proxemics” which means that there is no space between persons. In terms of social and personal development, touch is one of the most important nonverbal communication subcodes, and it can be proved by the fact that Weitz (1974) referred to it as “logical end of proxemics” because once two people touch they have eliminated the space between them which usually signifies some special kind of relationship between them, while Montagu (1971) said that touch is the mother of all senses and therefore stressed out the importance of touch. Of the importance of touch also witnesses the statement by Adler and Towne (1975) who stated that high mortality of new born children during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was because they simply hadn’t been touched enough. During that particular period, infants were dying from a disease called *marasmus* (Greek for *wasting away*). This thesis was proved by some contemporary research when breastfeeding and non-breastfeeding were contrasted. It has been concluded that non-breastfed children had more problems with health in general, learning problems, social adaptation (lack of trust and confidence). Also, there were some studies made on animals (Harlow and Zimmerman in 1958 studied the physical contact between a monkey mother and her infant), which, although made much earlier than previously mentioned studies, only proves the idea that a person’s development as a healthy individual is related to the amount of touch they received as an infant. As we experience different frequencies of touch during our lifetime, we also experience different kinds of touch. Heslin (1974) argued that we would classify touching behavior into five categories based on the nature of the interpersonal relationship between the toucher and touchee. In 1975, Argyle reported that 16 types of touch occur commonly in western culture. He argued that the various touches communicate attitudes, regulate the interaction, or fall into a “meaningless” category.¹¹ There is *functional/professional level of touch*, *social/polite*, *friendship/warmth* (most difficult to interpret because it is easily mistaken for love or sexual attraction), *love/intimacy*, and *sexual arousal*. Immediacy, area of body touch, comfort touch,

¹¹ Hickson, M., Stacks, Don W., Moore, N. *Nonverbal Communication: Studies and Applications (Fourth Edition)* // Roxbury Publishing Company, 2004 p.70-71

same-sex touch, and gender issues are the factors that influence touch. Although there is difference between cultures in the expectations of amount, location of touch, and its type, there is no doubt that the need for touch is universal and always there.

3.2. Proxemics

Proxemics is the term coined by Edward T. Hall (1966) who also defined it as “the interrelated observations and theories of man’s use of space as a specialized elaboration of culture”¹², or simply, it is the study of human use of space and the cultural impact on human communication, social interaction, and behavior. Proxemics is best defined, however, in terms of the two major subareas that constitute how we use the space around us: personal space and territory.¹³ According to Hall’s classification of space, the closest distance is *intimate space* and it is measured at zero-proxemics, i.e. touching to 18 inches in the United States. It ranges from 18 inches to 4 feet. Hall’s classification also includes *social space* which ranges from 4 to 10 feet, and *public space* that ranges from 10 to 25 feet. Since intimate space is measured at zero-proxemics, logical conclusion would be that spacing is based on the intimacy; as becoming more intimate, people reduce the space between them. Despite this general classification, there are still some exceptions; since not all people are the same, there are some factors influencing person’s distancing expectations such as age differences, sex differences, cultural differences, racial differences, and status, personality and liking. For example, some researchers claim (e.g. Lott and Sommer 1967) that people of higher status expect more interpersonal distance than people of lower status, heterosexual males maintain more space when interacting with other males probably because they associate close proximity to homosexuality, as Baxter (1970) noted, Mexican Americans keep closer personal space than European Americans. As far as proxemics is concerned, we can talk about the environment, not only personal space. Environment can also be a great nonverbal communicator as the manipulation of it can alter every other aspect of human communication. *Territory* consists of spaces or areas that are marked, have boundaries, and suggest ways to act and communicate. The territory we occupy – like the personal space we expect and maintain – is influenced by a number of factors, each operating in conjunction with the others to produce expectations of appropriate behavior and communication.¹⁴

¹² Hall, E.T. *The Hidden Dimension*//Anchor Books,1990, p.1

¹³ Hickson, M., Stacks, Don W., Moore, N. *Nonverbal Communication: Studies and Applications (Fourth Edition)* // Roxbury Publishing Company, 2004 p. 90

¹⁴ Hickson, M., Stacks, Don W., Moore, N. *Nonverbal Communication: Studies and Applications (Fourth Edition)* // Roxbury Publishing Company, 2004 p. 140

3.3. Kinesics

Kinesics is the study of human body movements such as gesture, facial expressions, posture, rate of walk, and eye behavior. Nowadays it is even popular as the non-academic expression – body language. In one of his more important publications, *Kinesics and Context* (1970), Ray Birdwhistell, who is also considered the founder of this area of study, gave six principles of kinesics. Each of the principles deals with the study of body movement and how such a study leads to the understanding of communication. According to Birdwhistell's six principles, body movement depends on language and culture, even status, facial expression, and eye behavior. There are different kinds of approaches to kinesics for better understanding of nonverbal behavior and communication. Probably the most frequently used is Birdwhistell's Linguistic Analogy in which he claimed that parakinesic phenomena (everything involved in the overall use of kinesics) are similar to factors that influence our verbal expression¹⁵, and Ekman and Friesen's Cumulative Structure which has taken a more precise approach to kinesics. This approach is also referred to as the *meaning-centered approach*; Ekman and Friesen were mostly interested in the meanings associated with movements. This approach identifies five categories of behaviors: emblems, illustrators, regulators, adaptors, and affect displays. *Emblems* are body movements that directly translate a word or a phrase, for example an American emblem for "OK" is pointing one finger like a pistol to indicate a suicide, or "the finger" which generally means "screw you" but when accompanied with a smile and transmitted by a friend, it loses the negative connotation. *Illustrators* accompany or reinforce verbal messages; there are several kinds of illustrators: those that emphasize words or sentences, those that represent thought processes, those that draw the shape of objects in space, sometimes are called *pictographs*. The third category is *regulators* that control the flow and pace of communication, *adaptors* are the fourth category and they release physical and emotional tension. Adaptors are gestures that are learned in childhood and some researchers call them "nervous habits"; picking one's nose, scratching the head or any other body part serve as a satisfaction of a bodily function, or an emotional need. The final category, according to Ekman and Friesen, is that of *affect displays* (emotional displays). Affect displays, through facial

¹⁵ Hickson, M., Stacks, Don W., Moore, N. Nonverbal Communication: Studies and Applications (Fourth Edition) // Roxbury Publishing Company, 2004 p. 208

expressions, express seven emotions that are universal and common regardless of the culture: anger, surprise, fear, happiness, disgust, sadness and contempt. There are also some variables that influence kinesics, such as culture, sex/gender, handedness, the ability of decoding or interpretation, and language behavior. All of these variables influence our communication, especially culture and sex/gender. Differences in cultural and subcultural (cultures found within greater cultures) variables are sometimes manifested in how we stand or walk, through emotions we choose to employ. As far as the sex/gender differences are concerned, it appears that women tend to smile more than men, nod their heads, and generally show a higher level of gestural activity. In addition to kinesics variables, there are also kinesics functions. Kinesics functions are identification and self-presentation, control of the interaction, display of cognitive information, display of affective information, and deception and leakage.

4. Physical Appearance

We have all probably heard sayings such as: “Beauty is in the eye of the beholder”, or “Beauty is only skin deep”, but are they really relevant, is that really so? Of course, most people would like to think that “inner beauty” is what really matters, what is more significant than physical appearance, but the truth is, that what we notice first is physical appearance, or physical attractiveness. When we must communicate to strangers, we prefer to talk to ones that we find attractive (Berger and Calabrese, 1975). Physical appearance may be as important as it includes more than just facial features; it includes dimensions such as body shape, physical attractiveness, clothing, hair and accessories. Langlois and Roggman’s (1990), and Langlois, Ritter, Roggman, and Vaughn’s (1991) studies only confirm the importance of attractiveness, e.g. three studies examined infant preferences for attractive faces in four types of faces: White adult male and female faces, Black adult female faces, and infant faces. Infants viewed pairs of faces, previously rated for attractiveness by adults, in a visual preference paradigm. Significant preferences were found for attractive faces across all facial types. The results confirm earlier reports of this phenomenon and extend those results by showing that infant preferences for attractive faces generalize across faces differing in race, gender, and age.¹⁶ Our looks, shape, and the clothes we wear tell a lot about us without a word. Physical appearance communicates “meaning”, and many stereotypes are based

¹⁶ Langlois, J.H., Ritter, J.M., Roggman, L.A., Vaughn, L.S. Facial Diversity and Infant Preferences for Attractive Faces, in *Developmental Psychology* 1991, Vol 27, No 1, 79-84//American Psychological Association, Inc., 1991, p. 79 (<http://www.psy.cmu.edu/~sieglar/35langlois91.pdf>, webpage visited: 3.9.2016)

on our first impressions of others' body shape and body image.¹⁷ We use our overall appearance to draw attention to ourselves, to communicate with others, by our appearance, for example clothes we choose to wear, or our hairstyle, we subconsciously (or consciously, depending on the person) reveal our sexual preferences, religion, cultural or subcultural identification and affiliation. People also use clothes and appearance in general to deceive others by using socially acceptable stereotypes dealing with expected behaviors based on our body type and shape. Although there is a high level of agreement of what is attractive, physical attractiveness cannot be defined as it does not exist on its own because it is a perceived factor, which means that what someone finds to be attractive may not be attractive to somebody else. In addition to physical attractiveness, there are other factors in physical appearance subcode that influence communication such as: body shape, weight and attitude, body image which can be positive or negative, body alterations and coverings (hairstyles, skin changes, etc.), and stigma. Given that we notice other people's bodies, we form some judgments and stereotypes based on one's body shape, which then entails height and weight, and body image. Based on the above mentioned physical traits people form all sorts of information about the individual they are interacting with, for example if a person is categorized endomorph, he or she communicates that they are soft, plump, short, more dependent on others, more good-natured. One would also think that this person lives an unhealthy lifestyle, and that they are sloppy, and lazy, and most probably would disregard them for communication and socializing. The same thing could be applied for height. Many studies have been done to find out why people appreciate more physical appearance than, let us say, "inner beauty", or "inner peace" of some sort. Really young children begin to develop body image alongside the growth of their physical, cognitive, and social abilities; even infants have a general sense of their bodies (Slaughter & Brownell, 2013). Nearly a third of children aged 5 to 6 choose an ideal body size that is thinner than their current perceived size (Hayes & Tantleff-Dunn, 2010). By the age of 6, children are aware of dieting and may have tried it (Dohnt & Tiggemann, 2004, 2006; Lowes & Tiggemann, 2003).¹⁸ White, Brown, and Ginsburg (1999), after surveying primetime television and afternoon soap operas, have found that television body types are significantly thinner than the ones in real life, and that thinner characters are more likely to reveal their bodies, and involve in romantic relationships. The conclusion is that mass media also has a great role in our perception of our own bodies and the thing we will communicate through it. Our body image has very much to do with it how we

¹⁷ Hickson, M., Stacks, Don W., Moore, N. *Nonverbal Communication: Studies and Applications (Fourth Edition)* // Roxbury Publishing Company, 2004 p. 174

¹⁸ Pai, S., Schryver, K. // *Children, Teens, Media, and Body Image, A Common Sense Media Research Brief*, 2015, p.5

“appear” to others. Positive body image means, for example more sexual partners, greater enjoyment in sexual relationships, i.e. we communicate that we feel good, thus we look good, and attract people. Culture, gender, and age also play a certain role in our self-perception, and our “appearance based” nonverbal communication. This obsession with our bodies is not a modern thing; people have been doing so for a long time. As far back as the Upper Paleolithic period (about forty thousand years ago), your ancestors were using bones for necklaces and other bodily ornaments. From that period to the present, historical and archaeological evidence has shown that people are fixated on their bodies. They have painted them, fastened objects to them, dressed them, undressed them, and even deformed and mutilated them in the name of beauty.¹⁹

4.1. Body Alterations and Coverings

The most important function of physical appearance change is identification and self-presentation. Body alterations and coverings make the previously mentioned overall physical appearance. How we treat our bodies and what we will put on it, how we will alter it and beautify it depends on numerous things such as: age, gender, culture, degree of professionalism (work clothes for example), occasion, our body image, our psychological state, socio-economic status, etc. As far as the cultural impact is concerned, some authors (e.g. Craik, 1994) suggest that western clothing really is fashion, because it constantly changes, it is superficial and secular, and projects individual identity, whereas nonwestern clothing is a kind of traditional costume because it doesn't change, it carries deeper meanings and projects group identity and affiliation. As Peoples and Bailey point out, “People around the world are highly creative in altering their physical appearance.”²⁰ Depending on the message we are trying to convey (or we are conveying subconsciously), we can change our looks by altering our hair with different hairstyles, our skin by using different cosmetics and colorings (make-up, tattoos), by using additions such as body piercings, or by any piece of clothing. All of these body alterations influence the way people will look at us as individuals. The way we do, or do not do our hair, as already mentioned, tells a great deal about us; some researches have shown that, for example short-haired men were considered more intelligent, moral, masculine, mature, and attractive than long-haired men - in western culture that also has changed through years as western culture could be considered “fashion culture”.

¹⁹ McDaniel, E.R., Porter, R.E., Samovar, L.A. *Communication Between Cultures*//Wardsworth Cengage Learning, 2010, p. 251

²⁰ McDaniel, E.R., Porter, R.E., Samovar, L.A. *Communication Between Cultures*//Wardsworth Cengage Learning, 2010, p. 250

Long-haired men before and nowadays even, send a message of a subcultural identity, telling the world that they belong to the rock 'n' roll subculture for example, in British punk subculture of the 70s, spiky hair was a part of their aesthetics, etc. The wearing of beards for men has a long cultural tradition in many cultures (such as Hasidic Jews, Sikhs, Mennonites, Amish, and some Muslim sects), it is an expression of a religious belief. Among Chinese women, a standard for female attractiveness is a very simple hairstyle of one or two braids. Hairstyles also depend on the level of professionalism, so hairstyles for businesswoman of the late 70s should be shoulder length but no longer, and the hair could be wavy but not curly, it could be short but not masculine, and it should lie neatly in place without constant attention. Another type of body alterations is the use of cosmetics. Westerners mostly use make-up and cosmetics for beautifying purposes. Women, more than men use make-up. They use it to enhance their facial features and to attract a possible sexual partner. In western culture, too much make-up is usually not a good communicator, it mostly drives people away rather than it attracts them. A woman wearing too much make-up or too heavy make-up could be considered sloppy or promiscuous even. Make-up also depends on the situation one is in, that way it is considered a common sense not to wear any make up to funerals, or at least reduce it to minimum because in that way we show respect to the deceased and their family. No make-up could also communicate that a woman does not have much time, and is exhausted, or simply does not like wearing make-up which makes her relaxed and outgoing. Face painting is still common in parts of Africa, in South America, and among some Native American tribes. In Ethiopia and Eritrea, many women still utilize facial tattoos as "beauty marks." In India, many women place red dots on their foreheads to show they are married.²¹ Tattoos and body piercings are usually connected to subcultures, at first to biker phenomena, but today they are worn by both sexes and by any socioeconomic class. Though, it still can mean some sort of rebellion or simply a spontaneous and relaxed person.

4.2. Clothing

Clothing is the "invention" of the human kind. Even though clothing is a part of physical appearance, it could be considered a phenomenon of the human species; therefore it deserves a chapter for itself. Clothing has many functions; the first function or purpose was to protect from severe weather conditions. Humans used basically anything that could serve to cover up the

²¹ McDaniel, E.R., Porter, R.E., Samovar, L.A. Communication Between Cultures//Wardsworth Cengage Learning, 2010, p. 251

exposed and more sensitive body parts, from animal skin to all sorts of leaves. The other function is ornamentation. Clothing as an ornament has various functions: sexual attraction, self-assertion, self-denial, concealment, group identification, and status and role indicator. Also, clothes can communicate many personal attributes, including such characteristics as sex, age, nationality, group and occupational identification, mood, personality, attitudes, interests and values. Given that clothes have countless purposes and functions, it is reasonable to expect that according to the purpose or function, there are different types of clothes. In that way we can distinguish between *casual/everyday clothes* which maybe describes best our personalities and socioeconomic status. It represents the individual's most independent clothing choice, and even though it is characterized as casual, it is also submissive to some conventions and rules. In that way, there is a difference between what we wear during the day, and what we wear during the evening or nighttime. Along with the owner's personality information, everyday clothes also communicate the age of the owner. By this type of clothing we can also find out the mood of the person wearing it, for example, people who tend to wear darker colors, usually seem to be more depressed than the ones who prefer brighter colors, or if it simply rains outside and one's mood is currently corresponding to weather it is more likely that the person will choose something darker to wear. Practical and very comfortable everyday clothes (sportswear even, tracksuits, and comfortable sneakers) are usually associated with very casual people, or the sport types of the persons. These people are probably always on the move, and prefer to be comfortable. If someone dresses provocatively, they send us the information about their sexual preferences. Everyday/casual clothes extend to *clothes as a sign of a subcultural affiliation and identification*. When we say that casual clothes extend to a sign of a subcultural identification, it is because casual clothes depend on the wearer's preferences. This type of clothing gives us the information about the person's lifestyle. If a woman looks like she just got out of some magazine, she communicates that she is a fashionista. Among gang members in East Los Angeles, even something as simple as the color of a bandana is a statement of group affiliation—blue for Crips and red for Bloods²² (Crips and Bloods are rival gangs in Los Angeles, California). Skaters adopted the loose, casual-fitting clothes and tennis shoes from the West coast and the body modifications from the British Punks.²³ Subcultural dress in general, delivers a cacophony of nonverbal messages both inside and outside the subculture. The subcultural body styles function as a visual language that communicates affiliation, status, and even fashion within the subculture. Specific body styles, communicate more specific visual messages, such as denoting

²² McDaniel, E.R., Porter, R.E., Samovar, L.A. *Communication Between Cultures*//Wardsworth Cengage Learning, 2010, p. 253

²³ Winge, T.M. *Body Style*//Berg, 2012, p. 96

accomplishments, narrating autobiographies, and commemorating loves and losses. The aesthetics of the subcultural body styles expresses innovation, membership, and agency, which suggest active resistance and subversion of social and cultural norms and values relating to aesthetics, identity, and gender. Opposed to clothes as a sign of subcultural identification, there are *professional clothes*. Professional clothes serve to distinguish relations between people. The best example of professional clothes are uniforms. Whether it is a school uniform, chef uniform, doctor uniform, or pilot uniform, when seen, we know exactly what the person wearing it does professionally. The uniform's primary function is to negate differences between people, and to pinpoint professional identity. If a workplace does not require any kind of uniform, there is something that is called *corporate dress code*. Corporate dress code is a dress code that helps employees to make decisions about the proper appearance at workplace. This type of attire is usually a bit more formal than the one we wear at home; it is also called the *smart casual*. Another type of attire is *clothes as a sign of cultural identification and affiliation*. Usually, this type of clothes denotes traditional attire. It communicates the cultural background we come from and therefore is as important as other types of clothing because not every culture has the same customs and same norms as, let us say, western culture. We can observe the subtlety of color in how the men of Iraq “tell others” about their status and affiliations by the colors on their *kaffiyas* (headpieces). An all-white kaffiya means the person wearing the headpiece has not yet made the pilgrimage to Mecca. In Malaysia women often wear something called a *baju kurung*. This garment is loose fitting and somewhat formless, and does not reveal the contours of the body. An even more extreme expression of feminine modesty through attire is seen among women in many Middle Eastern countries. In some instances, “Muslim girls are not allowed to participate in swimming classes because of the prohibitions against exposing their bodies.”²⁴ The dress of Arab men is a perfect example of cultural identity and dress. For many Arabs, correct attire would include a long loose robe called a *dishdasha* or *thobe* and a headpiece, a white cloth *kaffiya* banded by a black *egal* to secure it. The last type of clothing that will be discussed are *ceremonial clothes*. Ceremonial clothes are something that is worn in such occasions as funerals, weddings, graduations, or even some events such as the Oscars. On her wedding day, the bride usually wears a white dress that symbolizes purity, when going to a funeral, people wear black because it is a sign of grieving in Western culture. At ceremonies such as graduations, graduates wear a gown (a robe), with a separate hood and a cap. This attire is called Academic dress or Academicals.

²⁴ McDaniel, E.R., Porter, R.E., Samovar, L.A. Communication Between Cultures//Wardsworth Cengage Learning, 2010, p. 253

5. Conclusion

Nonverbal communication is as equally important as verbal communication. Maybe even more important, given that it makes up around 70% of total human communication.

Since it makes up around 70% of total human communication, it has the “power” to reveal things that we do or do not wish to reveal about ourselves. If a picture says more than thousand words, then humans could be considered pictures because without uttering a word, we reveal a whole spectrum of psychological processes, our socioeconomic status, ethnic background, religious affiliation, etc.

By breaking such a broad field of nonverbal communication into smaller units and subcodes, this paper explained the concept of body language, processes and functions. Using many examples from real life and different textbooks, the thesis has also proved that nonverbal communication, mainly physical appearance and clothes really are culturally influenced.

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