Culture and Non-Verbal Communication

ATU PhD

Course: Culture & Identity in Language Teaching

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Non Verbal Communication

Communication without words; communication by means of space, gestures, facial expressions, touching, vocal variation, and silence for example (DeVito)

Pioneer in nonverbal research
Ray Birdwhistell

defines nonverbal communication:

... the signals to which meaning will be attributed

Note:

- some sounds are not vocal,
- e.g., snapping one's fingers, stamping a foot
- …NV includes vocal and nonvocal phenomena

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Types of Nonverbal Behavior

- Proxemics: distance
- Haptics: touch
- Chronemics: time
- Kinesics: movement
- Artifacts: dress, belongings
- Vocalics or Paralanguage: voice
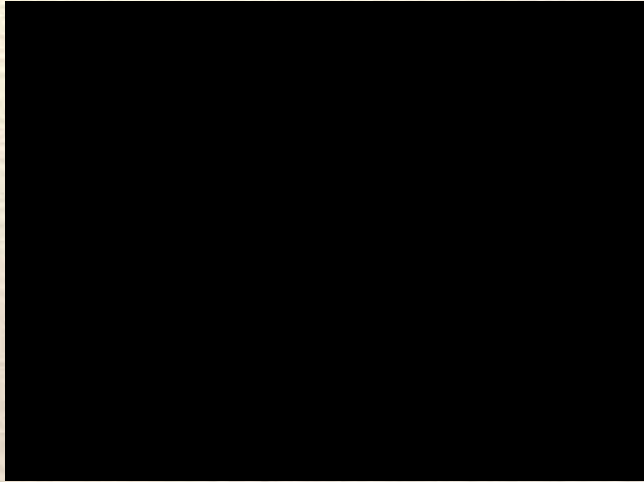- Environment: surrounding

Tips for Teaching Non Verbal Communication

- Identify basic concepts of NVC
- Emphasize the connection btw verbal & NVC
- Understand the functions of NVC
- Help Ss understand the concepts of physical space
- Introduce various concepts of time
- Emphasize differences btw high & low-context communication
- Explore kinesics, movements, and gestures in NVC

Identify Basic Concepts of NVC

NVC

- Functions at a primal level

- Important in the communication of feelings and emotions

- Used by infants before mastering language

- Differ from culture to culture

- Has forms and functions

What the Research Says

VERBAL 35%

NONVERBAL 65%
Facial Expressions
Tone of Voice
Movement
Appearance
Eye Contact
Gestures
Posture

- Ray Birdwhistell(1974):
  – More than 65% of a conversation is communicated through NV cues
- Porter and Samovar (1988)
  – NVC and culture are closely linked
  – Most NVC is culturally based
- Ting-Toomy (1999)
  – To communicate accurately in a new culture, we need to identify the rules, be aware of the cultural values, and understand the connection btw the functions and interpretations of NV behavior
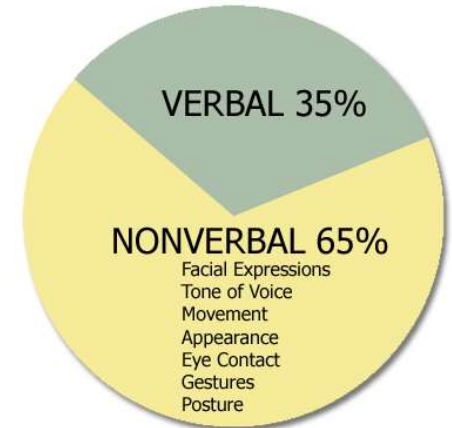
What the Research Says

- O'Sullivan (1994, p.63)
  - Iranian culture of greeting non verbally
  - NV behavior carries a heavy affective load, e.g. Japanese smile when angry or sad/ Americans smile when joyful, & content

Emphasize the connection btw verbal & NVC

- NVC has a greater impact than verbal behavior
  - E.g. saying sth while rolling the eyes

What the Research Says

- Hall (1959)
  - NVC (the silent language) includes all types of NV interaction including paralanguage, e.g. body language, voice features, silence, pauses, backchannel
  - NVC can supplement, underscore, replace or disagree with the verbal message
  - NVC can be intentional/unintentional
- Birdswistle (1970)
  - NVC is affected by cultural, situational, and individual variations

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What the Research Says

- Ekman and Oster (1979)
  - Culture is the dominant factor that shapes rules for conveying emotions through NVC

- Ekman (1982)
  - Social/cultural rules affect display of emotions

Understand the functions of NVC

- Ekman & Friesen (1969),Patterson (1990): identify 6 functions
  – Expression of emotion
  – Reinforcement of verbal message
  – Substitution for verbal communication
  – Contradiction of verbal message
  – Management of communicative situation
  – Conveyance of message in ritualized forms

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Functions of NVC

- Ting-Toomy (1999, p.116) identifies 5 functions
    1. Reflecting identities, e.g. clothing, vocalics
    2. Expressing emotions, e.g. kinesics
    3. Managing conversations , e.g. kinesics & oculesics(eye movements)
    4. Creating interpersonal attraction , e.g. posture, facial expression
    5. Forming impressions

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Help Ss Understand the Concepts of Physical Space

Edward T. Hall's (1966) patterns of spatial behavior in the US:

- **Intimate**: 0 to 1.5 feet
- **personal**: 1.5 to 4 feet (an arm's length)
- **social**: 4 to 12 feet
- **public**: 12 to 25 feet

PROXEMICS (distance)

- Different cultures have different comfort levels of distance
  - E.g. zone of personal and social distance is much smaller in the middle east.(Davis, 1990)
  - **HAPTICS (touch)**
    - Library study (1976) found that students who were slightly touched by clerk while checking out library books evaluated the library much more favorably than those who were not touched.

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Introduce Various Concepts of Time

- Concepts of punctuality differ across cultures
  - Lewis(2000): Americans are fast-paced, action-oriented, and linear time-oriented while easterners view time as not linear/capable of being managed but cyclic, flexible, or adaptable.

What the Research Says

Hall (1983) considers chronemics from 3 perspectives:

- Monochronemic/M-time: doing one thing at a time (time is rigid/fixed) like North Americans/ North Euopeans, e.g. the Swiss

- Polychromic/P-time: doing multiple things at a time (time is flexible) like Latin Americans

- Synchrony: coordinating actions in time through mutual understanding

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What the Research Says

- Levine & Wolff (1985) conducted a psychological study to find the relative accuracy of bank clocks and compared it to the walking speed of people and the time it took to buy a stamp in the post office. Japan & the US had the most accurate clocks and moved the fastest, Italy & Indonesia were the opposite.

Emphasize Differences btw High & Low-context Communication

- **Low-context Communication:**

Explicit/ direct Messages spelled out directly in speech/ writing

Individualistic cultures e.g. the US

- **High-context Communication:**

Implicit/ indirect Messages communicated indirectly

Collective cultures e.g. the Japaneses

What the Research Says

- Hall (1998,p.61):

High context communication: most of the information is already in the person, very little is in the coded, explicit, transmitted part of the message

Low context communication: bulk of the information in the explicit code or language (Bennett, 1998)
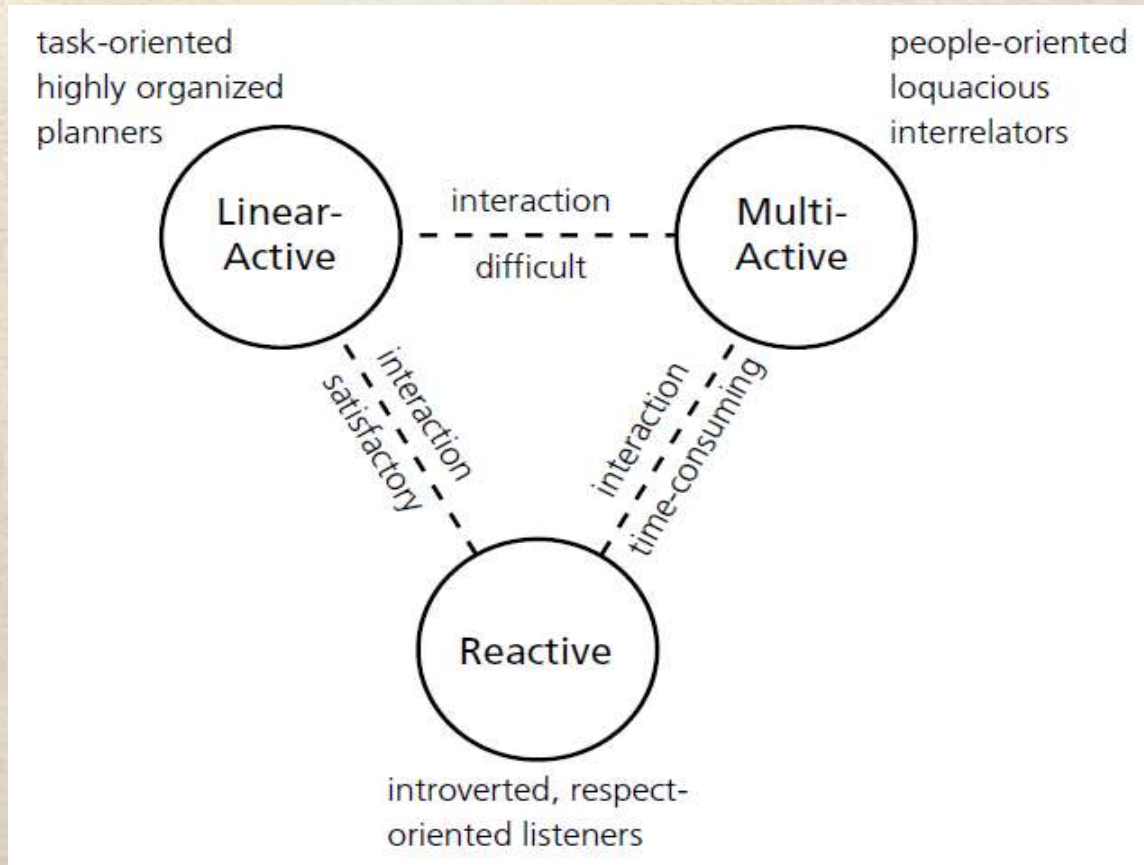
What the Research Says

Lustig & Koester (2003, p.112): Hall's high- and low-context culture include three characteristics:

- Use of covert/overt messages
  - Covert in high-context cultures
  - Overt in low-context cultures
- Importance of in-groups and out-groups
  - Easily discerned who belongs to the group, who doesn't → high-context cultures
- Orientation to time
  - More open & flexible → high-context cultures
  - Highly organized → low-context cultures

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Explore Kinesics, Movements, and Gestures in NVC

- Birdswhistle (1970): Body language is more reliable than verbal language.

- Certain gestures carry different message across cultures
  - Oculesics(eye contact) e.g. gaze, blinking, winking, glancing, and squinting e.g. the Japanese avoid direct eye contact while Americans insist on it

What the Research Says:
Lewis' (2008)categorization of Cultures

task-oriented
highly organized
planners

people-oriented
loquacious
interrelators

Linear-Active — interaction difficult — Multi-Active

interaction satisfactory

interaction time-consuming

Reactive

introverted, respect-oriented listeners

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Lewis' (2008)categorization of Cultures

Linear-Active	Multi-Active	Reactive
✦ introvert	✦ extrovert	✦ introvert
✦ patient	✦ impatient	✦ patient
✦ quiet	✦ talkative	✦ silent
✦ minds own business	✦ inquisitive	✦ respectful
✦ likes privacy	✦ gregarious	✦ good listener
✦ plans ahead methodically	✦ plans grand outline only	✦ looks at general principles
✦ does one thing at a time	✦ does several things at once	✦ reacts
✦ works fixed hours	✦ works any hours	✦ flexible hours
✦ punctual	✦ not punctual	✦ punctual

(continued)

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Linear-Active	Multi-Active	Reactive
✦ dominated by timetables and schedules	✦ timetable unpredictable	✦ reacts to partner's timetable
✦ compartmentalizes projects	✦ lets one project influence another	✦ sees whole picture
✦ sticks to plans	✦ changes plans	✦ makes slight changes
✦ sticks to facts	✦ juggles facts	✦ statements are promises
✦ gets information from statistics, reference books, database, Internet	✦ gets first-hand (oral) information	✦ uses both first-hand and researched information
✦ job-oriented	✦ people-oriented	✦ people-oriented
✦ unemotional	✦ emotional	✦ quietly caring
✦ works within department	✦ gets around all departments	✦ considers all departments
✦ follows correct procedures	✦ pulls strings	✦ networks
✦ accepts favors reluctantly	✦ seeks favors	✦ protects face of other
✦ delegates to competent colleagues	✦ delegates to relations	✦ delegates to reliable people
✦ completes action chains	✦ completes human transactions	✦ reacts to partner
✦ likes fixed agendas	✦ interrelates everything	✦ thoughtful
✦ brief on telephone	✦ talks for hours	✦ summarizes well
✦ uses memoranda	✦ rarely writes memos	✦ plans slowly
✦ respects officialdom	✦ seeks out (top) key person	✦ ultra-honest
✦ dislikes losing face	✦ has ready excuses	✦ must not lose face
✦ confronts with logic	✦ confronts emotionally	✦ avoids confrontation
✦ limited body language	✦ unrestricted body language	✦ subtle body language
✦ rarely interrupts	✦ interrupts frequently	✦ doesn't interrupt
✦ separates social/ professional	✦ interweaves social/ professional	✦ connects social and professional

Lewis's Model of Cultural Types
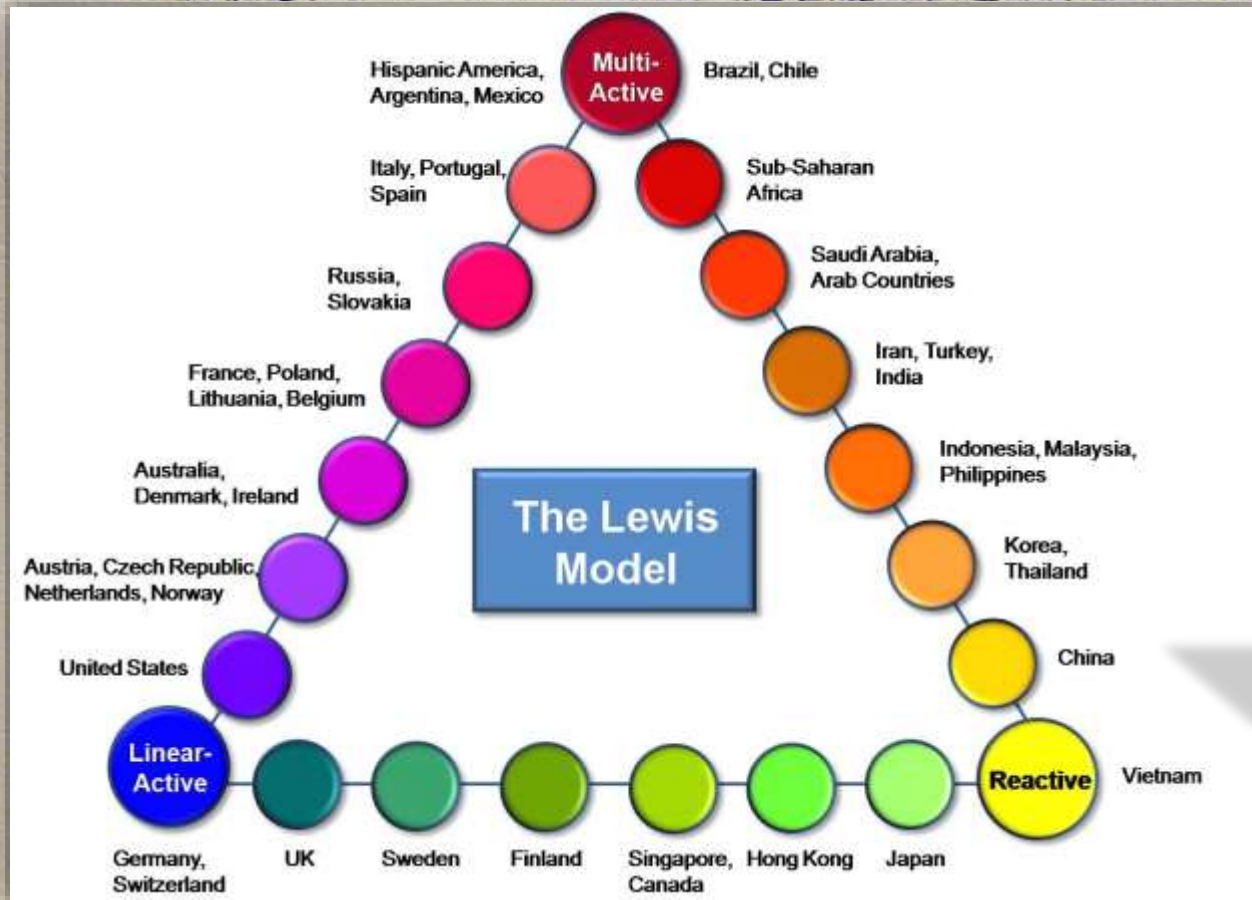
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