

When we communicate with others, we express our thoughts and feelings not only through the words we choose, but also through our tone of voice, facial expression and body language. In fact, many communications experts believe that far more information is communicated non-verbally (without words) than verbally (with words). "Body language" is an important part of non-verbal communication.

Body language includes many different aspects of our every day physical behaviour: the way we greet one another; how we stand, how we sit or walk; the way we position our arms and legs or use our hands and eyes are some of the most basic.

To learn another language is more than just learning words and grammar, **it** involves learning about another culture, too. We learn much of our own culture's body language before we learn to speak, from the time we are children, usually without even being aware of it.  And that body language varies from culture to culture, so it's something to which second language learners should pay attention.

So, how attuned are you to other people's body language?  Try this little experiment.  Turn the volume on the television right down while you watch people interact on the screen. You may find it is more difficult to understand what's happening between people from unfamiliar cultures.

Sometimes, cultural differences in appropriate body language can cause discomfort or misunderstandings too. For example, there are definite cultural differences in how much distance should be kept between two people **who** are speaking together. If you are used to people keeping their distance, you will feel very uncomfortable, and probably move away repeatedly, if someone keeps trying to stand closer to you at a party!  We call this the "personal comfort zone".

Another common example of misunderstanding is the use of a smile. In some Asian cultures, a smile can show embarrassment or apology. However, smiling back at a teacher who is unhappy with you, or a stranger **whose** foot you accidentally stepped upon is probably not a good idea in most English speaking cultures! Also, you should not assume that nodding your head means "yes" or that shaking your head means "no" or vice versa.  Yes, you can even get that wrong, with potentially disastrous consequences.

Even speakers of the same language, such as British, American, or Australian people, may not use the same body language and must adapt if **they** wish to communicate successfully.  British people are said to be more reserved and formal, in general, and this is reflected in **their** body language.  Americans are considered more open and outgoing, while Australians are seen as casual and relaxed.

It's worth learning, understanding any underlying cultural or regional attitudes can help you learn how to understand and use body language to improve your communicative abilities.

Just as you should not allow a fear of making language mistakes prevent you from speaking, you should not be overly afraid of using inappropriate body language in an unfamiliar culture. Most people will understand that people from different cultures may not always use body language in the same ways. All the same, it's definitely advisable to learn as much as possible about the body language of a new culture, and to use careful observation to avoid making any mistakes.

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Body Language

**1- Identify, in the text, four different ways we can communicate.**

**2- What do the underlined words refer to in the text?**

a) it b) who c) whose

d) they e) their

**3- Say whether the following sentences are TRUE or FALSE. Quote from the text to justify your choice.**

* 1. When we learn a new language we should only care about the grammar and vocabulary.
  2. Body language is the same all over the world.
  3. Sometimes it’s difficult to understand the body language from people from a different culture.
  4. Smiling doesn’t mean the same thing in different countries.
  5. When you nod your head, people understand you agree with them.
  6. Speaking the same language doesn’t mean using the same body language.

**4-** **Find the synonyms of the following words in the text.**

1. changes b) shame c) terrible d) get better e) permit
2. **5- Complete the sentences with the right question tag.**

**5.1-** A smile can show embarrassment, \_\_\_?

**5.2-** Shaking our head means “no”, \_\_\_?

**5.3-** I’m very reserved, \_\_\_?

1. **5.4-** Let’s learn how to use our body language, \_\_\_?
2. **5.5-** You didn’t learn how to communicate well, \_\_\_?

**5.6-** People will understand my body language, \_\_\_?

**5.7-** Speak louder, \_\_\_?

1. **5.8**- He crossed his arms, \_\_\_?

**6- Complete the sentences with the following words.**

a) Michael is very \_\_\_. He always wants things just for himself.

b) You are such a \_\_\_! This is just a spider.

c) She was very \_\_\_ with his problem.

d) I’m a shy person, not an \_\_\_ one.

e) He is so \_\_\_. He never mentions how rich he is.

f) Kate is a very \_\_\_ person. She is always in a good mood.

selfish

humble

coward

outgoing

cheerful

insensitive

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