Intercultural Features of Non-Verbal Means of Communication Used in Internet Communication

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ABSTRACT

The article focuses on the study of the non-verbal communication means in Internet communication among representatives of various nationalities. In modern reality, it is necessary to know how to construct a dialogue with a representative of another country, not only in live communication, but also in the Internet space. Scientific research methods: analysis, comparison, classification, questioning were used in this work.

Based on the analysis of linguistic literature and the survey conducted, the authors determined the essence of non-verbal communication in Internet communication, the main features of the use of symbols that replace non-verbal communication in the Internet by representatives of different countries, determined the relationship between non-verbal communication in live communication and non-verbal communication in Internet communication. Based on the results, the authors formulated rules for the use of various means of non-verbal communication in Internet communication in a dialogue with residents of a particular country.

Keywords: non-verbal communication, internet, communication, emoji, nationality, means, information.

1. Introduction

With the advent and development of information technologies, the interaction of representatives of different countries, cultures and nationalities has become possible without significant problems. This was facilitated by the emergence of the Internet, and social networks in particular. The result of the connection of the entire planet with the World Wide Web became the possibility of communication between residents of different continents, located at a distance of thousands of kilometers from each other. For this, social networks, instant messengers, blogs, dating sites, etc. Audio messages, video messages can serve as a way of transmitting information, but the main method is text. To simplify communication with a foreign citizen, online translators have appeared, with the help of which correspondence is possible if the communicants do not have knowledge of a foreign language for them. At the same time, the problem of a person's understanding of the thought embedded in the text of the message by his foreign interlocutor remained relevant, since modern translators do not imply the translation of phrases from one language into another, observing those aspects of the language that may not be spelled out in the rules of this language, but among its carriers, they will be widely distributed. Also, on the Internet there are no means of non-verbal communication common in live communication, which, according to Albert Mehrabian, account for 55% of all transmitted information (Mehrabian, 1972).

1 This article was presented as a paper at the 3rd International EMI Entrepreneurship & Social Science Congress.
Therefore, in order to improve the clarity and accessibility of information in Internet communication, various means are created to facilitate this. One of the most informative and effective means are graphic ones, since information presented in a visual form is most quickly and easily perceived by a person. M. A. Styukova and V. Yu. Melikyan distinguish five main types of graphic means of transmitting information in Internet communication: emoticons, emoji, stickers, memes and GIF animations (Styukova & Melikyan, 2017).

The emergence of needed tools is associated with the strengthening of the role of Internet communication. The Internet today is a means of communication, a place of work and rest, a platform for learning. There are no territorial, national or social boundaries on the Internet, reflecting the current state of globalization. Before the advent of the Internet, the concept of globalization was closely related to migration, that is, for the emergence of any trend in the culture of a foreign state, it was necessary to “import” technologies, cultural characteristics or material resources into this country. Currently, globalization is associated with the development of Internet communication. Now anyone can learn the language of another country, get a job in another part of the world, or hold online meetings with colleagues from different departments from their home. To meet these goals, Internet communication platforms are required, and to improve the quality of information transfer, universal means are required to promote international perception of the transmitted information.

Thus, the phenomenon of the emergence of a new interethnic language, its development and improvement of means of non-verbal communication in Internet communication, as well as the dependence of the popularity and demand for these means among people of different countries, cultures, religions, nationalities at the moment determines the relevance of the study and determine the purpose of our study.

The aim of the research is to determine and analyze the features of the use of non-verbal communication means by representatives of different nationalities and cultures.

To achieve the goal of the study, we have identified the following tasks:

1. To reveal the essence of non-verbal communication means in Internet communication.
2. To analyze the features of the use of non-verbal communication means by residents of different countries.
3. To determine the relationship between non-verbal communication in live communication and non-verbal communication in Internet communication.
4. To formulate the rules for the use of various means of non-verbal communication in Internet communication in dialogue with residents of a particular country.

The object of our research is Internet communication between representatives of different cultures, countries and nationalities.

The subject of our research is the features of the set of non-verbal communication tools used, depending on the communicant’s belonging to a particular country, nationality and culture.

We formulated the hypothesis of our research as follows:
The peculiarities of using non-verbal communication means in Internet communication are determined by sign language and cultural characteristics of the homeland of the communicants.

Methodology

During the research we used the following methods: analysis, comparison, classification, questioning.

We chose the WhatsApp messenger as a platform for conducting the survey, since it is a universal method of communication, widespread in various countries. Today, this messenger ranks first in the world in terms of the number of users, so our respondents did not need additional efforts to install applications and register in them. Also, to analyze the dependence of the popularity of certain symbols on nationality, we asked the respondents to indicate the group of countries to which their homeland belongs from the proposed ones: Australia, Asian countries, Arab countries, African countries, European countries, North American countries, South American countries.

Statistical information reflecting the popularity and demand for non-verbal means in Internet communication was obtained from the scientific works of developers and creators of social networks in general and symbols in particular.

For scientific substantiation, confirmation or refutation of the theories developed in the course of the study, materials of articles, journals, conference proceedings and journalistic material were used.

1. At the first stage, we conducted a literature review.
2. In the second step, we collected statistics on the popularity of various non-verbal communication tools among different nationalities.
3. At the third stage, we made a questionnaire based on theoretical material and already existing questionnaires. The survey questions were aimed at obtaining information about the relevance and popularity of certain symbols among various users. In the questionnaire, we asked the respondents: about their nationality,
about their use of non-verbal communication means, about the respondents' attitude to these symbols and their meaning for the respondents.

4. At the fourth stage, we conducted a survey of English language teachers from various countries on the WhatsApp messenger platform.

5. At the fifth stage, we analyzed the data obtained and formulated conclusions that will be presented at the end of the article.

6. At the sixth stage, we summarized the information obtained during the study and prepared the results for publication.

The study is divided into three parts. The first part examines the concept of “non-verbal communication”, describes its types and methods of substitution in Internet communication. The second part describes the research methodology, analyzes the data obtained during the survey, and classifies the causes of misunderstandings when using symbols by citizens of different states. The third part contains the main conclusions of the study, formulates the rules for the use of various means of non-verbal communication in Internet communication in dialogue with residents of a particular country.

Results

The origin of the concept of “non-verbal communication” or “non-verbal communication” is currently considered the first mention of this type of communication by Charles Darwin in the book “Expression of emotions in humans and animals”, the author found that the expression of emotions and various body movements, expressing the state of mind as a person, and animal, are hereditary and cannot be separated from them (Darwin, 1953).

A significant breakthrough in the study of non-verbal communication took place in the second half of the twentieth century. Non-verbal communication has been of great interest to scholars from various fields such as anthropology, psychology, and sociology.

In 1952 Ray Birdwhistell described sign language in detail, their meaning and defined the concept of "kinesics". According to him, only 35% of information is transmitted with the help of words during social interaction, the rest is non-verbal expression (Birdwhistell, 1952). Birdwhistell also identified five main types of body movements: illustrators, demonstrators, symbols, adapters and regulators. Each type has a specific meaning and function performed during the dialogue. Illustrator movements focus on parts of the phrase and are directly performed along with the speech. For example, a person shows the passerby the direction where to go in order to arrive at the desired object. The demonstration movement conveys the emotions of a person, his state of mind: a football player who has not scored a goal grabs his head or a dictator hits the table during his campaign speech. Symbol moves replace any phrase or word. For example, the phrase: "Stop!" can be easily replaced with the appropriate gesture. Movements-apters are movements that are mastered by a person unconsciously and that have become concomitant to any action. One of the most characteristic actions for this concept is the appearance of grimaces, scratching the nose or ear during a lie. So people often unknowingly give themselves away during stressful situations. Regulator movements contribute to the regulation of the dialogue process. These include: a smile, a kiss, a handshake, a fist swing, a raised finger, and others (Birdwhistell, 1952).

Edward Hall defines proxemics as interrelated observations and theories of human use of space as a specialized development of culture (Hall, 1966). He identified four zones that characterize the distance between interlocutors in various situations of interaction: intimate - typical for communication with close friends, (the distance does not exceed 45 cm); personal - typical for informal communication of people (from 45 cm to 120 cm); social - must be observed while observing the formal style of communication between people (from 120 cm to 365 cm); public - observed for communication of people at mass and public events (more than 365 cm). Later, his work became a teaching tool for writing the principles of holding various business meetings in an international format.

Many linguists and philologists have devoted their work to the problem of non-verbal communication. Ruesch, J., & Kees, W. have studied human communication behavior using archaeological evidence (Ruesch & Kees, 1974).

Non-verbal forms of interaction in Internet communication by representatives of different cultures were studied by Derks, et al, 2007; Kappas & Krämer, 2011; Bitti & Garotti, 2011; Ventrella, 2011;

All researchers have a common opinion - non-verbal communication means are used to reveal the physical, mental and emotional state, are used as coding for verbal communication with an emotional tone.

Today, there are various formulations of the concept of "non-verbal communication", but the most commonly used concept is formulated by Mark Knapp and Judith Hall in the book "Non-verbal communication". Professors have identified a possible interpretation of the concept of "non-verbal communication" as follows:
Non-verbal communication means communication carried out by non-verbal means (that is, words are the verbal element of communication) (Knapp & Hall, 2006).

This definition is broad enough, but when specifying important aspects for understanding, it becomes universal.

Non-verbal communication is very extensive and includes a number of concepts: posture, gestures, facial expressions, gait, gaze (its direction, pause length and contact frequency), voice characteristics such as intonation, volume, timbre, pause, sigh, laughter, crying, cough; tactile methods of communication (handshake, kiss, patting; orientation in space and distance between people. All these means of communication create an image of a person, his features of interaction with people. The ability to read signals generated by means of non-verbal communication makes a person more communicative and capable of empathy. Empathy - the comprehension of an emotional state, penetration-feeling into the experiences of another person (Titchener, 1909). This term was introduced in 1909 by Edward Titchener, an American psychologist. Also Titchener introduced the concept of "structuralism" - a direction in psychology, which consists in describing the elementary structure of consciousness through introspection. Titchener defined empathy as the ability to empathize, see, feel and analyze the character traits of another person. The importance of empathy in the modern world has grown enormously, and many scientists define it as a fundamental quality for a person's ability to competently build relationships with others.

In the process of studying non-verbal communication, the science of non-verbal semiotics arose, combining all types of unreal means and classifying them. In the work of the same name, Grigory Efimovich Kredlin singles out special sciences that describe various manifestations of non-verbal communication: paralinguistics, kinesics, auscultation, haptic, gastric, olfaction, proxemics, chronology, systemology (Kredlin 2002).

This classification most accurately characterizes non-verbal communication, but when considering non-verbal means of communication in Internet communication, it cannot be applied.

In Internet communication, various graphic elements act as a substitute for non-verbal communication. Currently, images in any form are increasingly beginning to prevail over text. The reasons for this process are: ease of reading information from a graphic image in comparison with information in text format, an increase in the speed of information consumption and the need to reduce the time spent on writing a message. Therefore, it was graphic tools that have become a replacement for the usual means of non-verbal communication. For their description and subsequent analysis, we need to introduce a different classification that characterizes the symbols of non-verbal communication on the Internet. They can be divided into the following groups:

1. Memes (humorous pictures describing a situation or a person's feelings).
2. Stickers (images, most often replacing any phrase).
3. Emoticons (symbols of punctuation marks that form emotion).
4. Emoji (interpretation of emoticons in a graphic image).
5. GIF-animations (rendered pictures, most often based on a part of a video).

By adhering to this classification, we found out the most used of these means among people belonging to different nationalities.

According to the analysis of statistical data on the use of non-verbal communication tools, emoji are the most popular today. Previously, their predecessors were emoticons, but with the development of graphic design and visual technologies, emoji supplanted them. This happened for a number of reasons, the main of which is the desire to reduce the time for writing a message. Selecting the desired emoji from the list of possible ones is much faster than typing a combination of punctuation marks. Also, a significant advantage of emoji over emoticons is a more elaborate graphic design. The animated design makes it easier for the interlocutor to read the meaning of the use of this symbol, so the risk of misunderstanding is significantly reduced.

The main task of emoji is to convey emotional connotation to the interlocutor. Transferring emotions through text is difficult if the person does not have sufficient vocabulary. To write emoji, a person does not need any impressive knowledge of the language, so the use of emoji is available to all people, regardless of their educational age. At the same time, the love message sent to the chosen one becomes more expressive with the addition of a certain number of hearts. The more hearts were added to the message, the stronger the feelings expressed. This is not a proven fact, but for people, a significant number of hearts are a pleasant addition to beautiful words. Also emoji can serve to concretize the meaning of the message. Before the appearance of smileys, a joke written to the interlocutor could be perceived as an insult. Now, when a laughing emoji appears in a message, we can easily understand that the interlocutor has nothing bad against us, but is just joking. Perhaps this is the reason why the most popular emoji is laughing to tears. At the time of the study, this symbol has been sent over 379,961,500 times [8]. Between laughing to tears and the red heart that follows it, there is almost a twofold gap - the number of red heart sendings is 196,145,800 times. In the third and fourth place are symbols that also describe a warm feeling for the interlocutor. This is a kiss emoji and a heart emoji.
Other non-verbal communication tools such as memes, stickers, and GIFs are not as common as emoji. The popularity of each of these symbols is determined by the country of the interlocutors and the social network or messenger where the communication takes place. For example, in Russia, among the user of the social network Vkontakte, stickers are more in demand than emoji. Also, Vkontakte users create a huge number of memes, which then migrate to other social networks. WatsApp messenger users are practically the only ones using GIF animations. This type of non-verbal communication today is gradually forgotten and ceases to be in demand. But WatsApp users continue to use GIFs and send them to their interlocutor at least as often as stickers on Vkontakte.

The basis for obtaining the data of our research is anonymous questioning. The questionnaire consisted of three blocks of questions. The first block involved obtaining data on the nationality of respondents and their communication on the Internet. The second block of questions was focused on obtaining statistical data on the popularity of various means of non-verbal communication among respondents. The third block was aimed at establishing the relationship between non-verbal communication in live and online communication, as well as identifying controversial symbols that lead to a possible misunderstanding between communicants.

The questionnaire contained 18 closed-ended questions, 6 of which with a choice of one answer from the list, and 12 with multiple answer options.

In our study, we asked survey participants to indicate which group of countries their homeland belongs to. We have highlighted the following groups: Australia, Asian countries, Arab countries, African countries, Europe, North America, South America. According to the results of the survey, the respondents of our survey were residents of Asian countries, Arab countries and European countries (Fig. 1). Therefore, we will consider the dependence of the use of certain means of non-verbal communication on nationality for these groups of countries.

![Fig. 1. “Nationality”](image)

Regardless of nationality, according to the results of our survey, the most popular means of non-verbal communication were also used by more than 50% of respondents (Fig. 2). The second place was shared by stickers and memes, and today none of our respondents use GIF-animations. The data obtained is a confirmation of the general statistics provided by the developers of social networks and instant messengers.
Which of the following symbols do you use in your correspondence?

- GIF
- Emoji
- Stickers
- Memes
- I don’t use anything

**Fig. 2. “The usage of various means”**

The most popular emoji according to the results of the survey is laughter to tears, the second - a red heart, which is also a confirmation of statistics. The third place was shared by folded hands and applause. Besides the most popular symbol, we were interested to know which respondents never use and will not use. These symbols turned out to be a skull, an emoticon swearing with obscene language, and symbols for alcohol. The reason for the unacceptability of these symbols is the prevailing cultural characteristics of nationalities.

To identify the rules for using symbols in a dialogue with a foreigner, we asked respondents about symbols that they might find offensive to themselves. Most of the respondents answered that symbols cannot hurt their feelings, but for residents of Arab countries, emoji symbolizing alcoholic beverages are unacceptable.

Also, more than 60% of representatives of Arab countries and Asian countries found the symbols associated with gestures offensive. We believe that the reason for this result is differences in the sign language of different nationalities. For example, the OK sign in Australia, USA, Russia, UK, and Canada means approval. But also the sign in the country of Asia and Brazil is obscene, as it denotes the fifth point. The alluring gesture with the index finger in Australia, USA, UK and Canada means "Come to me." And for Filipinos, this gesture is appropriate only for dogs, and means that you consider the interlocutor below you. Thumb up in Australia, USA, Russia, UK and Canada is a seal of approval. But in Latin America, West Africa, Iran, Iraq and Afghanistan, it means: "Roll from here." Therefore, the reasons for the misunderstanding when using emoji by representatives of different countries are: differences in cultural and national characteristics, differences in sign language, differences in religion and life principles. Therefore, we can say that the hypothesis we formulated has been confirmed.

The reason for using memes, stickers and emojis among our respondents is the ability to more fully express feelings and emotions - this is stated by more than 70% of respondents (Fig. 3). The data obtained indicate the performance of the functions originally assigned to emoji. This also confirms the statistics of the significant popularity of emoji in comparison with other means.
The respondents also named the ability to facilitate understanding of a foreign citizen as a positive quality of means of non-verbal communication in Internet communication. Therefore, we can say that the emoji language has become an international language, which at one time they wanted to make Esperanto out of the language. Of course, at present it is difficult to imagine that we will be able to fully begin to communicate with symbols, but we can confidently say that the creation of emoji has become a significant event for world linguistics.

**Conclusions**

We have identified the essence of non-verbal communication means in Internet communication. Today they are graphical representations of various emotions. Our research confirms that a characteristic feature of non-verbal communication means is their narrow application, that is, the ability to perform only a few tasks, in contrast to non-verbal communication means in live communication. We analyzed the use of non-verbal communication means by residents of different countries and came to the conclusion that there is no dependence of their use on nationality. Currently, emoji are the most popular in the world, and there is no need to use GIFs.

We have found that there is a direct relationship between non-verbal communication in live communication and non-verbal communication in Internet communication. It is characterized by differences in culture, religion, nationality, and in particular in sign language. Therefore, these factors should be taken into account, both when interacting live and during Internet communication.

We recommend that before using non-verbal communication tools in Internet communication with a foreign citizen, proceed from the following rules:

- Given the cultural characteristics of the state, avoid the use of controversial symbols such as animals, since in some countries the use of these symbols can offend the interlocutor, emoticons with a certain skin color (it is recommended to use neutral yellow) and emoticons associated with death.

- When using emoji gestures, find out if this gesture in the country of the interlocutor is obscene and offensive.

- When communicating with citizens of another religion, treat the faith of the interlocutor with respect and not use provocative symbols.

Thus, we can say that communication in Internet communication, as in live communication, requires compliance with the rules and norms of etiquette. Although Internet communication is considered more informal, following these rules helps to prevent the occurrence of interethnic conflicts.

Since Internet communication is not static, the study of non-verbal communication will remain relevant throughout its development. The area of studying the interethnic features of the use of non-verbal communication means remains insufficiently illuminated and requires more detailed consideration in the context of specific countries.
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