



THE ROLE OF HAND GESTURES IN SPOKEN LANGUAGE

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ABSTRACT

This article discusses the importance of hand gestures as one of the oldest and most effective forms of human communication. It explains how gestures were used before spoken language developed and how they continue to play an essential role in modern life. The article describes different types of hand gestures, including greeting gestures, gestures of agreement and refusal, directional gestures, and professional gestures used in various fields such as education, medicine, sports, and the military.

Special attention is given to the role of gestures in sign language for people with hearing or speech difficulties. The article also examines how the same gesture can have different meanings in different countries depending on cultural traditions and social values. Examples from various nations are provided to show the importance of understanding gestures in international communication.

KEYWORDS: Hand gestures, nonverbal communication, sign language, greeting gestures, agreement and refusal gestures, directional gestures, professional gestures, cultural differences, international communication, body language, social interaction, mutual understanding.

INTRODUCTION

Hand gestures are one of the oldest and most efficient means of communication among humans. Before people created a language, they communicated with each other by using hand and body movements. In contemporary world, hand gestures continue to be used as the mean of communication, explaining something, expressing thoughts and feelings, and increasing mutual comprehension. Everyday communication uses simple hand gestures like waving hello, giving a thumbs up, or raising a hand as the mean of attracting someone's attention. Such hand gestures can be very informative and replace long sentences. They prove to be useful in cases when verbal communication becomes impossible due to noise, performing, or language barriers between interlocutors. It should be mentioned that various cultures interpret gestures differently. A gesture that is perceived as polite in one culture can be offensive or not understandable in another one. Thus, in international communication and traveling, knowing the meaning of certain gestures becomes essential. Hand gestures are extremely important in the context of sign language, which is used by people suffering from hearing and speech problems.

Hand gestures play an important role in human life because they make communication easier between people. A person can express thoughts not only through speaking but also through different hand movements. For example, gestures are often used for greeting, showing agreement, pointing at something, or giving a warning. In many situations, they serve as a



simple and convenient way of communication. Sometimes, hand gestures can be even more meaningful than words. For instance, teachers use hand movements while explaining lessons, doctors use them to guide patients, and coaches rely on gestures to direct athletes during games. This helps people understand information faster and makes communication more effective. In addition, hand gestures are the main way of communication for people who have hearing or speech difficulties. They use sign language to communicate freely with others and to take part in social life. Because of this, hand gestures hold a very important place in human life and help strengthen mutual understanding in society.

Analysis and methods

Hand gestures have developed as a form of communication since ancient times. In the early stages of human life, when spoken language was not fully formed, people used gestures to express their thoughts, feelings, and needs. Through hand movements, they could warn others about danger, invite people to hunt, or explain simple ideas. As spoken language improved over time, hand gestures did not lose their importance. Instead, they became a useful way to support verbal communication. People often use hand movements while speaking to make their ideas clearer and more expressive. This can be seen in education, performing arts, sports, and everyday life. Even today, hand gestures remain an essential part of communication. They are especially helpful when people speak different languages or when communicating with individuals who have hearing or speech difficulties. In this way, hand gestures have grown from simple movements into an effective and meaningful tool of human interaction.

Gestures have several types. One of them are greeting gestures. Greeting gestures are among the simplest and most commonly used forms of hand gestures in human communication. They are used when people meet each other, say goodbye, or show respect and politeness. Such gestures help express warm feelings and positive attitudes even without words. For example, waving a hand is a common sign of greeting or farewell from a distance. When a person sees a friend or acquaintance on the street, raising and moving the hand is often used as a way to say hello. In the same way, waving is also used when seeing someone off on a trip, showing goodbye and good wishes.

Shaking hands is another important greeting gesture that symbolizes respect, sincerity, and friendliness. It is usually used during formal meetings, job interviews, or when meeting someone for the first time. For instance, shaking hands with a teacher or welcoming a guest in this way is often considered a sign of good manners and respect.

In some situations, placing both hands on the chest while greeting is also a sign of politeness and deep respect. This gesture is especially common when greeting older people or elders.: Gestures of agreement and refusal are among the most common hand movements used in daily life. They help people express their thoughts quickly and clearly. Sometimes, without speaking, a person can show the meaning of "yes" or "no" through simple hand gestures. This makes communication easier and more understandable.

For example, raising the thumb upward usually shows agreement, approval, or support. If a teacher is satisfied with a student's correct answer, they may raise their thumb to show approval. Among friends, this gesture is also often used to mean "everything is fine" or "I agree." To express refusal or disagreement, people may move their hand from side to side or hold the palm forward as a sign of "stop." For instance, if someone makes a suggestion and another

person does not agree, they may use a hand movement along with a head gesture to show refusal. Another example is when a driver uses a hand signal to tell a pedestrian to stop and wait.: Directional gestures play an important role in communication between people. They are used to show a place, call someone closer, or signal a person to stop. These hand movements are especially useful in situations where quick understanding is necessary. For example, when someone asks for directions, a person may use their hand to point toward the correct way. This method is very helpful, especially in unfamiliar places. In addition, a teacher may use a hand gesture to call a student during class. In this case, the hand movement works as a clear signal without the need for words. The stop gesture is also one of the most common directional hand signals. For instance, a traffic officer stretches out a hand to stop vehicles and control road safety. Parents may also use a hand gesture to warn their child not to go near a dangerous place by showing a “stop” sign.

Professional gestures are special hand signs used by people in different professions. They help make work faster, give clear instructions, and ensure understanding without unnecessary words. These gestures are especially important in situations where quick decisions and fast actions are required.

For example, sports coaches use hand gestures to give instructions to athletes during training sessions or competitions. A football coach may use hand signals to tell a player to change position or move to attack. This saves time during the game and helps players understand quickly. Doctors also use professional gestures in their work. During surgery, a doctor may use a hand signal to ask an assistant for a necessary instrument. In such situations, speed and accuracy are very important. Teachers use hand movements to manage students during lessons. For instance, they may use gestures to ask students to be quiet, come to the board, or answer a question. This makes classroom communication easier and more effective.

In the military field, special hand signals are used to give commands, start movement, or warn about danger. This is especially necessary in noisy places or in situations where silence must be kept.

Results and discussions

Hand gestures have different meanings in different countries, and this situation is directly connected with culture, history, traditions, and social values. A gesture that is considered positive and normal in one country may be understood as disrespectful, negative, or even insulting in another. For this reason, understanding the meaning of hand gestures is very important in international communication. For example, raising the thumb upward means “good,” “I agree,” or “everything is fine” in the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, and Uzbekistan. This gesture is often used as a sign of approval or support. For instance, a teacher may use this sign to show that a student’s answer is correct. However, in Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, and some Arab countries, this gesture is considered offensive and impolite. The “OK” sign, made by joining the thumb and index finger in a circle, means “excellent” or “everything is correct” in the United States, Canada, and Australia. However, in Brazil, Turkey, and some parts of Germany, this gesture carries a negative and inappropriate meaning. Because of this, people use this sign carefully during international meetings. The hand gesture used to call someone also differs from culture to culture. In many European countries, turning the palm upward and bending the fingers toward oneself is a normal way to call a person. It is commonly used to call

a waiter in a restaurant or invite a friend closer. However, in the Philippines, Singapore, and South Korea, this gesture is mainly used for calling animals. Using it for people is seen as disrespectful. In Japan, bowing is the main form of greeting. A deeper bow shows greater respect. Shaking hands is mostly used during international meetings. In India, joining both hands together in the "Namaste" gesture is a sign of greeting and respect. This gesture shows sincerity and polite behavior. In Uzbekistan, shaking hands, placing a hand on the chest, and greeting elders with respect are considered signs of good manners.

In countries such as Italy, Spain, and France, active hand movements are a natural part of conversation. People use many gestures to express their thoughts more strongly. For example, Italians often use hand movements to show surprise, disagreement, or questions very clearly. In many Eastern countries, however, too many hand gestures may be seen as impolite or too emotional. Special hand signals are also widely used in the military field. In the United States Army, soldiers use special gestures to give silent commands. For example, movements for going forward, stopping, or warning about danger are shown by hand signals. Similar systems exist in the military of other countries, although the forms of the gestures may differ. Hand gestures also play an important role in religious and national ceremonies. For example, in Muslim countries, raising both hands during prayer is a symbol of respect and worship. In Buddhist culture, joining the hands together represents peace and respect.

Ignoring cultural differences in gestures can cause misunderstandings in international relations. During travel, business meetings, diplomatic communication, and education, using the wrong hand gesture may create uncomfortable situations. Therefore, learning the gesture culture of other nations is necessary before communicating with people from different backgrounds. The same hand gesture can have completely different meanings in different countries. Understanding gestures correctly and using them carefully helps strengthen respect, mutual understanding, and effective communication in international life.

Conclusion

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