

Beyond Words: The Role of Intercultural Nonverbal Communication in Global Organizations

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Abstract:

As organizations expand overseas and across borders, the demand for interculturally competent leaders and employees grows. In addition, these organizations are facing new challenges, such as finding ways for their leaders and employees to coexist among many cultures. This presentation highlights one such way that leaders and employees in these organizations can overcome challenges in cross-cultural settings, which is using and understanding intercultural nonverbal communication. Nonverbal communication often accompanies verbal communication but can stand alone, and includes kinesics, oculosics, haptics, proxemics, paralinguistics, and physical appearance. Approximately 65% to 90% of interpersonal communication includes nonverbal communication. Leaders and employees often lack the specific training required to interpret such communication across varying cultural contexts. This presentation outlines 1) what nonverbal communication is and the various types, 2) the importance of knowing and utilizing nonverbal communication in cross-cultural settings, 3) current organizational training and programs offered to improve intercultural nonverbal communication, and 4) gaps and future research.

Working in cross-cultural settings calls for leaders and employees to be interculturally competent. Intercultural competence is essential in the workplace because of the interconnectedness of the world and the different cultures that exist within an organization. Communication in a cross-cultural setting helps drive the organization's mission and goals. It also invites collaboration and a positive workplace environment since employees are continuously interacting with each other. Furthermore, effective intercultural nonverbal communication bridges gaps among diverse employee groups and enhances followers' perceptions of leader effectiveness, interpersonal connections, and organizational performance. As globalization and diversity grow among organizations, these organizations must prioritize intercultural nonverbal communication training to maintain an advantage and to foster collaborative workplace environments.

Keywords: leadership, intercultural communication, nonverbal communication, global organization

