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ABSTRACT

A study investigated the listening experiences of American university students who interviewed people from other cultures as part of a class project. A total of 103 individuals from African, Asian, European, Latin American, and Middle Eastern cultures were interviewed. Each of the American interviewers described his/her perceptions of five nonverbal cues (voice, space, eye behavior, facial expressions, and hand gestures) by completing a questionnaire. Results indicated that: (1) depending on the type of nonverbal cue, listening to someone from another culture was either more difficult or easier; (2) adverse impacts on listening due to the differences in meanings for nonverbal cues occurred if the American student listener perceived something negative directed at him/her personally or something directed as a negative response to some portion of the message; and (3) whether differences in meanings resulted in easier or more difficult listening appeared to be related to the cultural area of the world from which the interviewee originated. Findings suggest that differences in meanings for nonverbal cues among cultures does not necessarily make it more difficult to listen to someone from another culture. (Contains 18 references. The nonverbal communication questionnaire is attached.) (RS)

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DIFFERENCES IN MEANINGS FOR NONVERBAL CUES  
AND EASE/DIFFICULTY IN INTERCULTURAL LISTENING

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## Abstract

Cultural diversity which already has become a more critically important factor in interactions between people will place even greater demands on our students currently in our educational system. This paper discusses the listening experiences of American university students based on their engaging in intercultural interviews as a class project. The paper will very briefly review the general reactions of the student interviewers to the intercultural interview experience and the nature of how the students perceived the involvement of five nonverbal cues in the interviews. The major portion of the paper will be to report and discuss the observations of the American student interviewers regarding the impact of the nonverbal cues on intercultural listening. Key results showed that 1) depending on the type of nonverbal cue, listening to someone from another culture may be more difficult or easier, 2) where there is an adverse impact on listening due to the differences in meanings for nonverbal cues, this may occur if the American student listener perceives something negative directed at him/her personally or something directed as a negative response to some portion of the message, 3) whether differences in meanings will more likely result in easier or more difficult listening appears to be related to the cultural area of the world from which the interviewee originates.

## Introduction

As cultural diversity becomes more and more likely a characteristic of individuals with whom we interact, it is becoming increasingly necessary to improve our intercultural speaking and listening knowledge and skills. Students presently in our educational system will have even greater demands placed on their intercultural communication proficiencies. A specific task facing educators involved in the subject area of listening is to devise means to maximize the learning of effective intercultural listening skills for students. Experiential learning is often cited as one of the primary approaches to accomplish this objective.

### Description of the Student Project

The author of this paper is employing an experiential student project in a university intercultural communication course in which listening is a primary focus of the participants in intercultural interviews. The project especially centers upon the student's perceptions of nonverbal cues as they affect the listening process in the interviews.

When interviewing someone from a culture outside the United States, it is stipulated that the person must have been in this country for no more than two years and preferably one year or less. The experience must be structured as two or more interview sessions, not just one. Different locations for each of the interview sessions are encouraged. Activities other than simply sitting across the table in a classroom or lounge are urged, also. Meeting in the university center, going out to eat at an informal restaurant, or inviting the person over for lunch are examples of varied situation which appear to facilitate the desired experiences intended for the project. Two types of information are sought from the intercultural interviews. One type is the information exchanged by the two participants about the culture and communication process of the respective cultures. A second type of information is what is gained by observing and reflecting upon the actual communication experience in the interview. Listening and, in particular, the affect of certain nonverbal cues on listening, is an aspect emphasized. To help the student interviewer gain insight into how the communication is going, suggestions are given as to how to focus on the nonverbal cues in the interview (Ostermeier, 1993, March, 4).

The author of this paper has been collecting data on the student experiences as an on-going project and has reported on two aspects at the past two ILA conventions. At the 1992 conference, data was presented which reflected upon the over-all responses of the student interviewers to the intercultural interview experience.

### Data Reported in 1992

The information may be summarized as follows:

1. The Interviewers:
  - a. Of 170 students enrolled in sections of the course, 59 (35%) elected to engage in the interview experience.
  - b. 36 females and 23 males participated.

- c. Males showed a 2 to 1 preference to interview males; females were nearly evenly divided between males and females.
2. The Interviewees:
  - a. Represented 32 countries primarily from Africa, Asia, Latin America, Middle East. and Europe.
  - b. 34 males were interviewed, 25 females.
3. Four major themes emerged in statements by the interviewer on nonverbal questionnaire and/or in the paper.
  - a. Gained more insight into the culture than would through reading or listening to lectures alone.
  - b. Perceived a reduction in inaccurate views about other cultures as well as a reduction in prejudice.
  - c. Developed personal friendships which often continued beyond the interview project.
  - d. Achieved greater appreciation of listening skills needed to listen interculturally (Ostermeier. 1992, March).

#### Data Reported in 1993

At the 1993 conference, a paper was presented which described the nature of the student interviewer's perceptions of the nonverbal cues in the intercultural interviews. A brief summary of major findings presented in that paper follows (Ostermeier. March, 1993):

A total of 103 individuals from cultures outside the United States, namely African, Asian, European, Latin American, and the Middle East were interviewed by American university students. Each of the American interviewers described his/her perceptions of five nonverbal cues possibly employed by an international person on a five point scale which indicated the degree of similarity or difference with the behavior of Americans. The five nonverbal cues were: voice, space, eye behavior, facial expressions, and hand gestures. In addition, the American students were to elaborate on the nature of any differences.

Students reported they perceived the following characteristics for the cultural areas of the world indicated.

##### Middle Eastern

- very different with hand gestures (more expansive, different).
- " " eye behavior (More eye contact and gaze).
- " " use of voice (faster rate).
- " " facial expressions (more emotion and smiling).
- moderately different in use of space (closer).

##### Latin American

- very different use of voice (softer volume, slower rate).
- " " eye behavior (less eye contact).
- " " facial expressions (less emotion, more smiling)
- moderately different in space (closer).
- " " gestures (fewer, smaller in size).

##### African

- very different use of voice (softer volume, slower rate).
- moderately different use of space (closer).
- " " eye behavior (less eye gaze).

- moderately different facial expressions (more smiling).
- " " gestures (no consensus on descriptors).

#### Asian

- moderately different use of voice (softer, slower in rate).
- " " facial expressions (less emotion, more smiling).
- slightly different use of space (closer).
- " " eye behavior (less eye contact and gaze).
- " " gestures (fewer in number and type, smaller in size).

#### European

- slightly different in voice (softer, faster rate).
- " " space (closer).
- " " eye behavior (more eye contact and gaze).
- " " facial expressions (less emotion, more smiling).
- " " gestures (no consensus on descriptors).

It was apparent that American student interviewers perceived differences in various degrees in the use of nonverbal cues by the international persons (the interviewees). It was also evident that the differences in cues varied in magnitude of impact depending on the particular cultural area of the world, ranging from the Middle East exhibiting the most, to the Latin Americans, Africans, Asians, and the Europeans the least.

#### Purpose of this Paper

The focus of this paper is to report and discuss the observations of American student interviewers as to their perceptions of the impact of differences in meanings for the specified nonverbal cues on listening in intercultural interviews.

#### Nonverbal Cues in Intercultural Listening

Prior to assessing the operation of nonverbal cues in listening in the intercultural interviews, a brief picture of what the literature says about nonverbal cues is warranted. A brief account will now be presented of the nature of nonverbal cues in the communication process, the significance of nonverbal cues in intercultural communication and, in particular, in intercultural listening, and the extent of the impact of the use of nonverbal cues and/or meanings for those cues across different cultures.

It is noted that while verbal languages are primarily informative, nonverbal languages are usually relational or meta-communicational (telling us something about the communication situation). Competence in nonverbal languages is equivalent to that in verbal languages; it is the user's knowledge of the codes and when they are appropriately used... You are competent in kinesics, haptics, proxemics, etc., to the extent that you: 1) know what behaviors are appropriate for a given relationship; 2) know when someone is not behaving correctly; and 3) understand the message encoded into a particular behavior (Borden,

1991, 173-174.

Thomlison (1991, 112) maintains that the use of voice and body language take on special significance when cultural variations are involved because they are predominantly used unconsciously. An awareness of nonverbal factors will significantly increase listening effectiveness since they play such a dominant role in the communication process.

Oludaja (1992, March, 11) goes on to indicate that nonverbal behaviors are the most fundamental means of relating and conveying meanings, particularly in cross cultural encounters. While certain nonverbal behaviors have been identified as universal in their expressive modes, meanings are not universal. Hence, much misunderstanding can occur in cross-cultural communication if communicators fail to give due attention to all available cues. In order to minimize the occurrence of misunderstandings, the cross-cultural communicator should make a genuine effort to listen with his ears, with his eyes, and with his heart.

Martin and Hammer (1989) studied a variety of cultures and identified those nonverbal behaviors most often associated with communication competence. The three nonverbal behaviors most strongly associated in cultures were direct eye contact, listening carefully, and smiling. Those three nonverbal behaviors were consistently found to be much more important than any other in making a successful impression in a foreign culture.

According to Richmond, McCroskey, and Payne (1991, 308) the nonverbal behaviors of a culture are as important, if not more important, to understanding the culture as are the language of the culture. In fact, many believe the study of the nonverbal behavior of various cultures is much more valuable to the American who may need to travel widely than is the study of foreign languages.

This brief examination not only emphasizes the importance of the use of nonverbal cues in the intercultural communication process but also indicates the potential adverse impact they can have in listening to someone from a different culture.

#### The Five Nonverbal Cues

The preceding section of the paper has looked at nonverbal cues in general. At this point information will be presented concerning the potential for misunderstanding with the five nonverbal cues which were the focus of the student intercultural interview project - voice, conversational space, eye behavior, facial expressions, and hand gestures.

Discussing one aspect of voice, Lee and Baxter (1992, 384) point out that the effect of speech rate on perceptions of speaker credibility depends on the cultural background of the audience and the gender of the speaker. In Korea relatively unfavorable source credibility judgments result when a male speaker communicates rapidly, whereas in the United States the opposite result is obtained. For females, on the other hand, there are few statistically significant effects of speech

rate on the judgements of speaker credibility.

Levine and Adelman (1993) offer observations concerning three of the five nonverbal cues - conversational space, eye behavior, and facial expressions. Less space in the American culture may be associated with either greater intimacy or aggressive behavior. A person whose "space" has been intruded upon by another may feel threatened and react defensively. In cultures where close physical contact is acceptable and even desirable, Americans may be perceived as cold and distant (109-110). Eye contact is important because insufficient or excessive eye contact can create communication barriers. In relationships, it serves to show intimacy, attention, and influence. Patterns of eye contact are different across cultures. Some Americans feel uncomfortable with the "gaze" that is sometimes associated with Arab or Indian communication patterns. Yet too little eye contact may also be viewed negatively, because it may convey a lack of interest, inattention, or even mistrust. In contrast, in many other parts of the world (especially in Asian countries), a person's lack of eye contact toward an authority figure signifies respect and deference (106-108). Our faces reveal emotions and attitudes, but we should not attempt to "read" people from other cultures as we would "read" someone from our own culture. The fact that members of one culture do not express their emotions as openly as do members of another culture does not mean that they do not experience emotions. Rather, there are cultural restraints on the amount of nonverbal expressiveness permitted. For example, in public and more formal situations many Japanese do not show their emotions as freely as Americans do (105-106).

Pertaining to gestures, Carbaugh (1990, 343) states that body alignment, body positioning and body movement (including gestures) are not only different in form and amount but they may not be synchronized with speech in the same way. It should be apparent that there is cultural variability in the ways that verbal and nonverbal modes of communication function together in the regulation of talk. And the contributions of the listener to such regulation will vary in keeping with the differences in the over-all system.

The preceding affirms the strong potential for misunderstandings with the five nonverbal cues. Poyatos (1988, 83-86) reinforces the complexity of this when he explains that there are actually three forms of cross cultural misunderstanding - misinterpretation, partial comprehension, and lack of comprehension. The first form is where the listener creates a different meaning for the nonverbal cue than the communicator. The second occurs when a sign is incompletely understood, ranging from a slightly wrong interpretation to one that contains only a minimal fraction of the intended meaning. The third form of misunderstanding takes place when a listener fails to attribute any meaning or even fails to perceive the sign.

#### Effects of Nonverbal Cues on Intercultural Listening - Results

American university student interviewers completed the Nonverbal Communication Questionnaire - Interviewing Someone from Another Culture (see Appendix A). While data generated from all parts of the

questionnaire are used to some extent in the discussion of the results presented in this paper, the responses to 2 c and 2 d are the primary focus. Cultural areas of the world represented in the sample of 103 were: Africa (13), Asia (44), Europe (24), Latin America (14), and the Middle East (8).

### Use of Voice

For the 103 international persons interviewed for this project, 78.6% of the American student interviewers volunteered comments concerning how they perceived their listening was affected by the voice of the international person.

- 1) Positively or negatively how was their listening affected?
  - a) 35.8% It was easier to listen.
  - b) 55.6% It was more difficult to listen.
  - c) 8.6% The voice had no impact either way.
- 2) For those who found it easier to listen, what explanations were given for this assessment?
  - a) 86.2% Their voice encouraged me to listen more intently.
  - b) 13.8% Their voice more effectively revealed their feelings.
- 3) For those finding it more difficult to listen:
  - a) 40% It was too much effort to concentrate.
  - b) 20% I missed too much of what was said.
  - c) 15.5% I couldn't hear what the person was saying.
  - d) 11.1% The tone of voice was too threatening.
  - e) 6.7% It caused me to feel tense.
  - f) 6.7% It conveyed disinterest to me.
- 4) Major forms of impact on listening according to cultural area of the world of the international interviewee:
  - a) All of the responses about Africans under "easier to listen" were in the category 2a "encouraged me to listen".
  - b) Under "more difficult to listen", all of the responses but one under 3d "threatening tone" were describing Middle Easterners. All of the responses under 3c "couldn't hear" pertained to Asians.
- 5) The American interviewers stated the softer voice and slower rate made it easier to listen to Africans but said the same characteristics made it more difficult with Latin Americans. The faster rate made it more difficult to listen to Middle Easterners. The interviewers placed the Asians in two opposite categories. Over one-third of the American interviewers claimed the softer volume and slower rate of the Asians made it easier to listen to them while nearly two-thirds found it more difficult to listen.

### Conversational Space

A total of 62.1% of the interviewers expressed an observation as to whether and how the use of space in the conversations affected listening to the international person.

- 1) How was listening affected by the use of conversational space?
  - a) 9.4% Their use of space made it easier to listen.
  - b) 48.4% It made it more difficult.
  - c) 42.2% Use of space had no noticeable impact.

- 2) If it was easier to listen, why was this so?
  - a) 50% Meanings were communicated more effectively.
  - b) 30% It expressed closeness with me.
  - c) 20% It helped me feel more relaxed.
- 3) Of those finding space made it more difficult to listen:
  - a) 58.1% It made me feel uncomfortable, uneasy.
  - b) 19.3% It affected my concentration, it was distracting.
  - c) 16.1% It intimidated me.
  - d) 6.5% It expressed disinterest in me.
- 4) Major forms of impact related to cultural area:
  - a) All of the responses but two under "more difficult to listen" about Asians were in category 3a "made me feel uncomfortable, uneasy". All of the responses about Middle Easterners were under 3b or 3c "distracting or intimidated me".
- 5) The American interviewers perceived the closer conversational space made it easier to listen to Africans but more difficult to listen to Latin Americans. While a majority of the interviewers (60%) observed no impact on listening due to the slightly closer spacial distance for Asians, none of the interviewers who said it had an affect found it made it easier to listen. The entire 40% found it more difficult.

#### Eye Behavior

Expressing observations about the affect of eye behavior on listening were 54.4% of the American interviewers.

- 1) How was listening affected by eye behavior?
  - a) 44.65% It made it easier to listen.
  - b) 44.65% It made it more difficult.
  - c) 10.7% It had no impact.
- 2) Of those finding it easier to listen:
  - a) 36% It encouraged me to put more effort into my listening.
  - b) 24% It held my attention better.
  - c) 16% It made me feel more comfortable.
  - d) 12% It helped me to have more eye contact myself.
  - e) 12% It seemed to express more interest in me.
- 3) Of those finding it more difficult to listen:
  - a) 36% It made me feel uncomfortable.
  - b) 32% I felt threatened by direct eye contact.
  - c) 16% The lack of eye contact was distracting.
  - d) 12% It communicated disinterest in me.
  - e) 4% It was annoying to me.
- 4) Major forms of impact related to cultural area of the world:
  - a) All but one of the responses about Africans under "easier to listen" were in the category 2a "encouraged me to listen".
  - b) All of the responses under "more difficult to listen" about Middle Easterners and Europeans were 3a and 3b "expressed threat or made me uncomfortable". All of the responses about Asians were under 3c, 3d, and 3e "distracting, disinterested, annoying".
- 5) American interviewers said the slightly greater use of eye contact and slightly longer duration for eye contact made it

more difficult to listen to Europeans. The considerably more frequent eye contact and gazing by the Middle Easterners made it more difficult to listen. There was no consensus among interviewers on the ease/difficulty listening to Africans, Asians, or Latin Americans due to their use of eye behavior.

### Facial Expressions

A total of 53.4% of the interviewers volunteered comments about the affect of facial expressions on listening to international interviewees.

- 1) How was their listening affected by facial expression?
  - a) 49.1% Facial expressions made it easier to listen.
  - b) 34.5% It made it more difficult.
  - c) 16.4% It had no impact.
- 2) Of those who perceived listening was easier:
  - a) 33.4% It projected a special interest in me and what I was saying.
  - b) 25.9% It made me feel good.
  - c) 18.5% The feedback was especially helpful.
  - d) 14.8% It expressed a real concern for me as a person.
  - e) 3.7% It kept my attention.
  - f) 3.7% It made me feel more credible.
- 3) Of those finding it more difficult to listen:
  - a) 42.1% It distracted me from what was being said.
  - b) 36.8% It made me worry I would misinterpret their feelings.
  - c) 15.8% It didn't communicate interest to me.
  - d) 5.3% I felt less concern for her/him.
- 4) Major forms of impact related to cultural area of the world:
  - a) All of the responses under 3c "didn't communicate interest" under "made it more difficult" pertained to Asians.
  - b) All of the comments describing Europeans were under "easier to listen", either 2a "projected special interest" or 2b "made me feel good".
- 5) American interviewers felt the greater use of smiling by Africans and the showing of less emotion but greater use of smiling by Europeans made it easier to listen to those two cultural groups. On the other hand, the less frequent showing of emotion and the greater use of smiling by Asians was perceived to cause more difficulty for listening to them.

### Hand Gestures

Stating observations about the affect of hand gestures on listening were 59.2% of the American interviewers.

- 1) How was listening affected by the use of hand gestures?
  - a) 31.1% It made it easier to listen.
  - b) 24.6% It made it more difficult.
  - c) 44.3% It had no impact.
- 2) Of those who felt the gestures made it easier to listen:
  - a) 63.2% Their use expressed more complete meaning.
  - b) 26.3% It kept my attention and interest.
  - c) 10.5% It forced me to concentrate.

- 3) Of those who believed it made it more difficult:
  - a) 43.8% I was distracted by the hand gestures.
  - b) 37.5% I was distracted by the use of no gestures.
  - c) 12.5% It caused me to be confused about meanings.
  - d) 6.3% He/she seemed uncomfortable; made me uncomfortable.
- 4) Major forms of impact related to cultural area of the world:
  - a) All of the explanations under "made it easier to listen" directed toward Latin Americans were for category 2a "expressed more complete meaning". All but one for Europeans were in the same category. All of the comments under 2c "kept my attention and interest" were about Asians.
  - b) All of the comments under "more difficult to listen" expressed about Middle Easterners were for category 3a "distracted by gestures". All but one of those attributed to Asians were under 2b "distracted by no gestures".
- 5) The interviewers stated that when Asians did use hand gestures, while they were less frequent and smaller in size, it made it made it easier to listen to them. The excessive gesturing, more different in types, and more expansive in size made it more difficult to listen to Middle Easterners.

### Summary and Discussion of Results

#### Use of Voice:

- Overwhelmingly, the explanation given by those interviewers who found the use of voice made it easier to listen was that it encouraged them to listen more intently.
- Most interviewers, however, found the use of voice made it more difficult to listen.
- By a two to one margin the most frequent explanation for the difficulty was that it forced them to exert too much effort to listen.
- For those finding difficulty in listening, the result was far more likely to be an adverse effect on their understanding the message (expressed by 75% under 3a,b,c) rather than being perceived as something negative directed at them personally (25% under 3d,e,f).
- While the preceding observation can be made as a generalization, it was not a uniform effect for all cultural areas. The negative impression created by the voice of Middle Easterners was more likely to be considered by listeners as a negative feeling directed at them personally.
- Responses of American interviewers revealed that merely because two different cultural areas might be perceived as using their voice similarly, the effects on the American listeners may not be the same. For example, it was perceived that both Africans and Latin Americans used softer volume and slower rates. Yet, the Americans maintained these characteristics made it easier to

listen to Africans but more difficult to listen to Latin Americans. One possible explanation for this seemingly contradictory result is that obviously voice is only one nonverbal cue which interacts with other nonverbal cues as well as language. Perhaps the voice interacts in different ways or with different nonverbal cues for one culture than the other.

#### Use of Conversational Space:

- Most interviewers indicated the different meanings for the use of conversational space by international persons resulted in it being more difficult to listen to them. The margin was 4 to 1.
- For the smaller percentage of those saying it made it easier to listen, the most cited explanation by a 2 to 1 margin was that the use of space helped convey meanings more effectively.
- For those considering it more difficult to listen, the most cited explanation was that it made them feel uncomfortable or uneasy. Over-all, over 80% of these explanations claimed that the perceived negative affect was directed at them personally and not that it was an adverse reaction about what they were saying.

#### Use of Eye Behavior:

- Interviewers were almost evenly divided over whether the use of eye behavior made it easier or more difficult to listen.
- The most frequent explanation given for being easier to listen was that it encouraged them to put more effort into their listening.
- For those perceiving greater difficulty in listening, there were two equally mentioned explanations - "It made me feel uncomfortable" or "I felt threatened by direct eye contact". Once again, most of the statements (two-thirds) indicating an adverse effect on listening were perceptions of a negative reaction to them personally not perceptions of a negative response to what they were saying.
- For eye behavior, there was consistency between cultural areas using eye behavior in similar ways and the reaction of American interviewers. More frequent eye contact and eye contact of longer duration made it more difficult to listen to Middle Easterners and Europeans. There was no clear tendency toward "easier" or "more difficult" for Africans, Asians, and Latin Americans.

#### Use of Facial Expressions:

- Most interviewers suggested the use of facial expressions by international persons made it easier to listen.
- One-third of the interviewers believed it made it easier because the particular use of facial expressions projected a special interest in them and their comments. One-fourth said it made them feel good. In essence, nearly three-fourths of the explanations focused on how the listeners felt the facial

expressions affected them personally.

- For those who found difficulty in listening, they stated they found the facial expressions distracting or that the expressions caused them to worry about possibly misinterpreting the feelings of the international person.
- The greater use of smiling caused different results. Interviewers reported smiling made it easier to listen to Europeans and Africans but more difficult to listen to Asians.

#### Use of Hand Gestures:

- While most interviewers felt the use of gestures had little or no impact on listening, of those who felt it did have an affect, a slight majority said it made it easier to listen.
- For those saying it made it easier, by far the reason given was that it helped express more complete meaning for what was being communicated.
- Of those claiming the use of hand gestures made it more difficult, 80% stated their use caused a distraction. Either they were distracted by the gestures employed or were distracted because no gestures were employed!
- By cultural area, the most evident finding was that the over-all lack of gestures made it actually easier to listen to Asians but the over-all excessive use of gestures by Middle Easterners made it difficult to listen to them.

#### Overview of the Five Nonverbal Cues:

The type of nonverbal cue may make it easier or more difficult to listen. Listeners reported that differences in meanings for the use of voice and conversational space made it more difficult to listen to international persons. On the other hand, they felt differences in the meanings for facial expressions and hand gestures made it easier to listen. Differences in meanings for eye behavior did not result in clearly being a help nor a hindrance.

The adverse impact on listening related to differences in nonverbal cues may be in the perception of the listeners that something negative is being directed at them personally or it may be perceived as something negative directed at what they are saying. Either result, of course, could mean misunderstanding.

The differences in meanings for nonverbal cues appear more likely to make it easier or more difficult to listen to persons depending on the cultural area of the world. From this sample of interviews, differences in meanings for nonverbal cues are more likely to make it more difficult to listen to persons from the Middle East and Latin America. Differences in these cues seem to make it actually easier to listen to Africans.

## Conclusion

The experiences illustrated in this student project would indicate that the differences in meanings for nonverbal cues among cultures doesn't necessarily make it more difficult to listen to someone from another culture. At least in the perceptions of listeners, it may make it easier to listen by motivating the listener to listen more carefully, to increase the attentiveness of the listener, to cause the listener to feel the other person has more interest in them as a person and in what they say, and to encourage the listener to engage in more eye contact, thus, picking up more nonverbal cues possibly enabling them to more accurately understand the meanings. On the other hand, one should not minimize the frequent significant negative impact on the intercultural listener which differences in meanings for nonverbal cues can and do have in cross cultural communication. This situation typically results in making it more difficult to listen which leads to misunderstandings.

An intercultural interview project, such as the one which is the focus of this paper, appears to give university students the opportunity to "experience" principles in listening relevant to gaining effectiveness in intercultural listening situations. Responses of the students seem to indicate that the students perceive such an activity to be more meaningful than perhaps some of the other more traditional modes of university instruction.

Poyatos (1988, 101-102) may be capturing the essence of the task faced by faculty and students when he observes that it is not difference that makes for divisiveness; rather, it is the lack of appreciation for diversity that interferes with successful cross cultural communication.

APPENDIX A  
NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION QUESTIONNAIRE

Interviewing Someone From Another Culture

You should look over the following questionnaire items prior to having your interview sessions. This will enable you to be alert in your observations of these factors. Use one copy of this questionnaire to keep an on-going record after each interview. After your final interview, complete the second copy in final form typed or in ink and attach it to your paper.

Country/Culture \_\_\_\_\_ Sex \_\_\_\_\_ Estimated Age \_\_\_\_\_ Over 21? Yes No

Number of months the person has been in the United States? \_\_\_\_\_

**USE OF VOICE:**

1. Very Similar To Americans \_\_\_\_\_ Very Different \_\_\_\_\_

2. If the use of voice was different, check appropriate responses:

a. Volume \_\_\_\_\_ louder \_\_\_\_\_ softer than Americans  
Rate \_\_\_\_\_ faster \_\_\_\_\_ slower  
Tone \_\_\_\_\_ friendly \_\_\_\_\_ unfriendly

b. Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

c. What meanings were communicated to you by these differences?

d. In what ways do you feel these differences affected your listening to the other person?

**USE OF CONVERSATIONAL SPACE:**

1. Very Similar to Americans \_\_\_\_\_ Very Different \_\_\_\_\_

2. If the use of space was different, check appropriate responses:

a. Distance between us \_\_\_\_\_ closer \_\_\_\_\_ further away  
Changes in space \_\_\_\_\_ stayed same \_\_\_\_\_ moved around

b. Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

c. What meanings were communicated to you by these differences?

d. In what ways do you feel these differences affected your listening to the other person?

**USE OF EYES:**

1. Very Similar to Americans \_\_\_\_\_ Very Different \_\_\_\_\_

2. If the use of eyes was different, check appropriate responses:
- a. Frequency looking at me \_\_\_\_\_ more \_\_\_\_\_ less than Americans
  - Length of each glance \_\_\_\_\_ longer \_\_\_\_\_ shorter in time
  - Staring into my eyes \_\_\_\_\_ more \_\_\_\_\_ less
  - b. Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. What meanings were communicated to you by these differences?
  - d. In what ways do you feel these differences affected your listening to the other person?

**USE OF FACIAL EXPRESSIONS:**

1. Very Similar To Americans \_\_\_\_\_ Very Different \_\_\_\_\_

2. If facial expressions were different, check appropriate responses:
- a. Showing of emotion \_\_\_\_\_ more \_\_\_\_\_ less than Americans
  - Smiling \_\_\_\_\_ more \_\_\_\_\_ less
  - Showing interest \_\_\_\_\_ more \_\_\_\_\_ less
  - b. Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. What meanings were communicated to you by these differences?
  - d. In what ways do you feel these differences affected your listening to the other person?

**USE OF HAND GESTURES:**

1. Very Similar to Americans \_\_\_\_\_ Very Different \_\_\_\_\_

2. If hand gestures were different, check appropriate responses:
- a. Frequency \_\_\_\_\_ more \_\_\_\_\_ less than Americans
  - Types or kinds \_\_\_\_\_ more \_\_\_\_\_ less
  - Size \_\_\_\_\_ larger \_\_\_\_\_ smaller
  - b. Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. What meanings were communicated to you by these differences?
  - d. In what ways do you feel these differences affected your listening to the other person?

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