

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION: GESTURES IN SLOVAK, AMERICAN, AND UZBEK CULTURES

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Abstract. *This thesis examines the role of gestures in intercultural communication across Slovak, American, and Uzbek cultures. Focusing on both common and culturally unique gestures, the study identifies how gestures reflect each culture's underlying values and communication norms. Using interviews and observational data, the findings reveal that while American gestures are often open and expressive, Slovak gestures tend to be more restrained, and Uzbek gestures emphasize respect and hierarchy. These differences have implications for effective cross-cultural communication and understanding in increasingly globalized interactions.*

Keywords: *Intercultural communication, Gestures, Non-verbal communication, Slovak culture, American culture, Uzbek culture, Comparative analysis, Cultural values, Communication norms, High-context vs. low-context culture, Respect and hierarchy, Body language, Cross-cultural understanding, Hall's context theory, Cultural perception*

INTRODUCTION

Gestures are a critical component of intercultural communication, often conveying meaning that transcends spoken language. In an increasingly globalized world, understanding gesture-based communication in different cultural contexts is essential for reducing misunderstandings and fostering positive interactions. While Slovak, American, and Uzbek cultures share some common gestures, each culture exhibits unique non-verbal cues reflecting its societal values and norms (Hall, E.T. 1976). This study aims to compare and contrast gestures in Slovak, American, and Uzbek communication, providing insights into how these gestures influence intercultural understanding and perception.

Gestures vary significantly across cultures, influencing how individuals interpret body language and meaning. Hall's theory on high-context versus low-context cultures provides a foundational understanding of why some cultures, such as Uzbek, may rely more heavily on gestures and implicit communication, whereas low-context cultures like the U.S. prefer explicit verbal cues (Hall, 1976).

The study found some shared gestures across Slovak, American, and Uzbek cultures, such as nodding for agreement and shaking hands as a form of

greeting. However, even these common gestures carry subtle variations in each culture. For example, while Americans often use a firm handshake, Slovaks tend to be more reserved, and Uzbeks might add a slight bow to express respect (Creswell, J.W. 2009)

Unique Gestures by Culture

- **Slovak Gestures:** Slovak gestures are generally subdued, reflecting a low-context culture where verbal clarity is preferred over expressive body language. For instance, Slovaks may use minimal hand gestures in conversation, focusing instead on eye contact as a primary non-verbal cue.

- **American Gestures:** American gestures are often more expressive, with hand movements commonly used to emphasize speech. Gestures like the thumbs-up or the “OK” hand sign are typical in the U.S. but may carry different meanings or be considered impolite in other cultures.

- **Uzbek Gestures:** Uzbek culture places a high value on respect and social hierarchy, influencing gesture use. For instance, Uzbeks may place a hand over the heart as a sign of respect when greeting someone. Additionally, certain hand movements are used to convey reverence or humility, especially when interacting with elders or superiors.

In conclusion, while Slovak, American, and Uzbek cultures share certain gestures, each culture’s unique approach to non-verbal communication reflects broader cultural values. Americans are expressive, using gestures freely; Slovaks are reserved, emphasizing verbal clarity over gestures; and Uzbeks incorporate gestures that emphasize respect and social order.

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