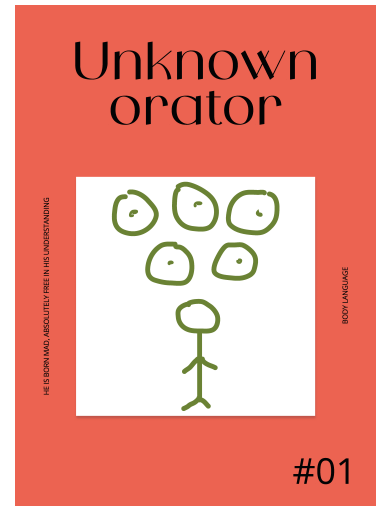


GESTURES OF GREETING: INTERCULTURAL FEATURES AND TRADITIONS

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GESTURES OF GREETING: INTERCULTURAL FEATURES AND TRADITIONS

Author: Mykola Ovcharov

ANNOTATION

This article presents a comparative analysis of greeting gestures as elements of nonverbal communication across different cultures of the world. The author examines a broad spectrum of traditional greeting forms — from nose touching among Arab peoples, the Inuit, and the Maori, to bows in Japan, India, and Thailand, cheek kisses in European and Latin American cultures, and distinctive hand gestures in the Philippines, Zambia, and Botswana. Particular attention is given to the cultural-historical origins of gestures and their semantic significance — spiritual, social, and hierarchical. The article argues for the necessity of intercultural awareness in nonverbal communication as a condition for mutual understanding, respect, and effective dialogue between representatives of different peoples.

KEYWORDS

greeting gestures, intercultural communication, nonverbal communication, cultural traditions, body language, bow, namaste, kunik, hong, handshake.

Greetings are an integral part of human communication in all cultures. However, the forms of greetings can vary significantly depending on the country and tradition. Let's take a look at some interesting and unusual greeting gestures from different parts of the world.

Nose touching

In some Arab countries, such as Oman and the UAE, it is customary to greet each other by rubbing noses together while shaking hands. A similar custom is also found among the Inuit of Canada and Greenland, where it is called "kunik." However, unlike the Arabs, the Inuit do not simply touch the tips of their noses, but press their nostrils to the other person's skin and inhale, as if "sucking" the skin.

In New Zealand Maori, this gesture is known as "hongi" and has deep spiritual significance. People press their noses and foreheads together and breathe in each other's breath, just as the god Tane-nui-a-Rangi breathed life into the first woman. This symbolizes the union of two people.

Showing tongue

In Tibet, people have long been greeting each other by sticking out their tongues. According to legend, this tradition originated with an evil king with a black tongue who lived in the 9th century. After his death, Buddhists believed that he could be reborn, so they began to show their tongues to prove that they were not the same tyrant. Now this gesture has become more symbolic and means respect and agreement.

Bows

Bows are common in many Asian countries, where they have their own characteristics. In Japan, there is a whole system of bows called "odjigi", where the depth of the bow and the posture (standing or kneeling) depends on the situation – business or personal, the level of respect for the interlocutor, the purpose (greeting, gratitude, apology, etc.).

When bowing while standing, Japanese people typically keep their feet together, their back straight, their arms at their sides (women can fold them in front), and do not look each other in the eye until the ritual is complete. For informal situations, a slight tilt of the body at 15° or even a simple nod of the head is sufficient, especially for foreigners. But formal events require deeper bows.

In India, Nepal, and Bangladesh, a similar gesture, "namaste," expresses respect and gratitude. Literally translated from Sanskrit, it means "I bow to you." Traditionally, the palms are folded in front of the chest, as if in prayer, and the head is slightly bowed. Nowadays, it is more common to say simply "namaste" without bowing, except when addressing elders or respected persons.

The Thai "wai" also means respect. The palms are folded together at chest level, the elbows are pressed together, the head is slightly bowed. This gesture is used to greet, say goodbye, apologize, or thank you. Its execution also has gradations depending on the age and status of the interlocutor.

Kisses on the cheek

Kisses on the cheek are common in many countries on different continents. In France, it is called "la biz", and the number of kisses varies from 1 to 4 depending on the region,

but most often there are two. Two kisses are also practiced in Spain, Brazil, Germany, Italy, Romania, Turkey, Tunisia. In Lebanon, Belgium, Egypt, the Netherlands – three kisses. And in Argentina, Chile, Peru they are limited to one.

In this case, you need to touch with your cheeks, not your lips, and make a light kiss sound. But it is not customary to kiss a person of the opposite sex everywhere. And which cheek to start touching with is a controversial matter. Parisians prefer the right, and Italians prefer the left. It is best to follow the locals' lead.

Hand gestures

In the Philippines, a gesture of respect for elders is “mano po” – instead of kissing, one places one's hand on one's forehead. In Botswana, a triple handshake is practiced: first, one supports one's right elbow with one's left hand and extends one's right hand for a shake, then clasps one's thumbs and returns to the starting position.

In Zambia, you can shake hands or simply fold your palms, clap your hands, and greet with the words “mulibwanji.” If you need to show more respect, sit down.

So, there are many interesting, and, at first glance, sometimes strange, greeting gestures in the world. They reflect the unique cultural characteristics and history of peoples. Awareness of these traditions will help you better understand each other, find a common language and avoid misunderstandings in intercultural communication. The main thing is to show sincerity and respect, because this is what lies at the heart of any greeting.

Red flags:

- Do not impose your usual greeting gestures if they are inappropriate in a certain context
- Avoid excessive physical contact, especially with unfamiliar people

Blue flags:

- Learn and respect greeting traditions in other cultures
- Be observant and pay attention to how locals greet you
- If you are not sure, ask how it is customary to greet someone so as not to offend anyone