Non-verbal Communication across Cultures: Gestures and Facial Expressions in Business Meetings in France and the Czech Republic

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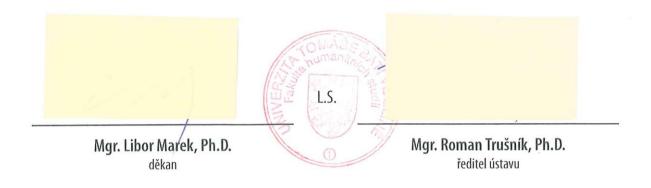
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ABSTRAKT

Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá výzkumem neverbální komunikace účastníků na obchodním jednání mezi firmami z Francie a z České republiky. Cílem této práce je vyhodnotit neverbální signály všech účastníků tohoto obchodního jednání, odhalit odlišnosti v jejich neverbální komunikaci a navrhnout doporučení pro budoucí komunikaci. Práce je rozdělena na teoretickou a analytickou část. Teoretická část přináší informace o interkulturní komunikaci a neverbální komunikaci. V analytické části této práce je pro analýzu neverbálních signálů všech účastníků jednání použito nezúčastněné kvalitativní pozorování. Na konci práce jsou uvedená doporučení na vylepšení neverbálního chování a neverbálních signálů, aby byla budoucí komunikace efektivnější.

Klíčová slova: neverbální komunikace, neverbální signály, interkulturní komunikace, komunikace, vyjednávání, obchodní schůzka

ABSTRACT

This bachelor's thesis is dealing with the research of non-verbal communication of participants of a business meeting between companies from France and from the Czech Republic. The goal of this thesis is to evaluate non-verbal signals of the participants of this business meeting, to present differences in their non-verbal communication and to state recommendations for future communication. The thesis is divided into theoretical and analytical part. The theoretical part provides information about intercultural communication and non-verbal communication. For the analytical part of this thesis, non-participant qualitative observation is used to analyse non-verbal signals of all of the participants who attended the meeting. Finally, recommendations on how to improve non-verbal behaviour and non-verbal signals are presented in order for the future communication to be more effective.

Keywords: non-verbal communication, non-verbal signals, intercultural communication, communication, negotiations, business meeting

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I hereby declare that the print version of my Bachelor's thesis and the electronic version of my thesis deposited in the IS/STAG system are identical.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

When hearing the term communication, most people probably imagine speaking, words, conversation etc. But communication is not only verbal. In fact, the most essential part of communication consists of non-verbal signals. Through gestures, facial expressions, body movements and voice we are able to catch and decode enormous amount of information which helps us to uncover not only the intentions of a sender, but also his emotional state.

Culture has the biggest influence on non-verbal communication. Every culture has its own system of non-verbal signals, own norms on which non-verbal behaviour is appropriate in certain situations and own system of taboos and rude signals. The problem could occur, when two cultures with different non-verbal standards meet. Without particular intercultural training, collision of these two different cultures might end up in a disaster, especially when this collision happens in a business environment. In international businesses, managers meet with different cultures on a daily basis. Proper intercultural training could help in increasing the success of a company as well as it could help managers to understand their colleagues and business partners from different cultures better.

The theoretical part of this thesis consists of two main chapters – intercultural communication and non-verbal communication. In the theoretical part, both of these concepts are explained. In the analytical part of this thesis, non-verbal behaviour of managers of two companies is described and analysed. These companies are from France and the Czech Republic and one of their meetings was chosen to be analysed in this thesis. The last chapter of the analytical part of this thesis is dedicated to recommendations on how these two countries should communicate.

The aim of this thesis is to prove that non-verbal behaviour plays an important role in business lives of managers and to find out, whether it is important to implement knowledge of non-verbal signals into intercultural training of businesses dealing with partners from different cultures.

I. THEORY

1 INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

In a world with over 200 countries it is relatively normal to meet and interact with different cultures. Globalization and the invention of the internet and its fast expansion among the world are huge reasons why it is so easy to meet with other cultures. In business, interaction with other nations and cultures is in fact desirable. Training in intercultural communication and experience with other cultures leads to a better understanding and stronger relationships with business partners from other countries (Lewis 2006, 27-28).

Průcha (2010, 13-16, 49) defines intercultural communication as verbal and non-verbal interaction between people from various cultures, ethnicities, nationalities and religions. This field could be described as descriptive as it is based on many observations of intercultural behaviour as well as it is based on many scientific researches including many individuals from various cultures and ethnicities. Intercultural communication is also an interdisciplinary study as it includes linguistic, psycholinguistic, ethnological terms and terms from comparative sociology.

1.1 Culture

The most essential term in intercultural communication is culture. Culture is a combination of human beliefs, knowledge, art, ideas, customs and religion. Culture contains everything created by humans as well as their behaviour and social norms and is learned from our parents and the community we live in. It also teaches us how to interact with other people and how to act in certain situations. Culture also influences how we decode the behaviour of other people (Brunet-Thornton 2010, 8).

Every culture consists of two components – external and internal. Kurylo (2013, 27) presents a method of a Culture Iceberg. External components are represented by the visible part of the iceberg, the part that is above the water. Therefore, external components are those features of culture which are more visible, more transparent and relatively easy to observe for someone outside of that particular culture. These components are also called the surface culture. Typical examples of external components are art, cuisine, religion, architecture and how people dress. The underwater, non-visible part of an iceberg represents internal components. This part is also called the deep culture. Internal components are less visible and they might require a lot of research and observations to be understood and acquired. Typical examples of internal components are language, technology, perception of nature, use of weapons etc.

Typical features of every culture are cultural patterns. Those patterns are defined as a typical behaviour in standard situations performed by members of a certain culture (Strnadová 2011, 413). They could be viewed as norms or rules which provide information about what is and what is not appropriate in certain situations, including behaviour, expressing emotions, dress code, dining etiquette etc. (Kurylo 2013, 28). Differences in cultural patterns of two or more cultures could lead to misunderstandings and inappropriate behaviour. Although some cultures would appreciate imitating cultural patterns of their culture and they would probably perceive it as an act of kindness and politeness, other cultures might be offended by this (Lewis 2006, 93-96).

Individual cultures are not separated from each other. They are constantly influencing and affecting each other. This process is known as acculturation. Acculturation is not only a process of taking over some features of other cultures, but also omitting certain features. It is also important to state, that two or more cultures could be present within one area. In such cases, one culture is more dominant than the other. Assimilation means that a dominant culture is taking over and blending with the submissive one (Strnadová 2011, 415).

Every culture is diverse – it could have different rules, patterns of behaviour, social norms, beliefs etc. While dealing with people from different cultures, we may sometimes experience a culture shock. Culture shock is a violation of those rules and beliefs. It is a behaviour that is considered inappropriate and rude in our culture. For example a German business man might experience a culture shock while negotiating with a French businessman as German culture is known for its punctuality and perfectionism while French people have a different time perception and it is common for them to arrive late for a meeting (Lewis 2006, 19).

1.2 Dimensions of Culture

The first person who distinguished the six dimensions of culture was Geert Hofstede. He is a Dutch social psychologist and he is specialising in cultural differences in organizations (Hofstede 2020). Those dimensions are power distance, uncertainty avoidance, masculinity versus femininity, individualism versus collectivism, indulgence versus restraint and long-term versus short-term orientation (Hofstede 2011, 8).

1.2.1 Power Distance

Power distance represents the distribution of power and its perception and acceptance by the members of certain organizations. This dimension works with a fact that power is distributed unequally and applies this to the whole societies (Hofstede 2011, 9).

Hofstede (2011, 9-10) presents two extremes of the power distance dimension, but the actual situation of a certain society could be somewhere in between. Power distance is measured by PDI – power distance index (Strnadová 2011, 438).

Low power distance societies are typical for their tolerance. The borders of their hierarchical system are blending together and are not that strict. The social life in those societies is based on consent and voting (Hofstede 2011, 9). Everyone should be equal and have the same rights. In business, management make their decisions based on a preceding consultation (Strnadová 2011, 439). Low power distance countries are for example Denmark, Ireland and New Zealand (Průcha 2010, 35).

Large power distance societies are described by Hofstede (2011, 9-10) as societies with a very strong and strict hierarchy. These societies are based on obedience and respect. Authorities command and subordinates must obey and listen to the orders. The place in the hierarchy in those societies is given and cannot be changed (Hofstede 2011, 9-10). Managers make their decisions without any consultation (Strnadová 2011, 439). Countries with large power distance are Latin, Asian, African and East European countries (Hofstede 2011, 10).

1.2.2 Uncertainty Avoidance

Uncertainty avoidance describes to what extent the members of a certain society accept uncertainty and ambiguity. It tells us whether the society is capable of dealing with unknown and unfamiliar situations and how much stress is caused by those situations (Hofstede 2011, 10). Uncertainty avoidance is measured by UAI – uncertainty avoidance indicator (Strnadová 2011, 439).

Weak uncertainty avoidance countries are tolerant towards controversial ideas and actions. They are not afraid of unknown situations and chaos and they are more comfortable dealing with them. They are willing to accept new ideas. They usually do not like rules and it is hard for them to obey (Hofstede 2011, 10-11). There are different points of view on what behaviour is appropriate and correct, so usually no criticism or punishment follows (Triandis 2004, 92). Countries with weak uncertainty avoidance are

for example Thailand (Triandis 2004, 92), English speaking and Nordic countries (Hofstede 2011, 11).

Hofstede (2011, 10-11) classifies countries with strong uncertainty avoidance as more emotional. Members of those societies do not like changes, they need to have strict rules which they can follow and there is a punishment and criticism when the rules are not followed (Triandis 2004, 92). Unknown situations are stressful for them and they try to avoid them. Employees prefer working in larger organizations and they are usually avoiding competition (Strnadová 2011, 439). Those countries are Eastern and Central European countries, German speaking countries and Japan (Hofstede 2011, 10-11). According to Triandis (2004, 92), the most extreme case of strong uncertainty avoidance culture is Afghanistan.

1.2.3 Masculinity vs. Femininity

Hofstede (2011, 12-13) characterizes this dimension as a distribution of power and values among genders and how is this distribution accepted by the society.

There is a strict distinction between male and female population in masculine societies. Men should be the strong, protective and ambitious part of society. There is no place for showing weakness. Masculine nations are quantity oriented (Hofstede 2011, 12-13). Typical examples of masculine nations are Japan, Italy, Mexico and German speaking countries (Průcha 2010, 35).

In feminine countries, the distinction between men and women role is not that visible. Those societies have tolerance for the weak and are supportive about them. Emotions play a vital role in feminine societies (Hofstede 2011, 12-13). Netherlands, Sweden, Norway, Denmark and Finland are typical examples of feminine nations (Průcha 2010, 35).

1.2.4 Individualism vs. Collectivism

This dimension determines to what degree people need a feeling of independence. Strong personal opinion and independence are key features of individualist countries (Hofstede 2011, 11-12). People in those societies are not afraid of conflicts and arguments and they tend to be more aggressive than people in collectivist cultures (Triandis 2004, 90). Individualism is typical for well developed countries such as the USA, the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, Belgium and Netherlands (Průcha 2010, 35).

Collectivist cultures put a strong emphasis on groups. It is common to take care about other people as people are used to live in larger social groups (Hofstede 2011, 11-12). Collectivists pay more attention to the external factors and group goals are the most

important for them (Triandis 2004, 90). Less developed and Eastern countries such as Guatemala, Ecuador, Pakistan and South Korea are considered collectivist countries (Průcha 2010, 35). Triandis (2004, 92) also emphasizes that collectivist and strong uncertainty avoidance features are often correlating.

1.2.5   Indulgence vs. Restraint

According to Hofstede (2011, 15-16), this dimension is connected to happiness of the people living in a certain country.

Indulgent societies need a feeling of freedom. They want to enjoy their lives and be happy. Indulgence is typical for wealthy countries with well educated citizens. Those countries are Western European countries and South and North America (Hofstede 2011, 15-16).

Restraint countries are usually less happy then indulgent countries. People believe that their future is given to them and they do not have any possibility to change it. Restraint countries have lower birth rate and are usually relatively wealthy countries too. Typical examples of restraint countries are Asia, Eastern Europe and Muslim countries (Hofstede 2011, 15-16).

1.2.6   Long-Term vs. Short-Term Orientation

This dimension is highly related to an economic growth. It was originally named as *Confucian Work Dynamism*, but it was renamed by Hofstede to the term we use nowadays (Hofstede 2011, 13).

Short-term oriented cultures are not very interested in future. The most important thing for them is past and present. Traditions play a vital part in the lives of people living in those cultures. Short-term oriented countries are usually very poor and have slow economic growth. Typical examples of those countries are Australia and countries of the African continent (Hofstede 2011, 13-15).

Future is a vital thing for long-term oriented societies. People living in those countries are ready to perform tasks that will show their effect in the future (Průcha 2010, 36), past and present are not that important for them (Hofstede 2011, 13). Traditions are readjusted according to a current situation. Long-term orientation is characteristic for countries with a fast economic growth and typical examples of those countries are East Asian countries and countries of Central Europe (Hofstede 2011, 14-15).

1.3 Communication

Communication is a phenomena occurring every day and almost all the time in a life of every person. It is a constant transmission of information between two or more people. (Mohammed Sherfu 2005, 44).

Communication could be one-way or two-way. Two-way communication is a transmission of information between two or more people. This type of communication is an ongoing process of exchanging the roles of a sender and a receiver. One-way communication could, for example, occur in a case when a sender is leaving a voicemail message (Eunson 2007, 28).

Communication includes an endless list of areas. Some of them are for instance non-verbal communication, negotiation skills, interpersonal skills, intercultural communication, communication skills in a workplace and many others (Eunson 2007, 13).

1.3.1   Spheres of Communication

Spheres of communication could be also sometimes described as soft skills or transferable skills (Eunson 2007, 14) and some of these skills could be developed and trained, for example our knowledge and our conscious behaviour (Mühleisen 2008, 23-24). Eunson (2007, 14-15) distinguishes six types of those spheres – intrapersonal, interpersonal, group or team, workplace or organisational, public or media and intercultural. We could easily distinguish the different types of spheres of communication, however, they could also easily overlap.

Intrapersonal communication is communication within ourselves. It usually takes place in our minds, but it could sometimes also have a verbal form. It is usually represented by internal monologues and our thoughts. Interpersonal communication is an interaction between two people. Group or team communication usually involves more than two people and is characteristic for a communication in a workplace within members of a group or department. Communication between two or more groups inside the organisational structure of a company is called workplace or organisational communication. Public or media communication takes place while a company is interacting with the outside world. Intercultural communication is a communication between people within a various cultural, religious, ethnical and racial groups (Eunson 2007, 15).

1.3.2   Communication Process

Communication process consists of six elements – sender, receiver, message, channel, feedback and noise (Pathak 2014, 7).

A sender is a person that provides a certain message. He wants to be heard, accepted and understood. The sender is projecting his emotions, personality, beliefs and thoughts into the message he is sending.

On the opposite side of the communication process stands a receiver. The receiver catches the message provided by the sender and then decodes it. Pathak (2014, 7) points out, that both sender and receiver could be providers of a message and that these roles constantly shift from one another during the communication.

A message that is provided by the sender has two forms – verbal and non-verbal. It could have a form of concrete words and ideas, which are quite easy to understand. On the other hand, this message might have a form of non-verbal signals, which could be harder to decode (Strnadová, 2011, 33). A message spreads through a communication channel. There are several types of channels – verbal and non-verbal, written and oral, face-to-face and electronic (Pathak 2014, 12).

A feedback is a certain reaction to a message that was received. It helps to provide information on how and to what extent the original message was understood and decoded.

All factors that contribute to distortion of a message are called noises. These noises could affect every element of the communication process, not just the message itself. These noises might come from a surrounding environment (loud music, crowded place, uncomfortable weather conditions) or they may be psychical or physical (stress, nervousness, problems with sight or hearing).

1.3.3   Barriers of Communication

The purpose of communication is to spread the message among others. However, this message might not always be interpreted correctly by the receiver. This situation is called the communication breakdown (Pathak 2014, 5).

The receiver generally catches and remembers better those kinds of information that are new, extraordinary or exciting. Information that is presented at the beginning and at the end of the message is also easier to remember for the receiver (Strnadová 2011, 29).

The usage of different languages may be another obstacle in communication. In order for communication to be successful, both sender and receiver should use the same language. Usage of different languages could contribute to misinterpretation of the

message or it might block the message completely. When one of the participants of the communication has a different level of that particular language, it could be a barrier too. It is important to adjust the level of language, if necessary. Another barrier of communication might be a usage of jargon or slang. It could be hard for the receiver to decode such messages if he comes from a different social or professional background and therefore is not used to some special terms or slang words. For instance, these barriers may occur while a person with an average education is talking to a lawyer or a doctor (Lunenburg 2010, 4).

Physical barriers could also interfere with the content of the message transmitted in communication. Loud music, a telephone ringing, loud traffic are examples of physical barriers. These barriers could be often relatively easily removed (Lunenburg 2010, 4).

2 NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION

Human communication consists of verbal communication, non-verbal communication and the tone of the voice. Only 7 percent of human communication is based on verbal messages, 38 percent of human communication consists of the tone of the voice and the other types of non-verbal communication form 55 percent of human communication (Brown 2018, 7).

The highest amount of non-verbal signals is unintentional and we learn the vast majority of them in the early stages of our lives by imitating our parents. The most important carriers of non-verbal messages are head and face as this body part is the most perceived in communication. The second carrier is movements of hands and the least perceived body part are legs (Strnadová 2011, 133-134).

Non-verbal communication is as important as verbal communication because people communicate their messages through words and support them with non-verbal signals (Lunenburg 2010, 1). Those signals are described by various types of non-verbal devices such as kinesics, proxemics, chronemics, oculesics, vocalics, haptics as well as signals related to the posture of the sender or the receiver, what they are wearing etc. Signals such as silence and sound symbols such as grunting or mumbling are also considered to be part of non-verbal communication (Darn 2005, 1).

2.1 Functions

Non-verbal communication has multiple functions. One of the most significant functions is a complementary function (A. Hans and E. Hans 2015, 50). Non-verbal signals complement a verbal message, for instance, when someone taps on the table to emphasise the verbal message (Strnadová 2011, 134). Complementary non-verbal signals, if perceived as genuine, give credibility to the verbal message (Hogan 2008, 39).

Another function is substitution. People can sometimes substitute a verbal message by non-verbal signals (A. Hans and E. Hans 2015, 50). This might occur in situations where we get very emotional, such as when we express happiness by jumping around and smiling (Strnadová 2011, 134). Substitution could be also observed in situations where the verbal message is somehow interrupted by a noise (A. Hans and E. Hans 2015, 50). In such situations a nod of the head could be used instead of a verbal message "yes" (A. Hans and E. Hans 2015, 50).

Repetition is another significant function of non-verbal communication. Repetition might be observed in situations when an individual is verbally expressing some direction

and supporting this verbal message by pointing in the same direction by his finger (A. Hans and E. Hans 2015, 50).

It is important to list the regulatory function of non-verbal communication. Non-verbal communication helps us to constantly control the verbal message and to evaluate whether the non-verbal signals correspond to and support the verbal message of the person we are communicating with (Strnadová 2011, 134).

Contradiction is another non-verbal function. Contradictive non-verbal signals could be conscious or unconscious and they are usually helping us to expose when somebody is lying to us (Strnadová 2011, 134). They could also sign nervousness or disagreement (Hogan 2008, 39). Those signals could be shaking hands or frequent blinking (Wilson 2016, 49). When the information presented verbally and non-verbally is in conflict, people will usually give more credit to the non-verbal signals (Hogan 2008, 39).

Another function is accenting or moderating. This function is designed to improve the verbal message and is used to emphasize, moderate and/or soften the verbal message (Hogan 2008, 42).

2.2 Kinesics

Kinesics is a study of the use of gestures, movements of the head, facial expressions and any other movement of the body (A. Hans and E. Hans 2015, 47). Those movements are highly individual and specific for every person (Strnadová 2011, 137).

2.2.1   Gestures and Movements of the Head and Body

Gestures are signals that are socially learned and they are represented by the movements of a particular body part (Wilson 2016, 17). The main purpose of gestures is to share information interpreted by a movement. Gestures are not only used to express our feelings. Gestures also help us to describe a shape of an object or a person by mimicking its characteristic shape or movement (Tegze 2003, 254).

Gestures could be perceived from two criteria. The first criteria is their unambiguity. Unambiguous gestures are those gestures that have a clear meaning and do not need any further explanation from the person performing them. Ambiguous gestures could be interpreted in two or more ways. They need to be supported verbally in order to clarify their meaning. For example an index finger pointing down on the floor could mean that a person should come closer to the performer of that particular gesture or that an object that the other person is carrying should be placed right at this position (Tegze 2003, 254).

There are four categories of gestures – emblems, illustrators, manipulators and regulators. Emblems are movements that are mostly used and recognised by all members of a certain culture (Ekman 1999, 39) and they are understood the most easily by the receivers (Ekman and Friesen 1969, 64). They are those types of gestures that have a direct verbal translation or dictionary definition and they are used intentionally; the sender is always aware of using emblems (Ekman and Friesen 1969, 63). They could have a different meaning in different cultures (A. Hans and E. Hans 2015, 47), however, multicultural emblems also exist (Ekman 1999, 39).

Illustrators are those types of gestures that accompany and illustrate the verbal message (A. Hans and E. Hans 2015, 47). They are learned in childhood primarily by imitation (Ekman and Friesen 1969, 69) and their role is to accompany the verbal message typically by using hands, however, head or even feet might be involved (Ekman 1999, 41). Illustrators are perceived by receivers as a sign of friendliness and sociability and "*they command the listener's attention*" (Ekman 1999, 43). They can repeat, substitute, contradict or argument the information provided by the sender (Ekman and Friesen 1969, 69).

Manipulators are performed when some part of the body or face is in some way manipulating another part of the body or face, for example scratching, biting, pressing, etc. (Ekman 1999, 43). Manipulators could be also targeted towards other individuals or objects (A. Hans and E. Hans 2015, 47), such as playing with a pen or a phone. These movements are extremely frequent among each individual. Most of them seem to have no purpose or goal and they are performed with a minimum awareness. Manipulators often have a changing frequency and are very individual. For example their increasing frequency is a sign of nervousness and discomfort for one individual, another individual could perform them while being completely comfortable and relaxed (Ekman 1999, 43).

"*Regulators are acts which maintain and regulate the back-and-forth nature of speaking and listening between two or more interactants.*" (Ekman and Friesen 1969, 82). A head nod is the most common type of regulators. It could express consent or that the receiver understands the information given by the sender. Regulators are not necessarily performed consciously but the performer is usually able to repeat them if asked (Ekman and Friesen 1969, 69-82).

The last category of gestures is emotional expressions. "*Emotional expressions are involuntary signals which provide important information to others.*" (Ekman 1999, 44). Those expressions could occur in any situation – in communication between two or more

individuals as well as in non-personal events such as watching something sad or beautiful etc. Emotional expressions could not only be observed on our faces; the secondary carriers of emotional expressions are voice and body movements. Emotional expressions are controlled by display rules. These rules are mostly stated by the particular culture of an individual and they describe, which emotional expressions are appropriate and acceptable to use in certain situations (Larrazabal and Peréz 2004, 45).

2.2.2   Posture

Tegze (2003, 202-217) emphasizes an importance of the posture of a body. It is the first element that we notice while interacting with other people. He believes that we can easily distinguish whether the person we are observing is a male or a female based on their posture. Male posture could be usually recognized by the wider spread of their feet. A wider distance between the feet is a sign of dominance. And dominance is a quality that is in a majority of cultures ascribed to men. In contradiction, women are more likely to stand with crossed feet or to spread their weight on only one foot. These kinds of postures signalize lower dominance and certain vulnerability and they suggest no interest in confrontation.

It is also important to state, that posture is not only a vital source of information while the person is standing, but it provides us a huge amount of information also when the person is sitting. The average position is sitting with crossed feet and hands loosely placed on thighs. Some authors consider this posture as closed, but Tegze categorizes it as a neutral or starting position. This person is waiting for the conversation to develop, so he could react to it and to adjust to it accordingly. When the person starts to feel interested in the conversation or if he feels involved in the conversation, he is likely to adjust his posture; he will change the position of his feet or just a slight movement will occur. Different situation occurs, when the person puts one of his ankles on the thigh of the other leg. He creates a certain barrier toward his surroundings. This posture suggests, that the person wants to step back a little form the conversation to organise his thoughts. If he simultaneously leans back on the chair, it means that he does not want to continue in the conversation or that he disagrees or is uncomfortable. A woman wearing a skirt can replace this posture by using a handbag as she can place the bag on her thighs and therefore create a barrier without using legs. When a person leans forward, it is a signal of affection and interest. The other person involved in communication might lean forward too, this therefore suggest concentration and a high quality of the conversation. When one of them

leans back, towards the chair, he is expressing that he is very uncomfortable (Tegze 2003, 235-241).

Miller (1988, 17-18) points out that the emotions of the person observed could be decoded from his posture and the way he walks. A happy person tends to walk dynamically and sit erect. A sad person might be identified by slouched shoulders, dragging their feet or their head facing the ground.

While observing and analyzing postures of other people, it is very important to analyze them in relation to the context of what is happening. We have to consider health and psychological state of that person as well as surroundings and content of the conversation (Tegze 2003, 235-241).

2.2.3 Facial Expressions

Facial expressions or mimics are movements of the face muscles and they are the most important and significant carriers of human emotions. Facial expressions not only represent current psychological state of mind, but also stable emotional expressions of an individual (Strnadová 2011, 135).

Some expressions are easy to recognize and to guess their meaning. Strnadová (2011, 135-136) distinguishes fourteen basic face expressions – half of them with positive and the other half with a negative meaning. The positive ones are happiness, feeling of luck, calmness, satisfaction, interest, certainty, respect and the feeling when our expectations are met. The negative ones are sadness, misery, surprise, anger, dissatisfaction, disinterest, fear and disdain. Every other type of emotion is very hard to recognize; they are called secondary emotions.

There are other facial signals that are very affected by our emotions but are impossible to be controlled. Typical example of those signals is pupil dilation. This signal could show interest or attraction. However, it could be just a response of an eye to the light (Wilson 2016, 49).

Tegze (2003, 306) distinguishes two extremes in terms of using facial expressions. An extensive use of mimics may be a sign of inability to control our emotions. Such person is perceived as untrustworthy. On the other hand, a person using mimics on a very low level is considered cold and other people might feel uncertain because of the lack of information coming from their facial expressions.

Tegze (2003, 306) also points out the fact, that facial expressions could be controlled to a certain extent. For example, while shaking hands with a business partner, it is a norm

to smile while performing the handshake. However, this does not necessarily mean that we are experiencing joy and happiness.

2.3 Proxemics

"Proxemics refers to the study of how space and distance influence communication." (A. Hans and E. Hans 2015, 49). It is a term which denotes the distance of two or more people while the communication is taking place. This distance mostly depends on the cultural background of every person involved in communication. However, age, sex, nature of the relationship, ethnicity of all participants and surroundings are also huge factors affecting proxemics (Brunet-Thornton 2010, 167).

The male representatives of human population generally have a tendency to keep a shorter distance between them and the other person they are communicating with, no matter if the other person is a male or a female. The feelings of the speaker are also vital as they also greatly reflect in proxemics. For example, the more attracted we are towards the other person we are communicating with, the closer we tend to stand and vice versa. Another important attribute of proxemics is whether we meet with the other person for the first time or not. We tend to keep a larger distance between the other person if we have never met them before. The distance also depends on personal characteristics. For instance, keeping a smaller distance between other people is typical for extroverts (Strnadová 2011, 139).

2.3.1   Horizontal and Vertical Proxemics

Proxemics could be divided into horizontal and vertical. Horizontal proxemics might be grouped into four sections. Those sections are intimate, personal, social and public distance (Brown 2018, 12). It is important to state that the border between these sections is not strict, these sections blend together and overlap and may be slightly different for each individual (Strnadová 2011, 139).

Intimate distance is a sign of a very personal relationship as it often involves touching or hugging (Carroll 2014, 18). We are talking about an intimate distance when two individuals engaged in communication are standing up to the half meter from each other. This distance is typical for very close, intimate relationships and it is not suitable for work related issues (Strnadová 2011, 140).

Personal distance refers to a distance from half meter to two metres (Strnadová 2011, 140). We can presume that two individuals standing in a personal distance are close family

members or close friends (Carroll 2014, 18). This section of proxemics strongly depends on the surroundings of the people engaged in communication, how much time they have and what are they talking about (Strnadová 2011, 140).

Social distance is the most neutral distance. It is used for individuals we do not know very well or not at all (Carroll 2014, 18). This zone could be observed in professional situations (A. Hans and E. Hans 2015, 49). It is a distance from one meter to ten metres and it is typical for those situations, where the individual is speaking to the group of people, usually if they are located indoors, for example, in a class or in an office (Strnadová 2011, 140).

Public zone is typical for public speakers or while having a conversation with a large group of people (Carroll 2014, 19). For example, when a teacher is talking to the students on a lecture or when a politician is giving a speech on a press conference. It is a distance from two metres to one hundred meters (Strnadová 2011, 140). The communication that takes place in this section of proxemics is usually formal and not intimate at all (A. Hans and E. Hans 2015, 49).

Vertical proxemics is mostly visible when the two people engaged in communication have significantly different height. The smaller person might feel submissive and uncomfortable. Vertical proxemics could be also present and emphasized in a workplace. For instance, while having a meeting, a boss may be using a slightly higher chair than his subordinates (Strnadová 2011, 140).

2.3.2 Territoriality

A significant phenomenon that is connected to proxemics is territoriality. Territoriality is an innate drive to take up places and consider them as our own. Every animal is aware of their territory and is defending it from any intruders. Territoriality is not only a phenomenon observed with animals, but it is also connected to individuals as well as groups of people and its size is individual (A. Hans and E. Hans 2015, 50).

Territoriality is divided into three groups – primary, secondary and public territories. Primary territories are considered those spaces that are in our possession, such as a person's house, favourite side of a bed or a space in a wardrobe. Secondary territories are those spaces that are not in our personal possession. It could be a favourite spot in the classroom or a favourite locker in a gym. Spaces that an individual cannot posses at all or could posses for a small amount of time are called public territories. We can reserve our place in a public territory with a jacket or a bag (A. Hans and E. Hans 2015, 50).

Human territoriality is not only reflected in a feeling of possession of a certain object or place; it also includes a need to protect and control that particular object or place. It is important to clarify, that an object we consider to be in our possession does not necessarily need to have a physical form. It could be an idea, role or a responsibility as well as a social group or a person (Brown et al. 2005, 579).

2.4 Chronemics

Time is a significant element of non-verbal communication. Chronemics deals with how people are expressing, structuring and using time (Strnadová 2011, 141). *"The perception of time influences body language in terms of how you approach lengths of time as well as how you interpret others' use of time"* (Hogan 2008, 108).

Such as many factors in non-verbal communication, culture plays a significant role in the perception of time (Hogan 2008, 108). Some cultures could be perceived as polychromic and some as monochronic. Polychronic cultures perceive time as circular; multiple events occur at the same time (Eunson 2011, 272).

However, time in monochronic cultures is linear; events are divided into segments and are performed one after another. Punctuality and planning are playing a significant role in those cultures (Eunson 2011, 272).

2.5 Oculesics

Our eyes are vital source of information about the world around us. In non-verbal communication, eye contact also plays a significant role. A section of non-verbal communication dealing with eyes, gazes, eye contact etc. is called oculesics. Eye contact carries four functions – it signalizes the beginning and the end of a conversation, it monitors feedback, it carries end express emotions and it helps to define the relationship between the individuals involved in communication (Lunenburg 2010, 2).

Eye contact changes throughout the conversation depending if an individual is in a role of a sender or a receiver (A. Hans and E. Hans 2015, 48). These roles could be constantly shifting from one to another depending on how the communication flows.

2.6 Vocalics

Vocalics is also called paralanguage or paralinguistics. Paralanguage covers every aspect of our voice aside from the actual speech itself (Reiman 2007, 243). Those aspects are *"differences in emphasis, volume, pitch, inflection, nasality and articulation"* (Eunson

2011, 263). Paralanguage forms almost 40 percent of the message we deliver through our words (Reiman 2007, 243).

2.6.1 Differences in Emphasis

Emphasising some particular word in a sentence or de-emphasizing it could completely change the meaning of the sentence (Eunson 2011, 263). For instance, a sentence "I sometimes like to be alone" could have a very different meaning, if we emphasize the word *I* and when we emphasize the word *sometimes*. "*I* sometimes like to be alone" (with the emphasis on *I*); in this sentence the sender probably wanted to contradict the other person he is communicating with. In such case, the sentence would probably start with "*me, not you*" instead of "*I*". In a sentence "I *sometimes* like to be alone" (with the emphasis on *sometimes*) the sender probably wanted to express that he usually enjoys loneliness, but not in this particular moment.

In a written text, such emphases are marked by italics. They could also be used to express sarcasm, boredom or anger or they could just be used as attention grabbers (Eunson 2011, 263).

2.6.2 Volume

Volume of the speech may be an indicator of how much is the sender passionate about the subject of the speech. It is also a vital indicator of how pleasant or unpleasant the speech will be for the receiver and how much the sender wants to attract the attention of the receiver (Strnadová 2011, 129).

Speaking in a low volume can indicate shyness and insecurity. Loud voices most often belong to extroverts and dominant people, however, being extremely loud could be considered rude and disruptive, especially while speaking in public places. Speaking loudly might also be a sign of anger and aggressiveness as well as friendliness and vitality (Reiman 2007, 252).

2.6.3 Pitch

Pitch is a feature of a voice that puts the sound of a voice on a scale from a low to a high voice. Women usually have a higher pitch than men. However, people tend to rise or lower their pitch depending on the situation and the type of a sentence, their emotional state and mood. Very small changes or no changes in pitch are perceived as a sign of boredom or indifference (Reiman 2007, 246).

Typical examples of a rising tone are questions. We also tend to rise our pitch when we are talking to our friends or family or generally to the people we like (Eunson 2011, 263). Higher pitch is also typical for extroverts and people generally use it to express excitement and joy (Reiman 2007, 248). In contradiction, we tend to lower our pitch when we do not want or do not expect an answer or further conversation from a person we are communicating with (Eunson 2011, 263). Lower pitch is sometimes also linked to insecurity and shyness (Reiman 2007, 252).

2.6.4   Silence

An underestimated feature of a human communication is silence. Silence could indicate many things – from punctuation to expressing our emotions and mood. Silence could be a sign of agreement or disagreement or it could mean that we are just evaluating the message that the other person provided to us (Eunson 2011, 264).

Silence could be divided into two forms. The first form of silence is represented by small pauses occurring between turns of speech. These pauses are used to take some time to think before responding and their usage is subconscious. The second form of silence is called the communicative silence. Pauses in this silence form are longer and usually conscious. The communicative silence carries a meaning depending on its length and position (Sifianou 1997, 64-65).

2.7 Haptics

Haptics or tactile communication is a segment of non-verbal communication which studies touch (Brunet-Thornton 2010, 167). It is not uncommon that people are touching each other while communicating. However, touching is perceived differently depending on the culture of each individual (Eunson 2011, 267) as well as depending on their "*age, sex, situation and relationship of the people involved*" (Brunet-Thornton 2010, 167).

In haptics, we differentiate three basic areas. The first one is the social, professional and politeness area. This area covers arms and hands. Second area covers arms, shoulders, hair and face and it is personal and friendly area. The third area is an intimate and sexual area, which is individual for every person, so we can not exactly define the body parts which are included in this segment of haptics (Strnadová 2011, 141).

The most common type of touch used in a face to face business communication is a handshake (Eunson 2011, 268). A handshake should be accompanied by a proper mimics and a visual contact. A proper handshake should be approximately five seconds long and

hands of both partners should be in a horizontal position, which represents equality of both partners (Strnadová 2011, 141).

II. ANALYSIS

3 METHODOLOGY

In this part, the main goal of this thesis, research questions and research method will be presented.

3.1 Goal

The main goal of this thesis is to present non-verbal behaviour of representatives of France and the Czech Republic on a business meeting, state any differences in their non-verbal behaviour and make recommendations on how to improve their non-verbal signals in order for the business communication to be more appropriate and comfortable for both parties.

3.2 Research Questions

According to the goal of this thesis, these research questions were stated:

1) Are there any differences in nonverbal behaviour between the representatives of France and the Czech Republic?

2) Is it useful to deal with the elements of non-verbal communication in intercultural training?

3.3 Research Method

The research method used for this thesis is the qualitative observation method. Qualitative research provides information about culture, behaviour, emotions and society. Qualitative research usually uses a smaller amount of data in comparison to quantitative research. For instance, it usually uses a smaller number of participants or people that are being observed. It also deals with more complex study topics and analyses data in many forms. (Hogan and Donnelly 2009, 15-21).

Observation is an unconscious everyday process performed by every person. In science, observation is used consciously. Observation not only helps the researcher to obtain visual information, but sometimes also auditory and olfactory sensations. It also helps to provide information about the surroundings of the people observed (Hendl 2016, 195).

There are many types of qualitative observation. Non-participant observing was chosen for the research in this thesis. The advantage of non-participant observing is that the researcher does not interfere and influence the behaviour of observed individuals (Hendl 2016, 196). This method also enables to observe individuals in their natural setting,

so there is a great chance that their behaviour will be natural and sincere (Gorman and Clayton 2005, 104).

The disadvantage of qualitative observation method is that the researcher is unable to notice everything. Using video records could solve this problem as the researcher could watch it several times and therefore make the observation more effective (Hendl 2016, 196). Another disadvantage of the observation method is the subjectivity of the researcher. People who are being observed could also consciously or unconsciously change their behaviour, so it is essential for the researcher not to interfere much (Gorman and Clayton 2005, 105).

Collecting data by qualitative observation method was used because it is the most effective and convenient method to observe non-verbal behaviour. Recording the meeting on a video was chosen to eliminate interference of the business meeting as well as to have a chance to observe every participant separately.

4 INTRODUCTION OF THE RESEARCHED COMPANIES

Two companies were chosen for the research in this bachelor's thesis; one from the Czech Republic and one from France. None of these companies wanted to be named in this thesis and they also did not want any information about the content of their business meeting to be published. They also did not want to publish any private information about their representatives who attended the meeting.

Both companies are parts of the tertiary sector of economy. They both specialize in hospitality industry. The company from the Czech Republic is an owner of a hotel group with its registered office located in Prague. This company operates 21 hotels and accommodation establishments all over the Czech Republic. They are specialising in accommodation and hotel services, rental of conference rooms, catering, spa services etc. They offer several types of hotels and accommodations - business and urban hotels, spa hotels, luxury hotels, low-cost tourist hotels and low-cost accommodations. They started their business in 1993 when they opened their first hotel in Prague. In 2007, they expanded their business to other regions of the Czech Republic. For the nearest future, they are planning to build two more hotels in Prague and Brno (YZ a.s. 2020).

The other company is located in Paris, France. It is a provider of a chain of restaurants specializing in French cuisine combined with elements of Korean cuisine. This company offers a relatively wide portfolio of restaurants. It operates five restaurants in total; three of them in a form of fine dining and two of them in a form of fast food. Two of the fine dining restaurants have the same concept; customers can not choose what they are going to eat. They can just choose from 12 courses, 6 courses and 4 courses menu without knowing what the dishes will be; the waiters will tell the customers the ingredients of the meal they were eating at the end of every course. The last one of the fine dining restaurants is the most luxurious one. In 2019 it was nominated for a Michelin star. The two fast food restaurants are specializing on a food delivery. For their delivery services, they are cooperating with companies Uber Eats and Deliveroo. The main concept of these two fast food restaurants is to distribute fine dining for affordable prices among wider public without a need to book a table in the restaurant. This company also offers catering to custom events. They also offer a room, which they are renting for various events or you can attend a private cooking class with the chef of these restaurants there as there is a fully equipped kitchen area (XY 2020).

5 PRIMARY RESEARCH

5.1 Research Participants

The research presented in this thesis focuses on a business meeting between the company from France and from the Czech Republic. This meeting took place in Paris in December 2019 in the conference room at the main office of the French company. There were two representatives of the Czech company and three representatives of the French company present on the meeting. Czech representatives were both male. Representatives from France consisted of two males and one female. Nobody else entered the room during the meeting. All of the participants were professionals; one male member of the French company was a manager, the second male member was the leader and the female member was a secretary of the French leader. The French leader was also the owner of the company and the main chef of the restaurants. The Czech participants were both managers.

As the participants of the meeting did not wish to be named, a capital letter *P* and a number will be assigned to them according to the appearance in the analysis. The non-verbal behaviour of the participants was analysed from a video recording of the meeting and in a form of non-participant qualitative observation. The video recording was played several times during the analysis so every participant could have been observed separately and in detail.

5.2 Analysis of Research Participants

In this part of the thesis, non-verbal behaviour of all participants will be described and analysed.

At the beginning of the meeting, all participants greeted each other. Everybody shook hands and smiled at each other. These handshakes were accompanied by a French greeting *bonjour*, which was also used by the Czech participants, even though English was the main language during the whole meeting. The French participants seemed very pleased to hear the Czech managers greet them in French language. All of the male participants had very direct and strong eye contact while shaking hands; the female representative kept just a very short eye contact with the Czech participants and her handshake did not seem very dominant and strong. After everyone had greeted, the P1, who was the French leader, performed a non-verbal signal with his hand to show the Czech representatives where they can sit; he stretched his fingers and turned his palm towards the ceiling while pointing with it to the places, where they can sit. While doing this, he also touched one of the Czech

participants at the back of his shoulder. This gesture indicates friendliness but could also be an unconscious attempt to prove dominance.

5.2.1   P1

The first person analysed is the P1. P1 was the leader of the French participants. In comparison with his French colleagues, he was speaking most of the time. He was looking directly in the eyes of other people; he used direct and strong eye contact that signalized dominance. As he was the most important person on the hierarchical spectrum of the meeting, he started the meeting by a short speech were he welcomed everyone again. During this speech he performed a wide smile with his teeth showing and wrinkles around the corners of his mouth. Other participants smiled back as a response to this facial expression. At the end of his speech, he moved his head upwards, he raised his eyebrows and opened his eyes wider in order to support the importance of what he was saying. He also probably wanted to suggest that the initial and less-formal part of the meeting is over and serious matters are going to be discussed from now on so that everyone should focus. When the meeting proceeded, his facial expressions became rather neutral; it was hard to guess what he was thinking about most of the time. However, he sometimes nodded his head in order to express that he understand what was the other person saying. Also, furrowed eyebrows accompanied with narrowed eyes forming wrinkles around the outer corners of his eyes were often visible on his face during the meeting. This was a sign that he was very concentrated on the information that other people provided while speaking. He also sometimes put an index finger on his lips, which was a sign of concentration as well as it could suggest that he did not agree with what was discussed, therefore he tried to hold back his negative emotions and tried to avoid confrontation. He was sitting tall most of the time. His hands were mostly placed on the table performing a gesture of a steeple, which was a gesture of dominance He used a lot of hand gestures and it was visible that he is very confident. While speaking, his voice was strong and relatively loud. To summarize, this person was on the top of the hierarchy in the French company. He was very dominant and confident. There were no signs of nervousness or discomfort. He was not afraid to speak and to ask questions.

5.2.2   P2

Another person analyzed is the French manager P2. While shaking hands with the leader of the Czech participants, he simultaneously touched the leader's arm above the elbow. With this gesture, he probably wanted to show his friendliness. However, the Czech

leader did not seem comfortable with it. P2 kept an eye contact with the speaker as well as he tried to look into everyone's eyes for a few seconds while he was speaking, which shows that he had respect for everyone in the room. He had the most noticeable face expressions from all of the participants. He smiled a lot with his teeth visible and wrinkles around his eyes. While speaking, he often moved his eyebrows upwards, which shows his passion and interest about the content of the meeting. He also sometimes nodded his head in order to encourage the speaker to continue with his point and to show him that he understands. He used a lot of hand gestures while speaking, but they were not distracting and they supported what he was saying. However, he sometimes exaggerated them. For instance, he moved his hands above his shoulders. This was a sign of excitement. While using hand gestures, he often performed them with his palms rotated upwards, which signs openness and sincerity. At the beginning of the meeting, he performed neutral, straight posture. However, his posture changed towards the end of the meeting; he sat with his legs wide apart and his ankles crossed on the floor. This posture is a dominant one and signals confidence, because the person performing it is not afraid to expose his private parts. However, crossed ankles might suggest insecurity and nervousness, but judging from his overall body language and non-verbal signals he was sending throughout the whole meeting, this was not the case. In conclusion, this person was confident and comfortable during the meeting. He was a good speaker and he seemed very supportive of the ideas of the Czech party as he smiled and nodded a lot.

5.2.3 P3

The third person analysed is P3. She was the only female participant. This participant was visibly the most nervous person of the meeting. As was written before, she tried to look into the eyes of the speaker, but her eye contact was very short; her eyes often roved around the room or she was looking at the screen of her notebook. This was not the only non-verbal sign of nervousness. She was not smiling at all during the whole meeting. Most of the time, her eye brows were slightly furrowed and corners of her mouth were slightly pointing downwards without any wrinkles around her mouth or eye brows. She was also blinking very frequently. She used a lot of self-comforting gestures that were supposed to help her to relax and to release her inner tension; she was adjusting her glasses and hair and she used these movements in a high frequency which was sometimes distracting for the listeners. She also often stroked her hands together. However, she did not perform any other visible or strong gestures. She was also often biting her lips. Her nervousness also

reflected in her posture. Her torso was rotated from the other participants and she looked stiff. She was sitting with crossed legs and was slightly leaning towards the back of the chair and her hands were crossed on her chest. This is a very closed posture that suggests, that she obviously did not feel comfortable. She was also shaking the ankle of the leg that was placed on the top of her other leg. That was also a sign of nervousness. She immediately placed her notebook in front of her which created a barrier towards the other participants. She was silent most of the time, but when she spoke, her voice was not very loud, but no one seemed to have troubles hearing her and understanding what she said. However, her articulation was ok and easy to follow. To conclude, she was probably not comfortable attending this meeting. Her shyness and nervousness were probably caused by her lower skills in English language or she was not comfortable being the only woman in the room. However, she remained professional throughout the whole meeting; she was very polite and kind.

5.2.4   P4

Another person analyzed is P4. P4 was male and he was the leader of the Czech participants. He kept a direct eye contact while shaking hands with everybody. He also kept a direct eye contact during the whole meeting. As was written before, he seemed quite uncomfortable when P2 placed a hand on his elbow while shaking hands; P4 slightly leaned his torso to the opposite direction and squeezed his lips together. He mostly used gestures in moderation during the meeting. He used illustrators to support his speech; while stating the most important points, he used his fingers to express numbers by stretching his fingers. He also used his index finger to point out the most important statements. While speaking, his palms were facing up to the ceiling, which is a gesture of sincerity and openness. He was sometimes playing with the pen on the table, which suggested that he was probably nervous. His posture was relaxed and rather neutral most of the time. He was sitting with his legs relaxed on the floor and his hands were freely placed on his lap or on the table. When he was in a position of a listener, he often leaned his head to a one side; this expressed support as well as willingness to understand what was being said and discussed. He also smiled with wrinkles around the corners of his mouth and nose, but he mostly did not show his teeth. He also nodded his head to support whoever was speaking. He sometimes looked at the table in front of him and furrowed his eyebrows while speaking, which suggest that he was thinking about what he was going to say. While speaking, he used a strong voice and his pitch was also used correctly. He articulated well

and expressively which also contributed to the confident perception of this person. To conclude, he appeared as a confident and dominant person, however, he sometimes used gestures suggesting nervousness.

5.2.5 P5

The last person analyzed, P5, was the second Czech participant. He accompanied his handshakes with a smile, forming wrinkles around the corners of his lips, but no teeth visible and a direct eye contact. His body language suggested that he was quite nervous during the rest of the meeting. He put his notebook right in front of him on the table, so he created a barrier towards the other participants. He tried to maintain an eye contact with other participants during the whole meeting, but he was sometimes looking on the screen of his notebook. He also looked at P4 very frequently while speaking, often with raised eye brows and eyes widely opened and accompanied with a head nod, as he was seeking some reassurance from P4. At the beginning of the meeting, he was playing with a pen and after a while, he put his hands under the table, which was another sign of nervousness. He was constantly jiggling with his left leg. He performed some self-comforting gestures, such as readjusting his blazer or touching his watch on his wrist. His posture was erect and stiff at the beginning of the meeting, but he seemed more relaxed after a while. Despite some of his non-verbal signals, he was a relatively good speaker. His English language was excellent and he used gestures in moderation and in a way that accompanied his words. Most of the time, his pitch was not in contradiction with his sentences; he used it with correspondence of what type of sentence he was using. However, he used a rising tone in a few sentences that he was visibly not sure about, but P4 always tried to clarify the information. He apparently tried to consciously moderate his gestures in order to hide his nervousness because his gestures sometimes felt weird and they were sometimes not used to support what he was talking about.

6   ANSWERING RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In this chapter, the research questions stated in the chapter Methodology will be answered.

6.1 Q1: Are There Any Differences in Non-verbal Behaviour between the Representatives of France and the Czech Republic?

The biggest difference in non-verbal behaviour was seen in touching. Touching is a cultural phenomenon different for France and the Czech Republic. In France, it is very common to touch another people. It is a signal of friendliness and acceptance. Kissing is also quite used in France. It is quite common to see people in France give each other usually two kisses on each cheek. This does not apply only to family members or close friends. However, kissing is considered inappropriate in French business culture, as well as in the most other countries, at least in Europe.

In the Czech Republic, touching is not that common. Touching is only visible within people who are close friends or family. In business culture, it is almost considered a taboo. This situation was seen during the researched business meeting when P2 put a hand on an arm of the P4, the Czech leader, while shaking hands and the P4 did not feel comfortable with this gesture. It is important to state, that the taboo of touching does not apply to handshakes. Handshakes are very common in both of these countries and it is even considered rude when someone refuse to shake hands, especially while greeting someone in a business environment. Kissing is also not that common in the Czech Republic. Kissing on the cheeks is mostly performed by members of close family or very close friends.

Another difference in non-verbal behaviour between representatives of France and the Czech Republic was visible in their use of gestures. The male French participants - P1 and P2 - used gestures in a higher frequency than the Czech participants. The Czech participants used gestures in moderation in contradiction to the male French participants, who sometimes exaggerated their gestures as they moved their hands above their shoulders, which was not visible among the Czech representatives. However, the P3, who was the only female member of the French company, did not use any strong and expressive gestures.

There was almost no difference in an eye contact. In both countries, maintaining the eye contact is considered polite and professional. Everyone participating on this business meeting was trying to look directly into everybody's eyes, at least while speaking, even though some participants were quite nervous and their eyes were roving around the room sometimes.

6.2 Is It Useful to Deal with the Elements of Non-verbal Communication in Intercultural Training?

As was written earlier in this thesis, 55 percent of human communication consists of non-verbal signals and non-verbal communication is mostly based on a cultural background of every person. Knowing about the differences in non-verbal behaviour and using proper non-verbal signals while negotiating with business partners with a different culture origin might increase success of a business negotiation. Effective intercultural training could also increase confidence of a manager and that may lead to a better overall perception of your company.

As was stated earlier in this thesis, there were some misunderstandings coming from the collision of two different cultures. In the previous research question was said that touching was the most significant difference in these two cultures. The P4 was visibly upset by the touching performed by the P2. If the P2 was aware of the differences in the norms of these two cultures, this incident would not happen.

Gestures indicating nervousness were observed within all of the participants. If they had attended a proper training in non-verbal behaviour, they would have been able to cover their nervousness with non-verbal signals indicating confidence. They would be perceived as more professional and confident and this could cause the negotiation to be more successful. Also, if the managers are able to read the non-verbal signals of people they are negotiating with, they could adjust their performance and therefore be more successful.

Particular non-verbal signals might reflect what are our business partners thinking, whether they are open to further negotiations or even whether they are lying or not about their intentions. However, decoding non-verbal signals properly requires at least some intercultural training focusing on non-verbal communication. Even the basic gestures, such as handshakes or exchanging business cards, could differ in various cultures and therefore they might cause some misunderstandings. Therefore non-verbal communication should absolutely be included in intercultural training.

7 RECOMMENDATIONS

As was proven earlier in this thesis, intercultural communication could bring many obstacles and problems when no intercultural awareness is present. Recommendations for future communication between Czech and French business partners will be presented in this chapter.

The first recommendation relates to hierarchy. France is a country with a more significant and visible hierarchy than the Czech Republic has. While communicating with French business partners, it is important to pay attention to the hierarchy of an organisation they are representing. It is essential to show particular respect to a person that is on top of the hierarchy as he is probably the person that does the decision making. However, Czech managers should show respect to every other employee as well. On the other hand, Czech managers should not be offended, when French managers show extra attention to the leader.

Another recommendation revolves around touching. As was mentioned before, touching is perceived differently when we compare Czech and French business culture. Czech managers should be aware of this cultural difference in order to be prepared that their French business partners could, for example, tap them on their back or shoulders or that they can touch their arm while shaking hands. On the other hand, French managers should keep in mind that Czechs are not used to touching when it comes to a business meeting.

When it comes to an eye-contact, it is mutual for both of these cultures. In both countries it is respectful and polite to look everyone in the eyes while communicating. It is considered very professional and it is a sign of sincerity.

It is also a good idea to prepare some basic phrases in the native language of the company you are negotiating with. The members of the analysed French company seemed very pleased when the Czech participants greeted them in a French language. It was a sign of interest and it was a good ice breaker for the start of the conversation. France is also a very proud country when it comes to its origin and culture, so that is another reason why the French managers were so pleased to hear their native language.

CONCLUSION

The intention of this bachelor's thesis was to point out differences and similarities of Czech and French business culture with focus on non-verbal communication. This thesis covered all types of non-verbal behaviour - gestures, facial expressions, posture, time perception, distances, eye contact and use of voice. A part of this thesis was also dedicated to intercultural communication as the main focus of the thesis was on negotiations between companies from France and the Czech Republic and as non-verbal behaviour is highly affected by the culture origin.

The analytical part of this thesis was dealing with non-verbal communication on a business meeting among two representatives of the company from the Czech Republic and three representatives of the company from France. In this part, non-verbal behaviour of all participants was observed and described and two researched questions were answered. To conclude, these two cultures are not that different as they both come from Europe. However, some differences were visible. The most noticeable difference in their non-verbal communication was touching. In Czech culture, touching is not that common. The only appropriate types of touches tolerated in Czech business culture are handshakes. Handshakes are considered polite and professional in both cultures, however, French business people tend to establish more personal relationship with their business partners, therefore touching is not such a taboo in their culture. Another difference in their non-verbal signals was gestures. French participants were using more noticeable and sometimes exaggerated hand gestures, in comparison to moderate gestures of the Czech participants. What was similar for all participants was the eye contact. Everyone was trying to maintain it during handshakes and speaking, even though some participants were visibly nervous. The analytical part also provided recommendations for future intercultural business communication between France and the Czech Republic.

In conclusion, non-verbal behaviour is the biggest provider of information in terms of human communication. It is learned in childhood by imitating people in our surroundings, therefore culture has huge influence on the non-verbal signals we use. Every culture is unique and has its unique non-verbal signals; what is inappropriate in one culture could be considered perfectly normal in another culture. While dealing with business partners from different countries, we need to attend some intercultural training in order to acquire appropriate non-verbal behaviour. The more professional and polite we act, the more successful our negotiation might be. The goal of the thesis was met.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

PDI   Power Distance Index

UAI   Uncertainty Avoidance Indicator