Non-verbal Communication in Malaysia: Gestures and Facial Expressions at Business Meetings and Negotiations

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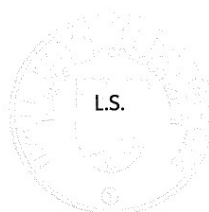
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ABSTRAKT

Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá tématikou neverbální komunikace při obchodních schůzkách a vyjednáváních v Malajsii. Nezaměřuje se však jen na kulturu malajskou, ale i na kulturu čínskou a indickou, neboť jsou také neodlučitelnou součástí malajské civilizace. Cílem této bakalářské práce je odhalit specifické aspekty a odlišnosti dané neverbální komunikace a navrhnout doporučení na její využití v obchodním prostředí. Data byla získána z nezúčastněného kvalitativního pozorování, které bylo uskutečněno se členy ekonomické organizace PEKUMA na Univerzitě Malaya v Kuala Lumpur. Praktická část proto obsahuje fotografii z jednání v Malajsii a je v ní popsáno a vysvětleno neverbální chování každého člena, který se jednání zúčastnil. Největší rozdíly v neverbální komunikaci byly vypozorovány zejména u muslimských členů. Na základě těchto dat byla vytvořena doporučení, jak komunikovat v daném obchodním prostředí.

Klíčová slova: neverbální komunikace, obchodní schůzky, vyjednávání, Malajsie, odlišnosti, doporučení

ABSTRACT

This bachelor's thesis deals with the topic of non-verbal communication at business meetings and negotiations in Malaysia. The work is focused not only on Malaysian culture but also on Chinese and Indian culture as they are part of Malaysian civilization as well. The aim of this thesis is to present specific aspects and differences in non-verbal communication and make recommendations on how to communicate in a given business environment. The data was obtained via the non-participant qualitative observation conducted with members of the economic organisation called PEKUMA at the University of Malaya in Kuala Lumpur. Therefore, in the practical part, the photograph from the negotiations in Malaysia is presented and the non-verbal behaviour of every participant of the meeting is described and explained. The most significant differences in non-verbal communication were observed especially among Muslim participants. Based on this data, the recommendations on how to communicate in a given business environment were stated.

Keywords: non-verbal communication, business meetings, negotiations, Malaysia, differences, recommendations

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

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

Effective communication skills are fundamental keys to successful relationships on both personal and professional levels. People use verbal but mainly non-verbal messages in conversations frequently. However, communication and especially non-verbal one differs from culture to culture. That is the reason why it is essential to understand differences across societies as what is relevant in one nation does not have to be appropriate in another one. Every culture is unique with its specific features.

In today's world, an international environment is a common place for many people. Many business people communicate daily with foreign colleagues, and thus the international meetings and negotiations are frequently held. It can be challenging for them to negotiate in an international business environment, but if they know the main differences in verbal as well as in non-verbal communication, it can help them to create more effective communication without possible failures.

The author of the thesis chose this topic as she undertook one semester of studies in Malaysia and she had the unique opportunity to meet this culture with its specific features. Malaysia is an intercultural nation, where three main cultures are found, and concretely Muslim, Chinese and Indian. That is the reason why this thesis will be primarily aimed at non-verbal communication in Malaysia.

In the theoretical part, the areas such as intercultural communication with the focus on non-verbal expressions and its varieties will be explained. The analysis part will deal with the practical example from Malaysian business meeting. The data for practical part was obtained via the non-participant qualitative observation. That is the reason why the photograph of the negotiation will be presented, and the non-verbal behaviour of all participants will be described and explained in details. The main focus of this thesis will be on specific aspects and differences of non-verbal communication in Malaysian culture concerning gestures, facial expressions and eye contact as well as on making the recommendations on how to communicate effectively with Malaysians.

I. THEORY

1 INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

Intercultural communication has always been a complex and dynamic process. For a better understanding of the topic the term intercultural communication, communication, and culture will be introduced and explained.

Intercultural communication is about sharing and meeting different values, cultural backgrounds, customs, knowledge that are given in foreign cultures. It helps to join people from various countries together. Moreover, it makes them aware of the need and the importance of understanding intercultural communication (Eilers 1992, 646). Learning intercultural communication means not only get to know a different nation and its culture but also to become self-aware about own country and to understand one's position in society (Martin 2013, 5).

The term cultural diffusion is closely connected to intercultural communication. Cultural diffusion is about spreading beliefs and cultural activities from one place to another. The important role is that it helps to connect people all around the world. It is exemplified by food and clothing companies originated in the United States which are seen and available around the world. Such examples are McDonald's and Starbucks in Asia, Nike in Australia or Japan (Chaney 2005, 2).

Intercultural communication is mainly associated with culture and communication. Without these two processes, it could not exist and function. That is the reason why these two significant terms need to be explained.

1.1 Communication as a part of Intercultural Communication

Communication is a powerful process which enables people to share their thoughts, ideas, and feelings with others through the use of symbols. It is closely linked to identity. Contact with others and information provided helps to identify a person, one's belongings and loyalties. Communication is one of the basic human needs. The interaction with people evokes feelings of warmth, friendship and satisfaction. While speaking with others, the verbal and non-verbal messages are sent, and thus the behaviour of others is shaped. Furthermore, communication serves as a basic social need and creates a pleasant experience. Thus, effective communication is a key to creating successful interpersonal relationships (Samovar 2012, 27–28).

1.2 Culture as a part of Intercultural Communication

Culture is a structure through which the values, attitudes and norms are expressed as well as it shapes one's behaviour and priorities. It is something that one is not born with as an individual has to learn it from an early age. People apply their cultural habits in the way they behave or in cooperation with others. Culture is the means through which one perceives the world and people around. Nonetheless, certain habits in one culture can be considered conventional and decent, and on the contrary, in another one, these habits can be turned into something different. Moreover, it can appear to be a rude and inappropriate way of behaviour. The aim is to avoid possible failures that could influence relationships or future business successes (Beamer 2011, 9–11).

1.3 Dimensions of culture

Nowadays, it is essential to know and differentiate all the possible cultural factors that could have an impact on the process of negotiation in the business environment. The first person who tried to deal with this issue was Geert Hofstede, a Dutch social psychologist, who researched the differences in cultural and organizational diversity. Thus, he created the framework used to understand the differences across cultures, how it affects the business settings and how values are influenced by culture. According to his research, there are six dimensions of culture which will be explained in this chapter (Hofstede 2019).

1.3.1   Individualism vs. Collectivism

The first dimension is related to the rule of the individual and the rule of the group. So-called collectivism prevails in today's society. The first group in one's life is family. In a collectivist society, an individual grows up and lives with other members of the family closely together. As one grows up, he becomes a part of "we" group which shapes his identity and protects him. One is loyal to all members of the group, and breaking this loyalty is usually the worst thing that an individual can do (Hofstede 2010, 90–91).

On the other hand, the individualism prevails over the interest of the group. Children are born into two or one parent family without the other relatives. As children grow up, they learn to perceive themselves as "I" identity which distinguishes them from others. An individual is taught through education how to stand on his feet, and as soon as it is learned, individuals leave their home, and the interactions with their parents are not so frequent (Hofstede 2010, 91).

According to Hofstede's research (2010, 93), there is a correlation between individualism and countries' national wealth and collectivism and poverty. Individualists tend to be from rich countries as their use of skill, training, and physical conditions are taken for granted. On the contrary, these things are not presumed in a collectivist society. The most individualistic countries are the US, Australia, Great Britain, and most European countries. On the other hand, the most collectivist countries are Pakistan, most countries in Asia, Latin America and Arab countries (Hofstede 2010, 103).

1.3.2 Masculinity vs. Femininity

The second dimension is related to gender roles. The way men and women behave is determined by the culture they live in and the traditions they adhere and respect (Samovar 2012, 190). The main differences in gender roles are seen in modern as well as in traditional societies. Men are usually considered to be competitive, assertive, independent and capable (Hofstede 2010, 137). On the contrary, females are usually tender, modest and they appreciate the quality of life. The main sign of femininity is the nurturing behaviour, and therefore women usually take care of children and household (Samovar 2012, 190–91).

Gender roles are the result of socialization. A family is the first place where individuals learn how to socialize and where to place themselves in society (Hofstede 2010, 151). In accordance with Hofstede's research (2010, 148), Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Denmark are the most feminine countries in the world. On the other hand, the most masculine countries are Japan, Venezuela and Austria.

1.3.3 Power Distance

The dimension of power distance deals with the issue of inequality in society. The inconsistencies in society can be problematic, and therefore many people try to resolve it, but most of the time they only deepen the social differences among individuals. The reason is that social class, occupation and education are closely connected and determine the individual's place in society (Hofstede 2010, 64).

Power distance is divided into high and low power distance relationship, and there is always only one orientation that dominates throughout the whole country. In high power distance countries, it is believed that power is a part of society. Furthermore, authority and power are facts of life. Authorities are different from subordinates, and people are not equal as everybody has the right social place. Such countries are for example Malaysia, the Philippines, Panama, Guatemala, African and Arabic countries as well as Slovakia. On the other hand, there are low power distance countries where social imbalance ought to be

limited. Countries are governed by different standards such as norms, laws, everyday behaviours in order to minimize the power distinction. Equal relationships are tried to be established among individuals (Samovar 2012, 189). According to Hofstede's research (2010, 189), the countries with the low power distance are Germany, Israel, the US, Great Britain, Finland, Sweden, and Norway.

1.3.4 Uncertainty Avoidance

This dimension deals with the fact that the future is not determined. There is no sureness about what is going to happen, things are uncertain and unknown and what will happen in the future is unexpected (Samovar 2012, 187). Ambiguity appears in every culture all around the world. However, in every society, there are tactics on how to alleviate this anxiety through laws, rules, religion as well as through technology. It is believed that laws and rules can help prevent other people's uncertain behaviour. Religion protects people from unpredictability that they cannot influence and defends their future. Lastly, technology helps people to predict vagueness created by nature (Hofstede 2010, 189).

Nevertheless, this dimension can be divided into high and low uncertainty avoidance. High uncertainty avoidance is associated with cultures trying to alleviate the ambiguity and unpredictability as the high percentage of stress occurs in these cultures. That is the reason why they use rules, norms and laws to minimize the ambiguity in society and protect individuals against hazards. Countries with uncertainty avoidance are Greece, Portugal, Belgium as well as Uruguay and Guatemala. Secondly, there are countries with low uncertainty avoidance such as Singapore, Malaysia, Japan as well as Great Britain. In these nations, people are accustomed to being tolerant and respectful to different people and ideas. Individuals are easier to adapt to the uncertainty that is given and inherent in life as they prefer to be more flexible, take some risks and have no strict rules (Samovar 2012, 187–88).

1.3.5 Long-Term Orientation vs. Short-Term Orientation

The penultimate dimension deals with a long-term and short-term orientation. When it comes to the long-term orientation, people are focused on virtues which can bring them some rewards in the future. Thus, the main values are the persistence and the thrift. The nations with the long-term orientation are Japan, China, South Korea, Hong Kong or Singapore. Therefore, individuals living in these countries are more focused on self-discipline, personal adaptability, market position, loyalty towards a company, relationships with others rather than on leisure time which is not too important for them. Secondly, there

is the short-term orientation in which individuals appreciate the virtues which are connected to the present and the past. Moreover, people respect social commitments and honour the tradition. In businesses, workers are focused on quick results and short term profits, and unlike the long-term orientation, they appreciate leisure time and freedom. Countries with the short-term orientation are for instance Great Britain, the US, Australia, and Mexico (Hofstede 2010, 239–43).

1.3.6 Indulgence vs. Restraint

The very last dimension is about an indulgence and a restraint in cultures. The indulgence is characterized by having fun and enjoying life as individuals try to satisfy their longings. These people are described as positive and optimistic, but also as happier than as in the case of restraint. There is no pressure on gender roles and moral norms and on the thrift which is not too significant for them. They prefer to have freedom of speech as their main value. The high percentage of indulgence is found mainly in countries which are not wealthy and typically poor such as Nigeria, Ghana, Colombia, Venezuela as well as Mexico. On the other hand, there are cultures where the restraint prevails. These countries are characterized by pessimism and cynicism. Thus, gender rules are delimited, moral norms and the thrift are considered to be significant values in contrast with freedom of speech, which is not too important for them. Despite the fact, that smiling is considered common in indulgence cultures, in restraint ones it can be found suspicious. The examples of nations with the restraint traits are Egypt, Hong Kong, China, India and South Korea (Samovar 2012, 192–193).

1.4 The Importance of Intercultural Communication

The term intercultural communication was first used by American anthropologist Edward T. Hall in 1959. Hall was the first researcher who tried to describe and explained the importance of understanding culture and communication across nations (Beamer 2008, 30).

In his book named The Silent Language, he writes about Americans and their unintentional inappropriate behaviour towards foreign nations. He explained the case of American scholar travelling to Japan, where he gave a lecture about American history to Japanese professors. He did not speak Japanese, and he was not sure if Japanese professors spoke English, so he rather asked for an interpreter. After the lecture, professors were asked what they learned in the lecture, and American scholar found out that they did not understand fifty percent of what he said. He felt confused and agitated. As he later found out, the level of English that one possesses is the symbol of education in Japan. Thus, Japanese professors felt inferior and uneducated as American scholar asked for an interpreter (Hall 1959, 16–17).

Hall wanted to train American diplomats who were sent abroad about intercultural communication and differences as he did not want them to repeat previous mistakes as it had inadequate consequences. As a result, after the Second World War, the Foreign Service Institute was created to train and prepare American diplomats for going overseas. It was essential to understand the local culture for doing successful business (Leeds-Hurwitz 2009, 262-281).

1.4.1   Barriers to Intercultural Communication

There are many cultures and many different rules that should be followed in certain societies. It is difficult to define what is right and wrong in a given culture as there is always a possibility that somebody will be offended, and thus it will affect communication. For this reason, the main barriers in intercultural communication will be described to avoid possible failures during a conversation (Jandt 2018, 37).

The first barrier deals with anxiety which is the situation in which people feel uncomfortable, insecure as they do not know what is supposed to do in an intercultural environment. It is the fact that people require more information about particular situations (Jandt 2018, 56). The other barrier is about assuming similarity instead of difference. It deals with the matter of not possessing the knowledge about a new culture, and therefore individuals might behave in the way they are used to, not respecting the rules in a given country. Consequently, there is a high risk of misperceptions to occur (Jandt 2018, 39).

Thirdly, there is the barrier called ethnocentrism which is a bias that assumes that one's own culture is superior to others. It is believed that the things the way they are done is the only possible way. However, every culture is original, unique with its structure and customs (Martin 2013, 5). Ethnocentrism can also be called cultural nearsightedness which leads to the presumption that simple things are the same all around the world (Jandt 2018, 41).

The fourth barrier deals with nonverbal misinterpretations in intercultural communication. As the countries do not share the same language, many individuals rely on communication through nonverbal signals. Nevertheless, the problem is that nonverbal behaviour is also not the same in cultures around the world. As looking straight into one's eyes in Europe is natural and usual, on the contrary, in China or Korea it is considered very disrespectful. The understanding of nonverbal messages can come out mainly from the context. Otherwise, the usage of nonverbal communication itself would not make any sense (Jandt 2018, 126).

Last, the fifth barrier is related to the language in intercultural communication. The main barriers such as the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, problems in translation and language as nationalism will be explained (Jandt 2018, 131).

The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis was developed by Edward Sapir and Benjamin J. Whorf who assumed that thinking and cultural norms are determined by the language individuals speak. Every person lives only in a place with a possibility to use a familiar language, so a language has an impact on how people perceive the world (Jandt 2018, 132–33).

In linguistic relativity, there is no possibility to translate all words to their full meanings. The example is the Portuguese word saudade which is the feeling of missing loved people, moments that were once making pleasure and happiness to the individual (Wilson 2014). There are also different expressions within the dialects, countries as well as minds. For this reason, one does not have the intention to use it or does not exist in its own lives (Badhesha 2002).

Language is always considered as a symbol of a nation. People from different countries speak different languages. However, some nations have only one official language and some of them two or more. Also, some languages can be very similar as it is the case of Czech and Slovak languages. However, one thing remains, and thus, language is always considered as national identity (Jandt 2018, 145).

2 NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION

Non-verbal communication is an integral part of intercultural communication as well as communication itself. That is the reason why the power of non-verbal expressions with its types will be presented in this chapter.

2.1 The Importance of Non-verbal Communication

Non-verbal communication belongs to the daily life of an individual as one can observe it all around. Furthermore, there are many things to be said through nonverbal messages.

In the 1970s, Prof. Albert Mehrabian of the University of California in Los Angeles came up with the study showing that while communicating with others, people pay only 7% of their attention to what is said, then 38% to how it is said, especially to the use of tone of voice, the rhythm, speed and pauses made between spoken words. Lastly, an incredible 55% of their attention is going to body language, especially to gestures, postures, facial expressions and poses. Therefore, nowadays, it is crucial to know how to use these non-verbal messages to have effective interpersonal communication (Belludi 2008).

In today's society, there is a huge emphasis on the success of individuals, and in many cases, it is related to the capability to use verbal and non-verbal messages. These aspects can help people to enhance their interpersonal relationship as well as succeed in business. For this reason, it is crucial to understand the differences in verbal and non-verbal communication while interacting with others as it can have a huge impact on future relationships (Lucas 2018).

However, it is needed to explain what exactly non-verbal communication is and how it differs from the verbal one. Verbal communication is about delivering and receiving messages involving words. In particular, it is mainly about spoken words, written words as well as sign language (Hogan 2008, 8). During verbal communication, the information is exchanged within two or more individuals. It can help to make some misunderstandings clear or when the information is absent (Lucas 2018). The main difference from non-verbal communication is that while talking to others, it rarely happens that there are any misunderstandings and confusions. Also, the speed of the information changed is very fast, and thus it leads to quick response. What is more, as it was mentioned previously, verbal communication also consists of written words. Therefore, the participants can be both in different places and still can communicate, and there is also evidence of it as in written communication (Surbhi 2015).

On the other hand, non-verbal communication is communication without words, but the signs are used instead. It is comprised of gestures, postures, facial expressions, but also of touch, time, tone of voice, distance and last but not least of smell. Nevertheless, it also deals with the exchange of the information but in a different way. The difference is in the fact that when communicating non-verbally, a lot of confusions and misunderstandings can appear as sometimes the right meaning is not clear. Whereas verbal messages are sent quickly, the non-verbal ones are slower as they are based on the comprehension with other parties. However, body language is based on the presence as there is a need to see the other person's reactions, feelings, emotions and thus it is necessary for participants to be in one place together. Unlike verbal communication, there is no evidence as it is happening at the moment (Surbhi 2015).

Although verbal and non-verbal communications are very different, it should be noted that they are not contradictory, but they go hand in hand as verbal messages are complementary to body language and vice versa. In some cases, the emotions can be supported by the right body movements. In most cases, non-verbal communication serves as an indicator of the right meaning. These two aspects help each other to develop effective communication and cannot be separated from each other (Surbhi 2015). Nevertheless, the non-verbal messages are the products of the unconscious mind. They are not under control, and they are not known to the participant. The moves are random and unplanned as there are not any special principles of doing it (Hogan 2008, 4). The rule is that the words are controlled by an individual's conscious mind and on the contrary everything else is controlled through an unconscious mind (Hogan 2008, 6). There is no doubt about non-verbal communication being the most effective and powerful means of communication in terms of influencing others (Hogan 2008, 14).

Besides, every culture uses its own, unique non-verbal communication which is different to other nations. Furthermore, the same non-verbal signals are not used even within the same culture. Men and women communicate in a different way as well as individuals from different upper or lower social classes. There are many factors influencing people's non-verbal behaviour, for instance, their age, gender, level of education, their socioeconomic and cultural background as well as their preferences (Beamer 2011, 218).

2.2 Types of Non-verbal Communication

Non-verbal communication is a very comprehensive and specific process of exchanging information by using signs and movements. In many cases, it is very difficult to understand the meanings of the unspoken expressions as there are many different possibilities of interpretations so one can get confused easily. That is the reason why each element of non-verbal communication will be explained in this chapter.

2.2.1   Paralanguage

Paralanguage is identified as a coherency between verbal and non-verbal messages. This element does not use words at all but sounds instead. Paralanguage can be categorized into three parts, namely into vocal qualifiers, vocalization and voice quality. The last mentioned is considered to be a matter of every individual, and it is not related to culture. Vocal qualifiers consist of the pitch, volume, tone, tempo, and pauses of oral communication. If the speaker finishes the sentence with a low pitch and pause, it means that another person is expected to talk. In another case, if someone ends the sentence with a rise of a pitch and pause, it indicates a question mark and another person is expected to answer. On the contrary, if someone asks a question without pause not even raising a pitch, it signifies a rhetorical question and a speaker continues in talking. Also, if an individual finishes the sentences with a high pitch, it stands for uncertainty or self-doubt. Vocal qualifiers serve as "turn-taking" signals in a conversation. When people use the same indicators, there is a conversation without problems which flows. On the other hand, one party can use different intonation and it can leads to a state when one side is more dominant and does not let the other person contribute to a conversation (Beamer 2018, 220).

Vocalization also uses special noises without meaning which are identified as fillers in a conversation. The examples are "um," "ahem" or "er." However, the vocalization differs in every culture as well. In English, speakers use the words "like," "okay" or "you know" as fillers. There is no meaning of these sounds for native English speakers as it is used as a connection between sentences or for the fluency of speech (Beamer 2018, 221).

2.2.2   Eye Contact

It is said that the eyes serve as windows to the soul. Eyes can have an enormous influence and effect on a conversation as it is the first place where people look while talking and also it is the first perceived indicator in non-verbal communication. The power of eye contact

lies in how long and with which intensity it is made because it can have many particular meanings (Hogan 2008, 37).

Most countries in Europe, as well as the US, Great Britain or Canada, prefer direct eye contact while communicating with others. It is considered polite, respectful and appropriate in terms of brief eye contact which is assumed to be usual. In case people try to avoid maintaining direct eye contact, it can be a sign of disrespectfulness, unfriendliness or insecurity. On the other hand, when someone stares at others, it makes other people feel uncomfortable and fearful. There is the exception when prolonged eye contact is considered to be appropriate as when two people are attracted to each other, and it is the sign of interest. Nonetheless, when men stare at women who are not interested, it is considered inappropriate, and women can start feeling unsafe (Chaney 2005, 122–123).

However, maintaining direct eye contact is not typical for all cultures and can be found rude. For example in Japan, China and Indonesia, where people usually stare below one's chin as direct eye contact is considered as inappropriate and disrespectful. People associate direct eye contact with bad manners, so they avoid eye contact to show their respect to others. In addition, in many countries, positions in society or gender take into account. As in Hindi society, castes determine the people's social status and individuals from different social classes are not allowed to maintain direct eye contact with other social classes. Another example is in Egypt when men and women who do not know each other avoid eye contact as well (Chaney 2005, 122).

There is also the power of not maintaining eye contact. If one party is not interested in a topic or wants to end a conversation, simply looks somewhere else. Thus, an individual breaks eye contact, and it serves as the signal for the end of a conversation. However, not looking into one's eyes can be found rude and disrespectful or in case women find other parties attractive, they tend to look away more often as the sign of submission (Hogan 2008, 37–38).

There are also many specific symbols that can be identified through pupils. In case the pupils are contracted, it is the sign of unhappiness, anger or negativity. On the contrary, when the pupils are dilated, it means that person is happy, satisfied and excited. The movements of the pupils are not under control, so if two parties are attracted to each other, their pupils tend to dilate as the sign of interest. The dilated eyes can also be found in advertisements for makeup as it is found more appealing (Hogan 2008, 38–39).

2.2.3 Facial Expressions

Facial expressions are considered to be the most significant non-verbal signals of all. Many emotions, feelings and thoughts can be expressed through one's face as there is a huge amount of muscles that move within every second. Facial part consists of a head, face, neck, eyes, nose, mouths, cheeks, eyebrows and all of them have a particular meaning when moving (Cherry 2019).

When it comes to head movements, tilting of a head is the sign that one feels comfortable, in a good mood and is interested in a conversation. On the contrary, when a person feels stressed, uncomfortable or anxious, an individual never tilts his head. In terms of neck touches, it is associated with insecurity. When someone touches his neck areas or dimples, it shows that a person is confused, threatened or has doubts (Navarro 2010, 65).

Concerning facial expressions, when the person's eyebrows are furrowed its meaning depends on a situation. It can be indicated as unhappiness, anger, concentration, confusion or concern and when a person also touches his head, it is the sign of troubling. When a chin is up-lifted, one is perceived as a confident individual and sometimes can be thought of as snobbish behaviour. On the other hand, if a chin moves down, it is the sign of lack of confidence (Navarro 2010, 65–66).

The other issue is associated with eye blocking movements. When an individual covers his eyes, it is the sign of disagreement, discomfort or dislike. If a person touches or closes his eyes while talking with others, it shows that a person has bad or negative emotions. When the eyelids are compressed, it is an extreme example of negative feelings. Squinting is considered to be also a part of blocking movements as if it is followed by lowered eyebrows. It means that an individual does not like something or feels uncomfortable. On the contrary, when the eyebrows are arched, it indicates something positive, satisfying, it can happen while surprise or when a person meets other friends or family. However, the rate of blinks depends on the feeling as well. If a person feels very uncomfortable, stressed or is in a difficult situation, the blink rate is very rapid (Navarro 2010, 66–70).

When it comes to nose movements, usually the nose is crinkled, and it signifies that person does not like a particular thing or does not agree with it. There are also differences in the smiles as it can be a true or a false smile. Everything depends on the movement of the eye muscles. In term of the false smile, there is usually no movement of the eyebrows and the muscles around the eye. The lips are closed, and the corners of the lips go to the back of the cheek. Contrariwise, the true smile is full of emotions, the muscles around the

eyes are involved as the wrinkles are created, arching of the eyebrows is added as well as the teeth are revealed, and the corners of the lips go up to the cheekbones (Navarro 2010, 71).

The other mouth movements are associated with feelings, if a person feels stressed, the mouth is closed, and the lips are tightened or compressed. In extreme states, the mouth creates the shape of upside-down U, and it indicates the real disgust or very negative feelings. Also pursuing the lips can signify a disagreement. Another issue is associated with licking lips, biting nails or chewing things as it is the sign of nervousness and an individual tries to relieve the level of stress or tries to hide the insecurity. A sneer or eyes rolling is a symbol of disrespect and contempt (Navarro 2010, 72–75).

2.2.4   Gestures

Gestures include movements of hands, arms and fingers and it is considered to be the most complex type of body language. Gestures are used as aids and tools in conversations as it helps to communicate more effectively. All gestures are dependent on the size, intensity, frequency as well as on the context in which they are used. Gestures can also signify the relationship between a person and a topic. If an individual is fully interested or passionate about a topic, the movements of hands and arms are frequently used. On the other hand, if a person is bored, the movements of hands are rarely seen (Hogan 2008, 45).

There are several movements that have meanings without words. If a person is shrugging his shoulders, it means that he has no knowledge or is not sure about some issue. Waving of the arms means greeting or saying goodbye, putting index finger in front of the mouth stands for "be quiet" and placing the arms straight in front, showing the palms says "stop" (Hogan 2008, 43–44).

There are also some movements expressing the dominance and confidence, and thus it is concretely placing hands at the waist. This is the very powerful movement, and for this reason, it is often seen in law and security environment or the military. Another position showing dominance is putting the intertwined hands behind the head. It is usually used by superior people as the sign of power and comfort. Another typical pose for powerful people is spread fingers leaning on the table as the indication of authority and confidence. One of the common manager positions is also touching the fingertips of both hands together as the sign of extreme confidence, knowledge and focus, and usually, it is made without conscious (Navarro 2010, 53–56).

The positions of thumbs are also playing an important role while communicating. When the fingers are intertwined with thumbs heading up, it shows the confidence. On the other hand, with intertwined fingers and hidden thumbs, the message is much different. It indicates insecurity, low confidence and the same comes with the thumbs placed in the pockets. There are also some extreme examples of hand movements. When people feel very stressed, they usually rub their interlaced fingers, stroke their hands together or wring their hands. These movements signify extreme anxiety, insecurity and people try to release the extreme inner tension (Navarro 2010, 60–61).

The other gesture such as putting the clasped hands behind the back is the symbol of distance as a person wants to have some space, or as a sign of better social status. While communicating, it is also important to pay attention to the position of palms. People who show their palms openly towards the other party are interested and feel comfortable. When a person hides the palms or hands, it indicates the insecurity. In general, individuals who use their palms frequently are more accepted by others (Navarro 2010, 56–59).

2.2.5   Posture and Body Movements

Posture and other body movements are very significant non-verbal expressions. It helps individual to recognize if other parties pay attention, like or dislike conversations or how they feel (Samovar 2012, 280).

At first, the movements of legs can reveal many meanings in non-verbal communication. It can be often seen that a person is repetitively jiggling with a leg or repetitively moving with feet to the sides and all of these movements indicates the high level of discomfort. The way people stand can also have a huge impact on the relationship. The sign of interest can be seen when someone moves his torso towards a person who speaks with. Furthermore, pointing the feet away from a person standing in front signifies that a person does not like a conversation and prefers to leave for uncomfortable feelings. Crossed legs while seated tell a lot as well. If two people are sitting next to each other and one person's leg on the top is pointing towards the other person, it is the sign of interest. On the contrary, when a person feels uncomfortable, the leg is crossed in another direction to create the barrier. Also, while sitting, cleansing legs with hands indicates the negative feeling full of anxiety (Navarro 2010, 42–50).

The confidence in posture can be supported by an erect stand with shoulders back and with a chin up. This posture is often seen in managerial positions. On the other hand, in so-called closed posture, shoulders are dropped, hands are crossed on the chest, backs are

hunched, a chin pointing down, legs crossed and palms are hidden. These are examples of anxiety, boredom or low self-confidence (Giles 2019).

2.2.6 Touching

Touch is a very essential and powerful feature of non-verbal communication as it has many meanings and interpretations. Touch can be experienced professionally, for example at the doctor, dentist and hairdresser or during fitness training. There is a social type of touch where a handshake is found, for example, when a person helps others from and to a car or with a coat. A friendship touch is about hugging, tapping on the back or placing the arm around one's shoulder. In intimacy contact, touching includes a kiss, holding hands or touching a face. It is important to say that physical contact usually has many purposes and its use depends on a situation (Hogan 2008, 46–47). In addition, touching make people happier as it releases the hormone oxytocin and creates positive emotions, and thus it helps to improve the relationships even business profits (Navarro 2010, 164).

While giving a handshake which is usually the first contact that is between two people, it is necessary to do a proper handshake, but it depends on the context as well as on the cultural background. In the proper handshake, two palms are met with the medium squeeze, two parties looking straight to each others' eyes and the true smile is given. If there is a need to emphasize the handshake, it is not recommended to touch the other person's hand but the elbow instead. However, it always depends on the situation and culture (Navarro 2010, 162–65).

2.2.7 The Usage of Space

The individual's use of space is usually given by culture but also depends on the strength of a relationship and on a situation. In general, the distance between individuals can be divided into four zones (Alessandra 2012).

In the first intimate zone, the distance is less than two feet, and it is typical for couples in love or parents and children. That is the reason why it is not often seen in business. Secondly, in the personal zone, the distance is about two to four feet. This is the most used zone in one's life, and it serves for friends and business meetings as one is close enough to hear and rarely touches the other party. The third, social zone is characterized by the distance from four to twelve feet, and it is used for professional or social meetings. Lastly, the public zone is about more than twelve feet apart, and thus it serves to public speakers who need to have space from the observers (Alessandra 2012).

However, the use of space is different culture by culture and individual by individual. For instance, Americans are usually more distanced than people from Latin America or Arab countries. Japanese people prefer much more space than Americans and standing too close to them is the sign of dominance or can be interpreted as sexual harassment (Chaney 2005, 121).

2.2.8   Attitudes toward Time

An attitude toward time or so-called chronemics is the way how individuals perceive the matter of time. Furthermore, it differs in every culture. Cultures can be divided into monochronic and polychronic ones (Chaney 2005, 119).

Germany, Switzerland, Great Britain, the US as well as Singapore or Malaysia are considered to be monochronic countries as they value the importance of time. Thus, most attention is paid to punctuality. If a person comes to a meeting on time, it is very respectful and appropriate as the time is not wasted or lost with waiting. On the other hand, coming late is considered very rude and annoying. It is preferred to do only one activity at the same time because it is more effective in monochronic nations. Otherwise, doing two things simultaneously such as reading journal at the meeting is considered inappropriate and disrespectful (Chaney 2005, 119–20).

On the contrary, polychronic countries, such as those in Latin America, Arabia or in the Mediterranean, prefer to do several things at one time and they do not mind being interrupted. Organization of time is often not planned, and people are more valuable than time schedules (Chaney 2005, 119).

2.2.9   Appearance

The appearance of each person is unique and tells a lot about him. The way people look and dress can be the sign of the social or economic level, sophistication or cultural background. It is always necessary to be dressed accordingly in a particular situation. People can influence others with the power of how they look or are dressed. One research, done by two economists Daniel Hamermesh and Jeff Biddle, shows that good-looking people are hired more often and tend to have about fifteen percent higher salaries (Navarro 2010, 103–5).

2.3 Non-verbal Communication in Business

The correct usage of non-verbal messages in business can have a great impact on the course of the meeting. It has an influence on how a person is treated and perceived. The business environment is a very specific place full of norms, rules and competition and thus it requires different non-verbal communication. It is necessary to be aware of the body language used as communication is then much more effective and satisfying (Hogan 2008, 129).

During negotiations or meetings, it is always essential to choose the right place to sit as it determines one's importance. The most convenient position for negotiation of two people is next to each other or at the corner of the table. In addition, sitting on the right if a person is a right-handed or vice versa. It is said that sitting on the left with a right-handed person is inconvenient as a person moving his head to the left shortly feels anxiety. On the other hand, sitting in the meeting directly opposite the person creates a very competitive position. While meeting with a group of people, it is recommended to sit along the sides and let the boss be in the front at the head of the table (Hogan 2008, 135–36).

While negotiating, it is necessary to use "mirroring" body language as the customer will feel more relaxed and comfortable. Moreover, minimized gestures and using the voice correctly and calmly can impress and influence the client as well as determine the quality of the meeting (Hogan 2008, 134–35). Nowadays, it is also common to see shielding behaviour at the meetings as a person plays with the watches, adjusts the shirt buttons or uses the phone to reduce the anxiety or nervousness (Navarro 2010, 51).

In the office environment, office equipment and furniture can indicate the importance of the workplace. It is common that the most powerful and influential people have their offices on the top of the building with lots of windows (Beamer 2011, 236–37).

2.3.1   Non-verbal signals and Other Cultures

As it was mentioned before, non-verbal communication is the unique process of exchanging information and varies from culture to culture. Every nation has its own non-verbal language and what is relevant in one nation does not have to be appropriate in another one. Knowing these differences can not only help to have a better understanding of the foreign culture but also improve the relationships and make the communication more effective.

The difference can be seen even in the way people smile. In the US, individuals tend to smile a lot, showing their teeth and smiling is important to them. On the contrary,

Japanese culture takes it differently. Men usually do not smile in public and women do not show their teeth while smiling. It is the reason why they often put their hands in front of their mouth. In East Asia generally, smiling and laughing is considered as the sign of embarrassment, nervousness and discomfort (Beamer 2011, 224–25).

There are also some different explanations for gestures from different cultures for instance raised thumbs are the symbol of "okay" in the US. However, in West Africa and Australia it is considered rude. Pointing with the index finger in the US or with the little finger in Germany is assumed to be appropriate while in Asia it is impolite and that is why the pointing is made with the thumbs. In Arabia, the pointing has offensive meaning. Showing a circle with the thumb and index finger in the US or some parts of Europe is interpreted as "okay" sign while in Japan or Korea it means money. In Arab countries is the sign of aggression while in Latin America it is the sign of sexual harassment (Samovar 2012, 282).

The intensity with which the gestures are made also varies across cultures. Arab men tend to use many gestures while speaking as well as those in America. On the other hand, Japanese men are reserved in this matter, and people tend to think that sometimes Japanese are not interested in a conversation. Instead, they are not used to use their space a lot as their territory is usually limited in Japan (Beamer 2011, 226–27).

Another significant difference is seen in the way people shakes their hands. In American and German culture, the handshake is quite strong and firm, but the French handshake is tended to be softer. In comparison, Japanese handshake is different as people tend to bow with their straight back and stand far enough to have a personal space. On the other hand, Germans sometimes only bow with their heads while shaking their hands. Latin Americans tend to do a firm handshake but usually also put the hand on the elbow of the other party (Beamer 2011, 230–31).

3 METHODOLOGY

In this part, the main goals, research questions and research methods will be presented.

Main Goals

Based on the research results, the main goals of the thesis is to present specific aspects of non-verbal communication in Malaysian culture and to make recommendations on how to communicate in the business environment.

Research Questions

To meet the main goals of the thesis, the following research questions were stated:

RQ 1: Are there any differences in non-verbal communication between the Czechs and Malaysians?

RQ 2: Do these differences have an impact on intercultural business communication?

Research Methods

The qualitative research observation was chosen for this bachelor's thesis.

Catherine Marshall and Gretchen Rossman in their book called Designing Qualitative Research defined the observation as *the systematic noting and recording of events, behaviours, interactions, and artifacts (objects) in the social setting* (Marshall 2016, 143).

The observation helps the participant to catch the activities through moving in the setting as well as through senses. The visual, auditory and touching skills are used for the description of the event, and those actions are also observed in the setting (Marshall 2016, 143).

The data were collected through non-participant observing as the researcher did not influence or interfere with the course of the meeting. The observer was sitting in the distance and was making notes of every participant (Creswell 2018, 168).

The advantages associated with observation are for example that the feelings, emotions, relationships among participants and interactions are seen. The researcher is focused on the time spent on different areas or topics and how things are organized. The observation is a good tool to see people in action at the same time in one place with all its components (Kawulich 2005).

On the other hand, there are also limitations in the observation process. The researcher can have a lack of interest in doing the observation, and thus the results and the quality of

the work is not appropriate. Also, people observed can feel very uncomfortable about the presence of the observer. Moreover, every person has a different understanding of things, and thus the different interpretations of the observed events can occur. In addition, the researcher can be biased, and the research is then more subjectively than objectively aimed (Kawulich 2005).

The reason for choosing the qualitative observation method for collecting data was that it is the most convenient way how to analyze non-verbal communication. The facial expressions, gestures and eye movements were properly observed as the participants were located in one place at the same time.

II.   ANALYSIS

4   INTRODUCTION TO MALAYSIAN CULTURE

Malaysia is a unique nation, not only for its exotic fauna and flora but also for its ethnic composition of the population. It is known as a multicultural, multiracial and multireligious country. This federal constitutional monarchy consists of three dominant cultures and thus Malaysian, Chinese and Indian. All the ethnicities are very different and various because every culture recognizes other values. The total number of people living in Malaysia is more than 32 million (World Population Review ©2019), and from this figure the largest ethnic group is represented by Malays (50.2%), then Chinese (22.4%), Indians (6.7%), the rest of the inhabitants consists of indigenous (11.8%) and other people (8.9%). However, all three main cultures recognize different religions. Most of the Malaysian population are Malays, and thus the official religion of the country is Islam, concretely 61.3% of the people are Muslims. Another religious group consists of Buddhist with a percentage of 19.8, then Christians with 9.2%, Hindu religion with 6.3% and the least numerous groups are Chinese folk-religionist with a rate of 1.3%. Lastly, 2.1% is formed by other religions such as Sikhism and Animism. Another important fact to mention is that Malaysia has two official languages and thus Malaysian and English language (Lockard 2019).

4.1 Malaysian Culture

The vast majority of the population are Malays who are Muslims by law. These people are highly committed to the Islam religion. Many mosques can be found throughout the country and Muslims are called five times a day for prayers. Even though this religion is the most dominant one in Malaysia, it is also the youngest one. It was brought to Malaysia in the twelve century by Indian traders (Bedford 2018). However, there are two laws introduced in this plural society. First one is called Sharia law, and it is considered to be only for Muslims, the second law is for everyone else (Hays 2015). Sharia is the special and sacred law of Islam which was revealed by Prophet Muhammad. In the Islam religion, God regulates the life of Muslim people in all aspects and parts of their life and often it is understood as a way of life (Shamsy 2019). These religious norms are the reasons why Muslims do not drink alcohol, do not eat pork, fast during the holy month Ramadan and women do not reveal almost any part of their bodies (Mustafa 2013). In Malaysia, all Muslim women wear a hijab, a scarf covering a head and a neck. Some women also wear a niqab which is a veil covering their face except eyes. The reason for covering is written in the Quran, and it is said that women are supposed to dress modestly, and thus they wear

long sleeved and ankle-length clothes as well. However, some of them can cover themselves as a sign of religious identity (Johnson 2018).

In Islam culture, men and women are not allowed to touch each other, unless they are blood-related or in marriage. As it is written in the Quran, even Prophet Muhammad did not make any physical contact with women. Muslims are not allowed to hug, kiss, shake hands, or high five with the opposite gender. Both genders should also not look at each other as any sexual interaction is unlawful according to God. Not touching and not looking at the different genders serves like a preventative measure (Purmul 2014). However, in case of greeting with opposite genders, males and females put their hands on their heart and say "Salam" which is greeting used in Malaysia meaning "peace be upon you" (Thamiem 2016).

4.2 Chinese Culture

The second largest ethnic group is represented by Chinese citizens who came to Malaysia between the fifteenth and twentieth century for a vision of a better life (Hockton 2018). Chinese people speak the Chinese language, but there are many different dialects found throughout the country. They also recognize many different religions, some of them Confucianism, Buddhism, Taoism or in small numbers Christianity (Lockard 2019).

Nowadays, thousands of Chinese move to Malaysia every year to have better conditions for living in comparison to China and also many expats move in for business. They enjoy the tropical weather, other Chinese communities that are already in the country, so the adaptation is much easier for them. The fact that Malaysia is a multicultural country is an incentive for many Chinese, and it makes their decisions easier (Sukumaran 2017).

4.3 Indian Culture

The third ethnic group consists of Indian citizens who were brought to Malaysia in the nineteenth and twentieth century during the British colonial rule. Indian immigrants worked as labourers, miners or on palm and tea plantations. They believed that moving to Malaysia ensured them better conditions for living and they would not have to follow the caste system. Nowadays, most of the Malaysian Indians recognize Hinduism with its colourful and ornate temples. There is also a small number of Indians who are Muslims. However, Indians speak their language called Tamil and English (Hays 2015).

5   PRIMARY RESEARCH

The primary research was undertaken at the University of Malaya in Kuala Lumpur. The group observed was the student organization called PEKUMA (Persatuan Ekonomi Universiti Malaya in the Malay language, and the University of Malaya Economic Association in English) from the Faculty of Economics and Administration. This meeting was focused on the organization of academic and social events for all students who were interested in economic topics. The primary goal of the PEKUMA organization was to create equal opportunities for all representatives and to develop their soft skills as well as to increase the employability and the ability of the students to succeed in companies or organizations. It was also essential for PEKUMA to establish a beneficial relationship with companies that they were cooperating with. However, there are also other organizations from the University of Malaya that PEKUMA was collaborating with. Such examples are the University of Malaya Accounting Club and the University of Malaya Law Society as together they created a wider range of events and opportunities (based on the author's own experience).

The group observed consisted of nine students in total, seven of whom were females and two of whom were males. Thus, the composition of the group was very intercultural. There were five Malaysians, three Chinese and one Indian, so all three cultures living in Malaysia were observed during the PEKUMA meeting. Moreover, the group consisted of the President of the University Malaya Economic Society, the President of the University of Malaya Law Society, the President of the University of Malaya Accounting Club and the rest of the participants were consisted of committees. The post-mortem meeting was held on 12th December 2018, and the session discussed the event called National Budget Dissection 2018 which was organized on 30th November 2018.

5.1 Research Evaluation

In this part, all the participants of the PEKUMA meeting will be analyzed. The main focus will be on facial expressions, eye movements, and gestures. As it was mentioned previously, there were nine participants in total from different cultural backgrounds.

Firstly, the participants greeted each other at the beginning of the meeting, however, all in a different way. Male participants greeted each other enthusiastically as they shook their hands shortly, looked into each others' eyes directly and made a little bow with their heads. Otherwise, other participants did not make any handshakes. Female Muslim participants greeted the opposite gender by saying "Salam," and placed their right hands on their heart, but there was no direct eye contact with the male participants. So there was not any physical contact as well as it is prohibited in the Islam religion between opposite genders.

Different greetings were seen between Chinese, Muslim and Indian female participants as they said "hi" and raised and waved with their hands at the same time. Greetings between male Muslim, female Indian and female Chinese were also made with raised hands and by saying "hi." All the participants came to the meeting on time, and nobody was late. For the multicultural reason of the session, all participants were speaking English all the time. The conversation between participants flew without any problems as all of them used the same indicators in communication, and everyone knew whose turn in conversation was.

Figure 1: The Group Observed

Source: Own Research

The first person analyzed was the male student, the committee, who was the Malaysian Muslim. During the whole meeting, his behaviour was inconspicuous as he did not engage in the conversation with others in comparison with other participants. The barrier to communication was created at the moment when he put the laptop on the table and was hiding behind it. He spent most of the time of the meeting watching others rather than talking. During this time, his mouth was closed and sometimes compressed as he felt a little bit stressed. However, when he was talking, he always looked directly into all participants' eyes, but eye contact was never prolonged. The movements of his eyebrows were minimal and sometimes were furrowed as the sign of his concentration. He always put his hand in front of his mouth or often touched his lips as the sign of high discomfort during the meeting. While talking he did not open his mouth properly, and the articulation was weak, and that is the reason why other participants had difficulties in understanding him. In terms of his gestures, he did not use a lot of space, when he was talking. He was also not showing his palms to others, and his left hand was under the table the whole time of the session, and it was the sign of his insecure feeling. When it comes to his body

movements, he was repetitively jiggling with his leg under the table, and it was the sign that he did not feel comfortable during the meeting.

The second person analyzed was the Chinese non-Muslim female student. Moreover, she was the President of the University of Malaya Accounting Club. She was very active during the whole meeting as she engaged in the conversation with others. While talking, she maintained eye contact with all participants. Nevertheless, in some moments she turned her eyes away, especially on the table in front of her. It was not the sign of shyness, but it was given by her culture instead. She did not want to prolong eye contact as it is considered rude in Chinese culture. She was also very enthusiastic while talking. Her articulation was very expressive, and thus her cheeks were moving up quickly and forcefully. Hence the wrinkles around the eyes were created. Although she had powerful facial expressions, the movements of her eyebrows were significant, and the blink rate was rapid as she was passionate about the topic discussed. When it comes to her gesticulation, she was very expressive. She used her hands and arms frequently while talking as she was very interested in many topics. The spoken words were always emphasized with the movements of hands. Moreover, she was also showing palms towards others as the sign of comfort, and that was the reason why a lot of attention was paid to her. In extreme examples of gesticulation, she moved with her hands even above her head while talking. Most of the time of the meeting, she supported her head with her hand. In this case, it was not the sign of boredom as she was very interested in the topic discussed. Nevertheless, it showed that she was thinking about things that other participants were talking about. In some cases, even her head tilted to the side as the sign of interest, and she also put her fingers on the chin. Her gestures were very strong, and her body movement was restless as she did not sit still. In the case of laughing, she put her hand in front of her mouth, and the reason for doing so was due to her cultural background. As in China showing teeth while laughing is taken as the sign of embarrassment and nervousness. On the other hand, from her non-verbal behaviour, it was observed that she was not feeling insecure, stressed or uncomfortable during the meeting as any signs of negative feelings were not observed.

The third person analyzed was the Indian non-Muslim female student and the committee. This participant was very open and friendly to others as she was engaging in the conversation a lot and she was also integrating with others in terms of non-verbal messages. For instance, the friendly glimpse with a smile was given to other members to support them. When it comes to her eye contact with others, she was very nervous and insecure. While speaking, she maintained direct eye contact only for a few seconds and

then looked away. While listening, she was looking at the table or at her hands which were under the table most of the time. Her speech and the way she acted were very insecure and nervous as she did not feel comfortable. During her speech, she finished the sentences with a high pitch and then was looking confusedly at others as the sign of high uncertainty and self-doubt. Also, she was changing her voice many times while speaking as she was not sure what she was talking about. As it was observed by the researcher, she found it very disruptive that the researcher was around, watching, making notes and taking photos as her nervous glimpses during the meeting were caught. In terms of her facial expressions, this Indian committee used a very strong articulation, and other participants did not have any difficulties in understanding her. The true smile was often seen on her face as her cheeks moved up, the teeth were revealed, the corners of her lips went up to the cheekbones, and the wrinkles around the eyes were created. Thus, all the muscles around the eyes were involved as well, and the eyebrows were arched while talking as the sign of her high enthusiasm. Her gesticulation was very significant as the usage of hands and arms was expressive and frequent while talking. So, it was seen that the student was very passionate about the given topic. On the other hand, although she was very interested in the subject, she felt nervous most of the time. She was often stroking her hands or her thighs as she was trying to release the inner tension. Similar to the student number two, while laughing the hand in front of her mouth was seen, but in this case, it was the sign of her shy nature.

The fourth person analyzed was the Chinese non-Muslim female student and the committee. This participant was open to others and had a confident speech. She used an expressive gesticulation while talking. The palms were seen almost all the time of her speech, and when she wanted to emphasize what she said, the committee slightly banged on the table, and thus all the participants paid attention to her. All the sentences were finished with the low pitch and paused. It signified that she was sure and confident about things being said and she also let other people share their opinions. So, her speech was more confident than the speech of the Indian participant, who finished the sentences with high pitch and was uncertain about things she said. When it comes to the facial expressions of the Chinese committee, her articulation was very expressive and significant as she opened her mouth properly. Nevertheless, she sometimes put her hand in front of her mouth, and other participants had difficulties in understanding her. The wide smile was also frequently seen on her face. Hence the corners of the lips went up to the cheekbones, consequently, the teeth were revealed, and the wrinkles around the eyes were created. In case of a sudden burst of laughter, her eyes were compressed, wrinkles were created and

the mouth widely opened. She kept direct eye contact with others during her speech, but as it was in the case of the Chinese participant number two, eye contact was maintained only for a few seconds and then it was stopped. Hereby, she was showing others her respect for them. The significant movements of her eyebrows were seen only in case when she got excited about some ideas. According to her frequent usage of gestures, it can be said, that she was very interested in the subject of the meeting. However, in the second half of the meeting, her approach started being different. She did not engage in the conversation so much, and she preferred to listen to others. While listening, her body gestures changed. She was sitting with crossed hands on her chest most of the time, or she supported her head with hand while listening to others. At this time of the meeting, her interest lowered as she was also looking somewhere else in the room and was repeatedly adjusting her clothes. As she stopped contributing to the conversation, a little discomfort was seen as in the example of her crossed hands on the chest.

The fifth person analyzed was the Malaysian Muslim female student and the President of the University of Malaya Economics Society (PEKUMA). The appearance of this participant was different as she was the Muslim female and wore a hijab which was covering her head. This Malaysian participant was the most important person in the meeting and should be in charge of the whole gathering. However, her facial expressions, gestures and attitude did not correspond with her status in the economic society. As it was observed by the researcher, she was the most nervous and insecure person of all participants. She did not engage in the conversation with others a lot, she only joined the conversation twice, and otherwise, she was sitting silently and listening to others. As she was listening to the other participants, her nervousness was obvious as she was often stroking her hands together, rubbing her interlaced fingers or wringing her hands. These movements signified her anxiety and insecurity during the meeting and through these non-verbal movements she was trying to release the extreme inner tension. Other examples of the non-verbal barriers were created when she crossed her hands on the table as well as under the table or held her elbows with her palms or adjusted her watches. The fact that is important to be mentioned is that when she was speaking to other participants, she was looking at the table most of the time, in some rare cases she looked only into females' eyes. During the whole meeting, eye contact with male Muslim participants was not observed. Even when she was listening, she was rather looking at the table or somewhere else than at the male speaking. She totally avoided direct eye contact with males. Even when the Muslim male, the participant number eight, was speaking, the female Muslim

participant was rather looking at another Muslim female sitting next to him, at the participant number seven who were not speaking, than at the male participant who shared his opinions with the group. She was also so insecure during her speech that she was looking at the table more often than at the members of the gathering and she gently raises her chin when speaking. She was very shy in presenting herself. When it comes to her facial expressions, her mouth was closed most of the time of the meeting, and when smiling, the true smile was not seen. Although the teeth were revealed, other facial muscles, such as muscles around the eyes were not involved, and thus the eye wrinkles were not created. This participant was so nervous that even when smiling, she could not relax. Even her sitting position was not relevant as she was sitting at the corner of the table and shared the leading position with another person, in this case with the Chinese participant number four, who were not in the same status as was this Muslim female president of the association. Also, while speaking, she was pointing on other participants with her thumb, not with her index finger, as it is more respectful in Malaysian culture.

The other, sixth, person analyzed was the Malaysian Muslim female student and the committee. The researcher observed similar non-verbal patterns like in the case of the Muslim female participant number five. This committee also wore a hijab. She was also rather watching and listening to others than speaking. The interaction with other members was not frequent. She put her hands on her belly, on or under the table and was stroking her hands frequently as the sign of her insecurity and discomfort during the session. So her usage of space was very limited as she did not use her hands to emphasize things she said at all. Instead, she let her hands freely on her belly. When she was speaking, her articulation was poor and spoke very quietly, and that is the reason why participants had difficulties in understanding her. The sentences were often finished with the high pitch as the sign of insecurity in what she said. While speaking, she was looking only at the table, in a few seconds she tried to make eye contact with other female members, but she rather looked away. Sometimes, she was even looking above the level of eyes of the participants, concretely on the wall behind them. However, similar to the case of the President of the Economic Association, she totally avoided eye contact with Muslim male participants. She was also looking at the other females instead of looking at the speaking Muslim male.

The seventh person analyzed was the Malaysian Muslim female student and the committee. This student was also wearing a hijab. This member did not engage in the conversation at all. She created the barrier to others as she was looking at the laptop which was on her thighs most of the time of the session. At one moment her non-interaction was

broken as the Muslim male participant sitting next to her asked her about her opinion on the topic discussed. While answering, she was very shy in her speech as she was looking under the table, did not make any eye contact with any participant and was nervously stroking her hands. The sentences were finished with the high pitch as insecurity in what she said. Even while listening, the signs of discomfort were seen as she was touching her chest or rubbing with her interlaced fingers.

The eighth person analyzed was the Malaysian Muslim male student, and his status was the President of the University of Malaya Law Society. This member acted accordingly to his status in the economic society. He was the most active person in the meeting, engaging in the discussion a lot and contributes his opinions. His gesticulation was also the most expressive one from this group as he used a lot of space. He was showing his palms, using his hands frequently and very quickly to emphasize things he said, sometimes he even banged on the table. When it comes to his facial expressions, his articulation was significant as he opened his mouth properly, so there were not any problems in understanding him. He also finished the sentences with the low pitch as he was certain about what he was talking about. While speaking, he maintained direct eye contact with all members. This participant was highly respected by others as everyone paid a lot of attention to him. The true wide smile was also observed on his face as the corners of the lips went up to the cheekbones, and his teeth were revealed, and thus the wrinkles around the eyes were created. Also, the movements of his eyebrows were the most significant ones from the group. When he was excited about any ideas, his eyebrows were arched or furrowed as the sign of his concentration. Sometimes as he listened to one's opinion, he supported his head with his hand as another example of his concentration. On the other hand, while listening to others, little signs of discomfort and insecurity were observed as he was stroking his hands under the table, rubbing his hands on his thighs or hiding his hands between his thighs.

The last, ninth, person analyzed was the Chinese non-Muslim female student and the committee. She was only listening during the first half of the meeting, and she did not engage in the conversation at all. However, she contributed her opinions in the second half of the meeting. She felt very uncomfortable and insecure during the whole session. While listening, she put her crossed hands on the table, rubbed her wrists as she put her hands in front of her mouth. She also put her hand in front of her mouth while speaking or she was rubbing her hands on her thighs as the sign of the nervousness and insecurity. Her articulation was also poor and spoke very quietly, so the participants were struggling with

understanding her. Her facial expressions were also not significant. Her movements of the eyebrows were rare and minimal. Direct eye contact was not often seen as she maintained eye contact only for a few seconds and then looked away or under the table. Also, as in the case of participants number two and four, she was showing her respect towards others by looking away and did not prolong eye contact. Her sitting position was also problematic as the Muslim male participant number eight often made the barrier with his back to her, and she could not interact with others properly.

At the end of the meeting, all the members said goodbye, and thus in the following way. There was a similar situation as at the beginning of the session. In the case of Muslim male and female participants, the final handshakes between these parties were not made. Muslim males members faced opposite Muslim females, shortly looked into each other's eyes, in case of female members the look was more at the male's chin, then they put their hands on their hearts, and bowed a bit with their bodies and heads. Otherwise, two Muslim males said goodbye to each other with the proper handshake. On the other hand, the final handshakes were made between other non-Muslim females and Muslim males. This hand-shake was assumed to show respect towards other members from different cultural back-grounds. Furthermore, all Muslim and non-Muslim female participants shook their hands at the end of the meeting.

5.2 Answering Research Questions

In this part, the research questions, which were stated in the methodology part, are answered. The first question stated is: Are there any differences in non-verbal communication between the Czechs and Malaysians?

In comparison with Czechs, there are many differences analyzed in this particular Malaysian group regarding non-verbal expressions. The most significant dissimilarities are in the case of Muslim participants and are primarily connected with greetings, and thus touching and personal space, eye contact and gestures.

The Muslim female participants did not make any handshakes with Muslim male members at the beginning as well as at the end of the meeting. The touching or physical contact was not seen. It is given in their Islamic culture that opposite genders are not allowed to touch each other unless they are blood-related. That is the reason why in Muslim culture, not making a handshake with the opposite gender is considered a common way of behaviour. It also shows respect towards the religion they follow.

On the other hand, in the Czech business environment, not making a handshake is considered a disrespectful and inappropriate way of behaviour. It can be interpreted as rude and impolite towards another person.

Another difference was connected with eye contact. All three Muslim females presented in the session did not make direct eye contact with Muslim male members during the whole meeting. Nonetheless, in Malaysian and especially in Muslim culture, it is assumed to be a conventional manner. Muslims find direct eye contact rude, disrespectful and can be the sign of sexual interest. On the contrary, In Czech culture, people are taught to look into each other's eyes, and it is the sign that people pay attention and are honest towards each other. Thus, it is considered as the appropriate, respectful way of behaviour.

The last difference observed in the case of Muslim female participants was that their gestures were minimal during their speech and they hid their hands under the table. The signs of shyness, insecurity and discomfort were seen in the case of all Muslim female participants.

Other unusual features of non-verbal behaviour were also seen in the case of Chinese participants. They did not prolong eye contact with others as they quickly looked away or below the person's chin. Moreover, all Chinese members put their hand in front of their mouth while laughing. They were not showing their teeth. It is also given in their culture as it is considered as the sign of nervousness or discomfort.

In terms of Indian participant, the difference in maintaining eye contact was observed as well. She maintained eye contact, but only for a few seconds and then looked away as well. However, from the all females observed in the meeting, Indian female made eye contact more frequently with other participants.

In addition, when participants wanted to point on other members, they used their thumbs. They did not point with their index fingers as it is considered disrespectful in Malaysian culture.

The second question stated in the methodology part is as follows: Do these differences have an impact on intercultural business communication?

Yes, these differences can lead to many misunderstandings in intercultural business communication between the Czechs and Malaysians. When it comes to the Czech point of view, people are used to shaking hands regardless of genders at the beginning as well as at the end of the meeting. People are taught and learned to do so as an appropriate, polite and respectful way of behaviour towards other people or business colleagues. Another aspect, which is also considered polite, respectful and honest, is to maintain direct eye contact while talking to other people. On the other hand, from the Muslim point of view, it is inappropriate to maintain direct eye contact as well as shaking hands with opposite genders.

In such an intercultural environment, it is essential for both parties, not even for Czechs but also for Malaysians, to be aware of the differences that are given in a particular culture. If there is no knowledge of these dissimilarities, many unnecessary misunderstandings can occur during the negotiations. Czech people can think that Malaysians or especially Muslims are not interested in the topic discussed as they do not maintain eye contact and moreover that Muslims do not show the respect towards Czech people by not shaking hands. On the other hand, Malaysians and again especially Muslims can think that Czech people are rude, disrespectful and show their signs of sexual interest while prolonging eye contact with Muslims. Additionally to this, Czech people could easily break the Muslim religious rules by touching the opposite genders and making a physical contact which is also considered as a sign of sexual interest, and it is forbidden by the Quran.

5.3 Recommendations

In this part, the recommendations on how to communicate in the business environment between the Czechs and Malaysians are presented.

Firstly, the recommendations for Czechs dealing with Malaysians are introduced. From the Czech point of view, Malaysian culture is extremely different. The way of behaviour that Czech people are used to while negotiating cannot be taken as an appropriate one in Malaysian culture. First of all, it is essential to know the main cultural differences in Malaysia. There are three main cultures, and each of them is unique with its specific features. When it comes to Muslim culture, Czech people should not feel disrespected as Muslims would not shake their hands. However, Czech male negotiator can try to offer a hand to a Muslim female and wait for her reaction. In some cases, women can show their respect and make a handshake. Nonetheless, if the handshake is not made, a person should not feel insulted. It is important to understand that it is a part of their culture which Czech people are not familiar with.

Another recommendation relates to eye contact. Czechs should understand that if Muslim females, Chinese or Indian do not look directly into their eyes or avoid eye contact, it does not show that they do not pay attention or are not interested in the topic discussed. It is a sign of their politeness and respect towards other people. However, it is not recommended to make prolonged eye contact with any Malaysian citizens as it is considered rude, disrespectful and in many cases as a sign of sexual interest. In addition, Czech people are not advised to touch Muslim individuals at all as physical contact with someone who is not blood-related is forbidden by the Quran and can also be interpreted as sexual interest.

Secondly, the recommendations for Malaysians dealing with Czechs are presented. From the Malaysian point of view, Czech culture is also unfamiliar to them. While negotiating, Malaysians should not feel insecure or threatened when Czechs look directly into their eyes. It is not a sign of sexual interest, but respect and honesty instead. Also, when it comes to greetings, Muslim women should not make any handshakes if they do not feel like it. They can feel under pressure to shake their hands, however, the rejection from their side should be fully respected by Czechs.

CONCLUSION

This bachelor's thesis was dealing with the topic of non-verbal communication in Malaysia focusing on gestures, facial expression at business meetings and negotiations. The thesis was divided into the theoretical and the practical part. The theoretical part was aimed at the topic of intercultural communication as well as on the topic of non-verbal communication. Furthermore, the types of non-verbal communication were explained.

The research method chosen for this bachelor's thesis was the qualitative research observation as it was the most convenient way how to analyze non-verbal communication. That is the reason why the photograph from the PEKUMA meeting was presented in the practical part, and thus non-verbal behaviour of all nine participants was described in details. Additional photographs from the PEKUMA gathering were introduced in the appendix of this bachelor's thesis. The two main goals of the thesis were stated, and thus to present specific aspects of non-verbal communication in the Malaysian culture and to make recommendations on how to communicate in the business environment.

Malaysia is a multicultural, multiracial and multireligious country as it consists of Malaysian, Chinese and Indian culture. All three nations are unique with their specific characteristics. However, based on the observational research, the main differences, in comparison with Czechs, were observed in the case of Malaysian, and thus Muslim participants. The main dissimilarities were connected mainly with touching, and thus handshakes and eye contact. The Muslim participants, both males and females, did not shake their hands at the beginning as well as at the end of the meeting. Thus, any physical contact between Muslim members was not observed. Moreover, Muslim female participants did not make any direct eye contact with other Muslim male participants. In the case of Chinese participants and Indian participant, the handshakes were made with all members, but eye contact was very limited.

The recommendations for Czechs dealing with Malaysians were connected to handshakes, eye contact and physical contact. In the case of Muslims, their culture is regulated by their religion, and it is advised not to shake their hands at all or wait for the Muslim's reaction. Furthermore, the Islam religion forbids any physical contact unless people are blood-related or in marriage, that is the reason why Czechs should not touch Muslim participants as it can be interpreted as a sexual interest according to the Quran. Also, Czechs should not prolong eye contact with Malaysian participants as it makes them

feel insecure as well as it is considered rude and inappropriate. Moreover, it can be interpreted as sexual harassment.

The other way round, in case of Malaysians dealing with Czechs, the Malaysians should not feel insecure or uncomfortable as Czechs look directly into their eyes. It is a part of their culture, and it is considered as polite and appropriate and not as a sign of sexual interest. In the case of Muslim women in a business environment, they should not feel under pressure or unsafe if Czechs want to shake their hands as it is also a sign as respect and politeness. However, Muslim female participants should be fully understood by other non-Muslim colleagues, and if they reject any kind of physical contact, it should be fully respected by Czechs.

To sum up this bachelor's thesis, it is always essential and advisable to know the main differences in a particular culture that people are planning to deal with in business. If a person knows the main differences across cultures, then communication is more effective, leads to successful personal and well as professional relationships. Furthermore, people who know the cultural dissimilarities avoid possible failures that could influence the relationships as well as future business successes.

The research questions were answered and the goals of the thesis were met.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

US   United States

PEKUMA   Persatuan Ekonomi Universiti Malaya

(The University of Malaya Economic Association)

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