

THE TASK AT HAND.- Culture and People.

Situation

Lourdes, Susana and a couple of colleagues from work are in a pub relaxing for a while after a long stressful day.

Susana: What are you having guys?"

Lourdes: A [diet coke](#).

Francesco: A beer of course!

Kate: Yeah, I think I'll have the same as you **Francesco!** The waiter comes closer.

Waiter: Good evening, Are you ready to [order](#)?

Susana: Hi! yes. A diet coke, a lemonade and two beers please. (she raises two of her fingers).

Kate: Hey, **Susana!** What are you doing?? Take those fingers back!!

Susana: What's wrong? Did I do anything wrong?

Kate: Oh my God! Don't raise your fingers like that! That's really rude!!

Susana: Oh really?? I just meant two beers! That's the way we ask for two beers in Spain!

Kate: Oh really? Hehehe, here it isn't like that! And it's quite rude, you could get into serious trouble with people!

Susana: Oh my God! Thanks for telling me.

Everybody: Hehehehe.



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1.- Body Language.

When we communicate with other people it is not only our words that contain the meaning. According to experts, 50 % of the meaning conveyed in a conversation is through what is called **non-verbal communication**. By this we mean facial expression, gestures with hands, arms, legs, the way we sit or stand, the way we touch other people, the distance we keep between ourselves and the people we are talking to; our dress and our appearance. All these say something to other people.

Facial expressions and gestures are used by everyone often spontaneously, even unconsciously. Smiling, for example, is found in most cultures as a sign of happiness or pleasure. Gestures such as pointing, waving, shaking or **nodding** the head are also widely used, although the gestures themselves do not always mean the same in every culture. For example, in Portugal, **bank clerks** tend to be too **dour** for foreigners, however in their culture, if they smiled too much they would not seem serious about their work.



Because many non-verbal messages are culture specific, they can cause a lot of misunderstanding between people from different backgrounds. Northern Europeans and Americans, for example, like to keep a certain personal space between themselves and others and feel uncomfortable if people come too close to them. In these same cultures it is considered impolite to stare, but Greeks, it is said, feel ignored if people do not stare at them in public. Europeans usually change their facial expression to show happiness, anger, **boredom**, sadness. For this reason they call oriental people inscrutable because they change facial expression much less.

In styles of dress we also make important statements about ourselves. Dress codes vary greatly from one culture to another and it is easy to make mistakes about people's status if you don't know the cultural norm. In Mediterranean cultures bank officials and similar employees wear **short-sleeved**, **open-neck** shirts and no jackets. This casual dress would not be acceptable in northern Europe, where suits and ties are a sign of seriousness. Ambitious women in western cultures wear classic clothes in **sober** colours to indicate their dedication to career.

One of the main differences between verbal and non-verbal communication is that we are often not conscious of the expressions and gestures we use and so we are in danger of giving more information than we really want to, or even of giving a conflicting message with our body language to the one expressed in our words.

1.1.- Now you put it into practice.



Now it's your turn

Read the previous text again and answer the following questions.



Body language is ...

- The way we dress.
- The expressions on our face.
- Non-verbal communication.

When we do something spontaneously, we do it...

- immediately.
- after careful thought.
- reluctantly.

The word "status" means...

- condition.
- level of seniority.
- age.

Classic clothes are...

- fashionable wear.
- casual dress.
- unobtrusive, sensible dress.

A conflicting message gives people...

- useful information.
- confusing information.
- wrong information.

A step ahead

Are you curious about body language? Click on the link below to learn some finger gesture curiosities. Have fun!

[The Finger Gesture Guide.](#)

1.2.- Song.

Think about it

Look at this picture. Do you know this woman? Can you guess her name?

1. Kylie Minogue.
2. Rihanna.
3. Hilary Duff.



Kylie Ann Minogue is an Australian pop singer, songwriter and actress. She's famous worldwide and in 2003 she [released](#) her ninth studio album "Body Language". Have you ever listened to it?

Have fun by watching and listening to her song "After Dark" included in her album Body Language.

A step ahead

[Text summary](#)

Do you want to sing along while you watch the previous video? Click on the link below so that you can read the lyrics. Have fun!

[Click here to read the lyrics.](#)

Think about it




Now that you have listened to Kylie's songs, let's learn a little bit more about her life and music. Surf the net for the following information.

1. In which three different countries was Body Language recorded?
2. Kylie first achieved professional recognition through her role in a television soap opera, what is the name of this TV show? What was the name of her character?
3. Why did she had to cancel her concert tour in 2005?
4. What was her debut film? When was it released?

5. Minogue has achieved worldwide records. Name at least four different music awards she has won.

Appendix.- Licenses of resources.

Licenses of Resources used in Culture and People

Resource (1)	Resource information (1)	Resource (2)	Re
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