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## *Focusing on Eye Contact: Interpersonal Communication among Students at Eastern Mediterranean University* \_\_\_\_\_

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### **Abstract**

*This study aims to find out the factors that affect eye contact decoding which gives different meanings to different people. Eye contact is the only common language in the world and feature of non-verbal communication which is a branch of interpersonal communication. It is as old as humanity and common in our everyday lives but is hardly researched in communication studies. Qualitative methodology has been chosen and carried out among the students at the Eastern Mediterranean University in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. In this university, approximately 14000 students study. They constitute the population of the study. They come from 60 different countries. Data were collected from three different levels. The first one is semi-structured interviews with students from twenty one to thirty years old. The participants are from different countries like Albania, Turkey, Iran, and Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, Nigeria and Cameroon. The second method is focus group interviews. Ten people participated in these sessions: Five of them are males and five are females, from nineteen to twenty nine years old and all these students are from different cities of Turkey. The results show that eye contact is an important language of interpersonal communication. It can communicate a variety of attitudes such as anger, love, sadness, happiness as facial expression in different situations. On the whole, from both research that we conducted with students of Eastern Mediterranean University and field notes the researcher kept, how to decode the many*

*possible elements and understanding the discourses of eye contact are closely tied to cultural, ethnic, gender, relationship, media, situation and other factors*

**Keywords:** *Eye contact, Communication, Non-verbal communication, Interpersonal communication*

## **Introduction**

Eye contact is a feature of non-verbal communication which is a branch of interpersonal communication; it helps to express meanings and attitudes. It has subjective meanings as well, such as “friendship”, “sexual attraction” and “hate and struggle for dominance” (Argyle & Dean, 1965). Eye contact can communicate a variety of attitudes such as anger, love, sadness, happiness. The absence, as well as the presence of eye contact, has a meaning. Indeed, “Even our silence and avoidance of eye contact are communicative. It is a quality that makes interpersonal communication transactional” (West & Turner, 2008, p.26). Hanna and Brennan (2006) maintain that eye contact is developed at an early age, after two months old. Children are very sensitive to a person’s head position. This is how the eye contact starts. Indeed, Spitz (1946), argues that “man is the only mammal which has habitual eye contact with its mother during the nursing” (Hodge, L. R. 1971, p. 265). Adults use the orientation of both head and eyes at the same time. Hanna and Brennan (2006) further argue that the eye contact can be different like when you look at an object for the first time, searching for a target, researching toward the object etc.

When two people look at each other even for one second, a crash takes place between pupils of their eyes; this is called “eye contact”. Eye contact is defined as: “When two people look at each other’s eyes at the same time” (Cambridge Advanced Learner’s Dictionary. Retrieved May 14, 2006).

When two people do not have eye contact, usually they will not have strong communication. For instance, when two people talk to each other and if one of them does not establish eye contact, the other one will feel uncomfortable and usually decode it negatively. Some people believe that poor communication takes place when there is distance between two or more people while communicating. This is invalid for chatting with each other on the Internet, sending messages through e-mail or telephone. On the other hand, people who are involved in face to face communication, eye contact make communication stronger and more valuable than those who do not have it. People do not feel that full communication takes place unless there is eye contact (Argyle and Dean, 2003).

Eye contact is a natural tendency for human beings but the way we face with it is shaped by other factors such as culture. People who support psychological

perspective, like Hodge (1971) hold that eye contact facilitates decoding the message of the communicator. For instance, most people can recognize the difference of eye contact of someone when s/he is angry or the way that s/he is falling in love with somebody. In a similar vein, Hodge (1971) argues that eyes are effective transmitter of information within the framework of the face. “Eyes are the gateway to the mind” (p.264). It takes up different meanings according to culture, age, gender and social relationship. In other words, people from different cultures decode eye contact differently and give different feedback. Every culture shows their own unique patterns of behavior that seems strange to the people from other cultures.

Peter Hartley (1999) believes that when media portrays interpersonal communication of other people, it gives an idea to audience to discourse and decode in the way that media shows. People are affected by popular media which portrays interpersonal communication. In other words, popular media guide audience to justify discourse of eye contact in the way it portrayed. Each medium has their own perspective for portraying programs. Media is a large area for research. The reason why we ask questions about Media is for finding out about their communication with it and how it affects them. Media helps the people to decode the eye contact which we need to be familiar with in order to understand the participants. Media is a source for information and learning about the other people.

This research intends to find out about different elements of eye contact in personal relationships, between people, like love partner, married couples, friends and strangers and how this element can be trusted as the translator for people who use it in order to decode messages given by the eye contact! At the same time, it is sought to find out whether there are any differences in establishing and decoding eye contact between the participants that are from different countries.

In summary, eye contact is something personal, private and most people do not want to talk about this subject. Some people do not know how to explain the feelings that they get from eye contact. Moreover, living in a multicultural city like Famagusta, people from different backgrounds can decode eye contact differently based on their background and culture where they come from. The culture in which a person lives shapes the way s/he lives. For instance, people use eye contact differently and at the same time they decode it differently from each other. Therefore, the cultural factor is as important as the personal one. At the same time age and gender plays important roles in decoding the eye contact. Duration of eye contact can play an important role as well on people. It can make them feel different and at the same time it depends if it is their friend or a stranger because from the person in front of them their attitude and feelings may differ and change.

More specifically, is to find out whether university students studying at the Eastern Mediterranean University in Fall2011 differ in relation to their attitude towards establishing and decoding eye-contact with respect to their gender, culture, context, social relationship, and media. Moreover, in the present study it is sought to find whether there is any relationship between eye contact and body language. The information included in this research covers different subjects like communication, interpersonal communication, models of interpersonal communication, non-verbal communication, differences and similarities between non-verbal and verbal communication, research about eye contact and the influence of eye contact on human relationships.

## Communication

“The word communicate is historically related to the word common. It comes from the Latin verb *communicare*, which means ‘to share’, ‘to make common’ and which in turn is related to the Latin word for common; *communis*” (Rosengren, 2000, p.1). So, when we communicate we share things like knowledge and feeling with each other and at the same time we talk for common subjects of idea.

As the ways of communication have changed overtime from primitive methods to modern, at the present time, technology has started to play an important role in communication as well as media. With the help of technology, people can communicate very easily with each other. So technological media such as, TV, Cinema, Internet, etc make distances between countries shorter and breaks the borders.

Communication in itself includes signs and symbols that are called “codes or languages” signs include icons, indices, signals and symbols. “Way of codes or languages reality may be represented, understood, evaluated, explained and sometimes changed. Language is man’s important tool of communication for transferring action-oriented information” (Rosengren, 2000, p.30). Human language is doubly articulated: at the level of sounds (phenomena, linguistically relevant sounds) and at the level of morphemes (minimal meaningful units) (K. E. Rosengren, 2000, p.31).

Rosengren argues that communication has got different forms which are:

1. Verbal and non-verbal communication;
2. Mediated communication;
3. Human languages;
4. Writing from printing to computing.

The communication form that is used for the present research is a form of non-verbal communication. As there are different forms of communication, at the same time, there are also different levels of communication. The levels are: interpersonal communication, individuals in group, societies, intrapersonal communication, group communication, organizational communication, societal communication, mass communication, international and intercultural communication (Rosengren, 2000). The level of communication used for the present research it is interpersonal communication

## Interpersonal Communication

“Inter” as word means “between” or “among” and “Interpersonal” means between or among people (Wood, 2010). “Interpersonal communication refers to face-to-face, two way communications only” (Tubbs, Moss, 1981, p.4). Interpersonal communication is a very important part of social reality. It will happen every day when we start to have communication in social life. This kind of communication helps people understand each other and make reaction to what they understand or their feedback. Interpersonal communication takes place between a sender and receiver. The sender uses different tools for sending his or her message to the receiver.

The sender understands the message by listening, reading, viewing the vision and conversation. It can be understandable and observable during this exchange and it can be changeable from moment to moment. Interpersonal communication is a process that gives chance to the person to understand, share ideas and thoughts. According to this process, similarities and differences between two people can be observed. This process will be supported by mass communication, which is effective on the social life of people in their daily lives. “Interpersonal Communication refers to one of the most important functions of language. It is what one uses with either spoken or written words as the basis to form and maintain personal relationships with others”(http://elearndesign.org/teachspecialed/modules/ocada7081\_norm2/15/glossary/glossary.html).

Activity in interpersonal communication meets three major criteria according to Tubbs and Moss (1981). The first one is “*all parties are in close proximity*”, which means since usual interpersonal communication is mostly face to face that is why the distance has a significant effect on the meaning of the message. Usually, there is not considerable distance between two people when they start to communicate with each other, certainly when the distance increases it makes their meaning which they share with each other more complex. The second is “*all parties send and receive message*”. For example, when two friends sit in a bar together or two co-workers in their

office or a couple when they dance together, etc. This entire situation is exchanging meaning by a sender and receiver. This sending and receiving is not something that will stop at any moment of situations even if they are silent. "Feedback" is important in sending and receiving messages. The last criterion is "*these messages include both verbal and nonverbal stimuli*". Verbal and non-verbal stimuli support each other and sometimes they do not support each other. Non-verbal stimuli means things like dressing, gestures, expressing feelings, eye contact etc. When we have interpersonal communication, gesture of body such eye contact is one of the key rules in sending message to each other (Tubbs&Moss, 1981, pp.5-7).

Wood (2010) lists the characteristics of interpersonal communication as being: "Selective", "Systemic", "Unique", "Ongoing process", "Individual", "Transactional", "Personal knowledge" and "Meaning Creating". "Selective" means that we do not choose everyone to make interpersonal communication. In other words, try to have interpersonal communication with 'selected' 'people which makes us more comfortable with them. The second characteristic is being "systemic". It is take place in as system for example, if a person says to someone "I want you to know how much I care about you" then this sentence will get meaning for them by their system such as "situation", " cultural values", "relationship between them", "social class" and "belief". Every person in the world has a unique character and it happens ones which means interpersonal communication is "Unique". For instance, with a close friend, we would like to share our secrets. On the other hand, when two people share a secret, their relationship could be a different with each other from other people.

Interpersonal communication is a never-ending process. In other words, is an "ongoing process". It is affected from the past, present and future. "All our communication occurs in three temporal dimensions: Past, which affects what, happens now; present, which reflects the past and sets the stage for the future; and future, which is modeled by what occurs in this moment and past ones"(Dixon& Duck,1993; Wood, 2006a).For example, your relation with your parents in the past could not be compared to the one that is in the present or future. No doubt that they always will be called as "Your parents" but the process of our relation is always ongoing even if we have different character in different age. "Transactional" is another characteristic of interpersonal communication. It will always be called feedback because of being "transactional". For instance, when you are talking to someone he or she will smile or even misunderstand but generally they will give the feedback as the receiver. "The transactional nature of interpersonal communication implies that communicators share responsibility for effectiveness"(Wood, 2010, p.24).

When we start to share a secret with each other or building trust in the relationship with someone, this is because of "Personal Knowledge". When

humans communicate with each other, they try to learn something from each other that guide the relationship in the way they want. The last and another important feature of interpersonal of communication is "meaning Creating". The heart of interpersonal communication is shared meaning between people"(Duck, 1994a, 1994b). People communicate with each other in order to understand each other. In interpersonal communication, meaning is created at two levels. The first level is "content meaning" and the second is "relationship meaning" (Rogers, 2008; Watzlawick, Beavin& Jackson, 1967). Content meaning is figured out with denotative meaning (Wood, 2010, p.25). For example, if someone says "Get out of my room", the meaning for this sentence will be according to content meaning to go out of his or her room immediately. The "relationship meaning" is creating the meaning which arises from the relationship between communicators (Wood, 2010).In this case if someone says: "Get out of my room", does s/he have right to order that person or not? To become clearer, the "relationship meaning" should be recognized in three dimensions that Wood (2010) mentions about. The first dimension is "responsiveness", which makes the situation for communicator know how to get involved with each other."Higher responsiveness is communicated by eye contact, nodding, and feedback that indicate involvement" (Richmond &McCroskey, 2000, p. 67,pp. 85-95).

"Liking" is the second one of "relationship meaning" dimensions. It depends on positive and negative feelings that happen between two people who communicate with each other. The last dimension is "power" and it is important one. According to the previous example, if someone says "Get out of my room", who has power and control? Dosehe or she has family member relationship or boss in job or little brother or sister whom play in their room! According, to this example, the person who says "Get out of my room" has the power (Wood, 2010, p.26).

## Models of Interpersonal Communication

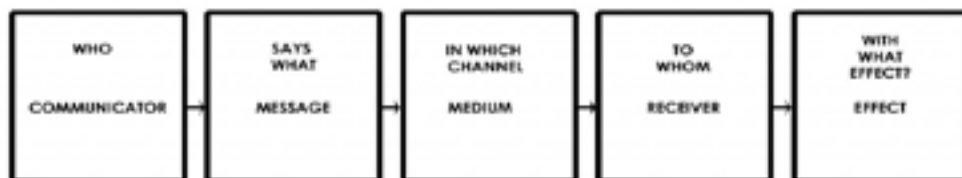
"A model is a representation of what something is and how is working" (Wood, 2010, p.16).Wood (2010) mentions three models of interpersonal communication. The first is "Linear Model", the second one is "Interactive Model" and the third is "Transactional Model".

### 1. Linear Model

"Linear model" is the first model of interpersonal communication that is described by Laswell (1953). The first model is one-way view of communication. For example, when you are reading this study, it will be one-way and the message

is sent from the writer to the reader. Laswell puts forward five questions. The questions are: “Who Says What, In Which Channel, To Whom, With What Effect”. It is called “5Ws” of communication (Laswell, 1953).

**FIGURE 1.1** Laswell Model

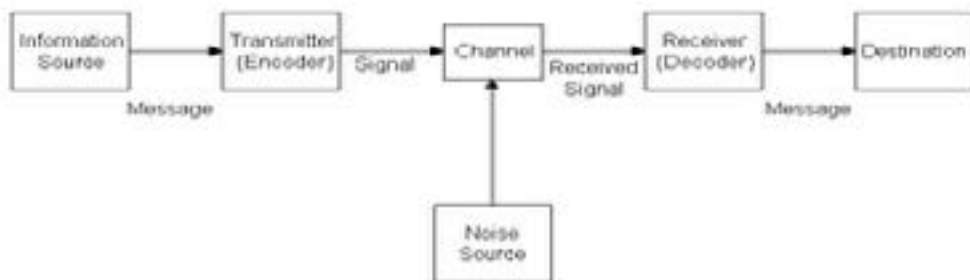


(<http://communicationtheory.org/laswells-model/comment-page-1/>)

The advantage of this model is simplicity and easiness which makes it clear to understand. It is a type of model that can be used in any type of communication model as well which shows the concept of effect. But this model has disadvantages as well. It does not show feedback and noise. Without feedback, we will not be able to understand how strong communication is. In other words, it could not be called real communication without feedback. Noise can be anything that will lead to lose information of the message that is sent by the sender. Anything which makes the communication between communicator hard will be noise as well. One year later, in 1949, Claude Shannon and Warren Weaver changed the model of the linear communication model by adding “Noise” to it.

**FIGURE 1.2** The Claude Shannon and Warren Weaver Model

**The Shannon-Weaver Mathematical Model, 1949**



(<http://www.indiaprblog.com/2007/12/future-pr-communication-models.html>)

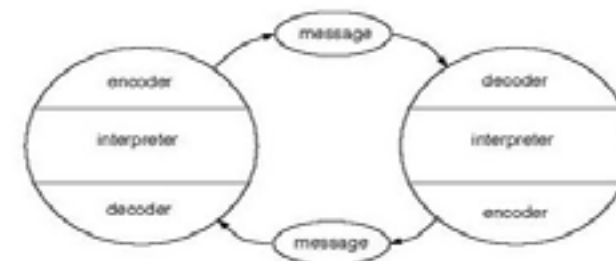
There are four types of noise; the first is “Physical noise”. For instance, when people sit together in bar and the loud music plays. This is the physical noise. The second

is “physiological noise” which is “Direction caused by hunger, fatigue, medications and other factors that affect how we feel and think” (Wood, 2010, p.22). In other words, biological factors affect communication. The third is “psychological noise”. It is related to biases, prejudice and feelings that communicators have towards each other. When someone speaks in another language, according to another person it bothers him or her, and then what is experienced is “Psychological noise”. The last category of noise is “Semantic noise”; semantic noise is the confusion that occurs when a sender and receiver apply different meanings to the message. As an example, when one person from England and one person from Iran speak English with each other, it can be misunderstood because of the accent of the language. English is the native language for a person from England and a second language for the other person (West & Turner, 2006, pp.13-14). Noise can have an impact on eye contact during communication. Later, context is added to the linear model. The context means the environment that a message is sent from a sender to a receiver. The context can be: “historical context”, “social-emotional context”, “culture context” and “physical context” (West & Turner, 2006, pp.14-15).

**2. Interactive Model**

Feedback is one of the most important factors in communication which is a response to the sender’s message. “Interactive model” is the second model of interpersonal communication. “The interactional conception goes beyond a linear model to a more complex way of thinking about communication” (Tubbs, Moss, 1981, p.9). It gives opportunity to the communicator for two-way exchanges. The sender becomes the receiver and the receiver becomes the sender; each of them exchanges meaning with each other all the time. This model changes in time and becomes stronger for saving the basic meanings which are sent by the sender. For example, when two co-workers work with each other in the same room after one month they become more successful in understanding each other (Schramm, 1954, pp. 3-26).

**FIGURE 1.3** Interactive Model



([http://corporatecommunications-divya.blogspot.com/2007\\_07\\_01\\_archive.html](http://corporatecommunications-divya.blogspot.com/2007_07_01_archive.html))

Sellnow (2005), the author of "Confident Public Speaking", believe that interactive model can also account for internal and external interferences. Internal interferences are "any distraction that originates in the thought of either participant" (Sellnow, 2005, p.11). For instance, when two people chat with each other and one of them know another person has psychological problems and creates distraction in the mind of him/her this will be "internal interferences". External interferences are "any distraction that originates in the communication situation" (Sellnow, 2005, p.11). In the previous example for internal interferences, if a phone rings or TV's volume is high during the chat of two people and these will affect the interaction communication as "external interferences". Culture, context and feedback are the basic factors in interactive model. Yet there are disadvantage for this model. The first is, it does not mention "noise". The second is, it is just between two sources. If more than two parties send and receive message at the same time, then, this model will not be suitable for explaining the communication.

### 3. Transactional Model

It embraces all elements from the interactional model of communication and gathers all of them together. It gives opportunity for more than two parties' in communication. In this model one can find all elements of communication. Barnlund (1970) created transactional model. Barnlund (1970) introduces this model with six characters the first is "continues" which means it never finishes and it is not a static activity. The second is "dynamic"; it is always changing as the sender and receiver change their positions. It is "circular" as the third characteristic. It makes turning like circular between encoder and coding. In other words, sender and receiver change their places. The fourth is "irreversible", which means the message cannot disappear. The fifth one is "unrepeatable". It will be unique the result of this model. The last "complex" that shows all factors that affect communication like culture, language, power and relationship. The Transaction Model is a model that sees communication or negotiation of meaning in two or more other parties responding to their environment and other factors which effect the communication between the people (Mohan, T., McGregor, H., Saunders, S., Archee, R., 2008, pp.25).

### Non-Verbal Communication

"The non-verbal part of communication is the aspect of the communication process which deals with the transmission of signs that are not part of nature language system" (Rubenstein, 1973, p.p 27-48).

Non-verbal communication means all aspects of communication except words. It does not mean only body language and gesture because non-verbal communication is based on physical aspects of communication. Usually this kind of communication is used to express feelings to other people to get a message. Non-verbal communication is another language, in which message is sent without using words as voice, in another word Non-verbal communication is everything excluding not word or less word (Guerrero & Floyd, 2006).

Verbal communication developed among the first human beings with signals, icons; gestures, facial expression, cry and grew as a language of verbal symbols, building on words and simple sentences. Parallel with verbal communication, non-verbal communication remains as an important part of communication. There are different types of non-verbal communication; the oldest one is bodily signals like emotions, feeling, and mood that format important part of human language. Joy, anger, fear, surprise, disappointment, and other types of non-verbal we still use. Non-verbal communication includes dance and music as well as imitative arts such as miming, drawing, painting, sculpture and architecture. This kind of art is seen to be as old as man. Non-verbal arts are still used to communicate meaning and sometimes are more powerful than verbal communication. Man has developed three formal languages as very powerful non-verbal communication that is: logic, mathematics, and statistics, used to present and analyze qualitative and quantitative and probalistic phenomena (Rosengren, 2000, p.38-40). Prof. Roger Brown explains non-verbal communication that is communication by facial expression, hands, feet, body and vocal quality and do communicate information inequality and connected with personal relationship. Non-verbal channel is more informative than the verbal (Brown, 1986, p.521).

### Similarities and Differences of Non-Verbal and Verbal Communication

According to Wood (2010), non-verbal communication has four common characteristics. These are "symbolic", "rule-guided", "unconscious" and "reflected by culture". Similar to verbal communication, firstly it is "symbolic", which means it uses symbols to represents other things, to explain different kind of situation. "Lowering our eyes" is an example for non-verbal communication. The second one is "Rule-Guided", which means it has rules when someone shares something, like hand shake with another person at the beginning and in the end of the meeting that is got general understanding in many countries. When someone gets dressed carefully for job interview, this can be something unconscious. This it can be a reason without planned in their mind that why

we should wear professional outfits for job interviews. Verbal and non-verbal communication has “unconscious” as a third similarity characteristic. The last common similarity is “reflecting by culture”. Both verbal and non-verbal communications are shaped by cultural ideas, values, customs and history (Andersen, Hecht, Hoobler, & Small-Wood, 2002; Emmons, 1998).

Wood (2010) distinguishes verbal and non-verbal communication in three aspects. The first is non-verbal communication is more trusted than the verbal communication, in other words, non-verbal is more reliable than verbal. Anderson (1999) believes this is the major difference between them. Non-verbal is more successful in expressing feelings (Anderson, 1999). It is clear when non-verbal and verbal messages are in contradiction with each other. For instance, when someone says “I love you” and receiver could not decode message in the same way that message is decoded according to non-verbal. Maybe s/he is not successful in using the right “eye contact” when s/he says “I love you”, but it shows that non-verbal complete verbal message.

The second difference is about channel. Non-verbal communications is multichannel but verbal is single channeled. When someone uses “Eye Contact” and smiling on his/her face, it shows message sending from two different channels. Multichannel gives opportunity for sending message more strong and clear for decoding the meaning in right section.

The last difference is non-verbal communication is a continuous process. Opposite verbal communication, which has a starting and ending, non-verbal communication never ends. When a person says something or writes something then it starts and end, but facial expression which is a form of non-verbal communication continues and never finishes.

## Types of Non-verbal Communication

According to Ting-Toomey (1999) non-verbal communication is divided in to six categories. These are: “Haptics”, “Chronemics”, “Paralanguage”, “Proxemics”, “Kinesics” and “Oculistics” (Ting-Toomey, S, 1999).

“Haptics” is the study of how people use touch in their daily lives related to their communication. “Haptic is relating to the sense of touch in all its forms including those” (Paterson, M, 2007, P.9). There are different types of touches in different communication like professional touch, social touch and etc. “Chronemics” is how we understand and use the time in action and inter-action like females being late for date on purpose. In some cultures, time has great value and in some cultures, it is the opposite. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) believe that the time is highly valued in North America (Lakoff, G., & Johnson, M. 1980).

Using vocal for whispering, accent, pronunciation and volume of voice without considering the words, is called “Paralanguage”. “Paralanguage is made of sounds that sometimes do not have a written form (e.g., uh-huh means Yes or I’m listening to you)” (<http://www.esl-lab.com/para.htm>).

“Proxemics” is related to the space and how we use the space around us (Hall, 1968, p.9, 83-108). In every culture people use space differently based on their relationships and situation according to their culture. For instance, Andersen gives an example in American culture. He points out that the child has a separate room and later, usually they have their individual office or at least an individual space for their work (Andersen, 2003, pp.239-252). The relation and type of reaction of two people towards other necessitates decisions to arrange their space (Sommer, 2002, “Personal space in a digital age” pp.647-660). For instance, sometimes people present themselves to each other face to face or side by side or back to back but all of them depend on the relation between two people.

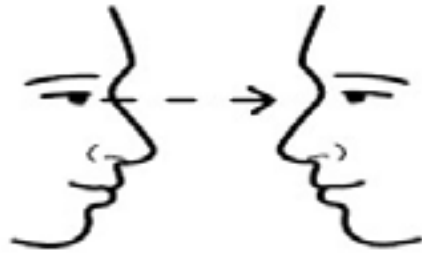
The study of how people use their bodies and their faces is “Kinesics”. It is “Body position and body motions, including those of the face” (J. T. Wood, 2010, p.333). It includes gestures and facial expressions. In other words, it is about the whole of body study in communication. In different cultures, different meanings are attached to gestures and body language. Showing thumb finger in American and Western culture gives positive meaning but in Iran it gives the opposite meaning. In North America rolling thumb with finger means “Ok”; in Russia it means “Zero”; in Japan, it means “Money”; and in France it means “worthless”. “Oculistics” is the last character that is mentioned in this section. It means the study of eye contact in communication. Eyes are the most important tools which is using in communication process (Richmond & MacCrosky, 2003).

## Eye Contact

“Body language may tell you something about prospects response to your sales pitch, but eye language will tell you a lot more” (Konopacki, p.1, <http://www.nlpinfo.com/nlpebooks/Eye%20Contact.pdf>).

Oculistics is known as the study of the role of eye behavior which includes eye movement and pupil’s reaction. In other words, it is the study of eye contact (Tubbs, Moss, 1981, p.174).

**FIGURE 1.6** Eye Contact



(<http://www.eyescontactlenses.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/04/eye-contact.jpg>)

“Eye contact is a natural experience of face-to-face communication” (M. Argyle & M. Cook, 1976). There are two types of definitions about it. The first is a noun, which means “When two people look at each other’s eyes at the same time” (Cambridge Advanced Learner’s Dictionary, Retrieved May 14, 2006). Another meaning from Psychology is “a meeting of the eyes of two persons, regarded as a meaningful nonverbal form of communication” ([http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/eye %20contact?fromAsk=true&o=100074](http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/eye%20contact?fromAsk=true&o=100074)).

Eye contact has two aspects; negative and positive. For example, when an engaged couple looks at each other, this is positive. On other hand, when parents teach their children not to stare at others (Hickson III/stacks, 1985), this is negative.

Ellsberg (2010) believes that dance is divided into two parts. The first, dance between the body motion and the second the dance between the eyes. If the dancer is a female, has all the techniques in dancing, but does not have good eye contact, it will give the dance a feeling of dead. But if the quality of her eye contact is good, it can create soulful, deep and joyful dance (Ellsberg, 2010, p. xxii). As Dr. Allen Konopacki argues quantity of eye contact is not important but the quality is important, this is important because a wrong type of eye contact may cause problems. Eye contact is a very social, almost intimate type of interaction. Argyle and Dean (1965, p.289) argue that without eye contact, people do not feel that they are fully engaged in communication.

Browning and Porter (2007) examine effective teaching behaviors including eye contact behavior. Browning and Porter find out that eye contact is an important component of effective instruction (p. 64). Browning and Porter argue that “Eye contact behavior in preservice music teachers was chosen for a variety of reasons. Firstly, eye contact is a simple behavior and provides positive feedback. Secondly, eye contact is an instructional behavior that is, entirely under the control of the instructor, and not dependent on the cooperation of the ensemble members. Thirdly, eye contact can be purposeful yet, unlike other instructional behaviors,

the act of changing eye gaze requires minimal instruction. “Lastly, poor eye contact behavior is a frequent occurrence during student teaching” (p. 65). In their research for collecting data Browning and Porter made two broad domains of eye contact: eye contact during student performance and eye contact during teacher instruction (p. 65). According to Milton Chen (2002), eye contact is natural and often essential element in the language of visual communication.

When people talk and have an eye contact with each other, it is a signal of listening to each other. Peters, Pelachaud, Bevacqua, Mancini and Poggi (2005) argue that through the evaluation of the level of interest, the speaker can perceive the effectiveness of the conversation and decide if it is high enough to maintain the interaction with the listener or if he should close it (p. 7). Moreover, the more people share looking behaviors, the more they are involved and coordinate the conversation. This may not necessarily involve mutual eye contact with the speaker in shared attention situations; where there is another object or entity, the listener may actually signal his/her interest in the situation by directing his/her attention away from the Speaker and at the object in question. Gaze is an especially important way of providing feedback and subtle signaling (Peters, Pelachaud, Bevacqua, Mancini and Poggi, 2005, P.7). An effect of Listener’s lower level of interest in the conversation may be to put the speaker in a negative emotional state. Distractors could be applied such as making a strange noise, not gazing in a direction when expected (Peters, Pelachaud, Bevacqua, Mancini and Poggi, 2005, P.11). Catherin Lord (1974) argues that eye contact may be more important to the behavior and attitudes of the sender or initiator than to the receiver (p. 116).

According to M. Argyle and J. Dean (1965), there is more eye contact when people are listening than speaking. Especially when the discussed topic is not personal and intimates there is more eye contact from the person. They have found that women have more eye contact than men in a variety of situations (p. 289-304). Ekman (2010) as revolutionary psychologist believes that eye contact is a simple signal for attention and when people pay attention it means that they simply care for us. Eye contact is “a wholly new and unique union between two people represents the most perfect reciprocity in the entire field of human relationship” (Simmel, 1921). Feelings can be identified from eye contact. There are lots of feelings that are shared between two people such as anger, fear, surprise, happiness and etc. Argyle and Dean (1965) argue that eye contact can have a variety of subjective meanings—such as friendship, sexual attraction, hate and a struggle for dominance. They consider these subjective meanings as the main functions which eye contact may serve (p. 291). Ekman in the book “the power of eye contact” believes that most information, which is received from eyes, comes from change in aperture (p. 8-10). This information is a result of the four muscles around the eyes. Ekman mention in his interview with Ellsberg that “anger is upper eyelid is raised and



brow is lowered” and happiness has some eye signals as well (Ellseberg, 2010). According to Dr. Allen Konopacki “ understanding eye contact is not difficult is just a matter of keeping an eye out for certain cues” (<http://www.nlpinfo.com/nlpebooks/Eye%20Contact.pdf> “Making of eye contact” p.1). “The eyes have one language everywhere” George Hebert says (1593-1633) (<http://www.rightwords.eu/quotes/search/eyes/3>). Hebert argues that eyes have one language everywhere, but if we talk about the eye contact in different cultures, it will be revealed that an eye does not have one language. As it has been mentioned earlier the meaning of eye contact in different cultures can be different as well. A directly eye contact with someone, in different cultures means different like offending, respect, agree, etc. Moreover, the duration of eye contact is important because in some cultures it shows that you are a rude person, it makes you a suspicious person or you should be careful.

To communicate with eyes, with people from different cultures, we have to study their cultures in order to avoid misunderstandings. Meaning of contact change from culture to culture, from different religion and from social differences as well.

Jim Johannasen (2010) as a writer and Rebecca Scudder (2009) as an editor wrote two articles about the eye contact in different cultures, in both their writings, we found similar meanings of eye contact used in different cultures. In America, a good eye contact with the person that you are talking with makes you a trustworthy person with self confidence and a positive one. When you create a low eye contact, this makes you suspicious and negative person. In Mexico when you look more than normal, too long eye contact, this makes the other think that you are a suspicious person. In Europe, looking at someone’s eye while talking is a sign of respect for that person. In England, too long eye contact than normal makes people uncomfortable. When we talk about Islamic faith, young and adult Muslims are not allowed to see at the opposite sex’s eye. This is a rule to make people to avoid unwanted desire, but when people from same sex looks at each other’s eye gives the meaning of ‘trust me’. However, they can look at teacher in class or at a female when they will get married. Different from Asia, Africa and Latin America, people like children with parents, students with teacher, inferior and superior, do not create eye contact as a sign of respect (Johannasen, J. (2010). *Eye Contact in Different Cultures*.<http://EzineArticles.com/4079251>. , H., R. (2011, May 19). *Eye Contact: What Does it Communicate in Various Cultures?* (R. Scudder, Ed.). This is more emphasized when that person is superior to you.

Geri Ann argues about it in many Asian countries with different cultures and attitudes that men are superior to women or teachers to students and parents to children superiority and so forth, which makes them, feel that looking directly at someone’s eye is disrespectful. In Nigeria eye contact is avoided as a sign of respect.

According to Galanti (2008) in Middle Eastern countries eye contact between male and female should be avoided because it is interpreted as a sexual invitation. Thomas and Inkson are authors who believe that “a further complication is the fact that most cultures have different conventions about eye contact depending on the gender, status, and so on of those involved” (Thomas and Inkson, 2009). Although culture is one of major tools in eye contact behavior but, facial expression is playing the main role as well to decode eye contact.

Eye contact has an influence on brain activity (McCarthy, Lee, Itakura, Muir 2009). Eye contact modulates the development and activation of the social brain network, Atsushi Senju and Mark H. Johnson (2008), talk about social cognitive theory in relation with eye contact effects in brain activity. According to the authors: ‘the eye contact effect is defined as the phenomenon that perceived eye contact modulates the concurrent and/or immediately following cognitive processing and/or behavioral response’ (p. 127). Moreover, it is found that direct gaze affect the brain activity but it is slower than the way how the averted gaze affects it. Eye contact directly activates brain arousal system. Senju and Johnson (2008) have found two different effects of eye contact; autonomic arousal and emotional arousal. Autonomic arousal is an eye contact effect caused from a stranger’s direct gaze and emotional arousal is related with facial expression and attractiveness it is related more with psychology of people (Atsushi Senju and Mark H. Johnson, 2008, p.127-134).

In eye contact and eye gaze not only social interaction, daily life, but normal communication can also be affected. Even technology plays a role in eye contact and eye gaze. Fullwood and Sneddon (2006) talk about video-mediated communication, which is used in video conferencing, distance learning, interviews, meetings. Video mediated communications are used apparatus that support gaze awareness, if the person looks directly into the camera and gives the impression that the participant is gazing in the direction of their eyes (p. 168). This kind of strategy is used in television as well “presenters give the impression that they are talking to the audience, by focusing attention at the monitor not at the camera” (p. 168). Mutual gaze comes if the users look directly into the camera. According to Fullwood and Sneddon (2006) it is also possible that the perception of gaze aversion (a consequence of the confederate not looking into the camera) had a negative impact upon memory performance (p. 171).

## Conclusion

As it has been mentioned above data for the present research was collected from three different sources. The first one is semi-structured interviews where

twelve people participated; six of them are males and six of them females. They have different ages from 21-30 years. All of the participants are from different countries like Iran, Albania, Turkey, Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, Nigeria and Cameroon. However, all of them have something in common with each other. All of them are students of the Eastern Mediterranean University; all of them live in Famagusta in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. However they are students of different departments like Public Relations and Advertising, Astrophysics, Visual Arts, Master in Banking and Finance, Master of Arts in Communication and Media Studies. Moreover, they are people that are used to living a life in Famagusta that is different from their lives in their own countries. In Famagusta know each other. Famagusta is a city that you live a life as if you are a member of the community.

The second one is focus group interviews. Ten people participated in these interviews: Five of them are male and five are female, with ages ranging from 19-29 years. These groups of participants were different from the first group. All these students are from different cities of Turkey. They all have different backgrounds with different cultures and attitudes and their different ages makes them to look at life differently. For example, a student who lives here for more than two years behaves differently from the one who just arrived in Cyprus. Also, Turkey is a multicultural country because of Ottoman Empire who was ruling Balkan and Anatolia for more than 200 years. For this reason the people from Balkan and Anatolia kept their culture and tradition no matter where they live. For instance, Izmir is a big city but the origins of their ancestors go back to Bulgaria, Hungary, Albania, Kosova, Cekrez, etc. Izmir is so different that some Turkish people believe that it is not a part of Turkey. The people kept their culture and tradition in a way that they influenced the Turkish people as well. However, Turkey is a country which is surrounded by Europe, Asia, Balkan, etc. The third and the last one is field notes based on the researchers observations. In other words during the study the researcher kept field notes about the eye contact.

Methodological data triangulation is done and findings of the study are summarized below in order to answer research question. The first two research questions are:

0-2) Do males establish eye contact with females easily and do females establish eye contact with males easily?

The findings of the study suggest that, there is gender difference in establishing eye contact with the opposite sex. According to the data, females can establish eye contact easier than males but males can keep eye contact for longer time. Eye

contact shows more negative feelings than positive feelings. Females as participants in both semi-structured interviews and focus group strongly agree with negative feelings that they receive from eye contact. For the same sex, relationship is important and has direct affect to establish eye contact. They are not comfortable to establish eye contact with strangers from the opposite sex and the same sex. In addition, characteristics of person and his/her cultural background is important in establishing eye contact.

According to the answers, they decode eye contact differently. This happens because of culture, tradition and character of the person who is decoding. Gender affects the understanding of eye contacts meaning. Also, males and females learn these meanings by experience and sharing the meaning with each other. As the time passes and they have more experience about the meaning of eye contact, it becomes more common among males and females. This does not mean that the same sex understands all the feelings expressed through eye contact. Even some people from the same sex do not establish eye contact except they have relationship with each other like co-worker, friend, couple, etc.

3-4) Do males think females are interested in them socially or personally when they are looked at and do females think males are interested in them socially or personally when they are looked at?

The data suggest that there is differentiating a social interest from personal interest on the person's character and background. Females make different eye contact from males. They do not mention any special reason that helps them to read eye contact differently but they mention culture and background of the person. Moreover, the place where they gather plays an important role for eye contact. However, participants maintain that they are more interested in him/her as a sociable person. The females maintain that males are interested in them in their social lives; but on the other side, males explain that they are interested in the given personally. They explain that the relationship between the people and the eye contact created with each other depend on their character, culture and relationship.

4-6) Do males/females from different nationalities differ in establishing eye contact with the opposite sex and do males/females from different nationalities differ in decoding eye contact with opposite sex?

Out of three data collection techniques used for the study, 'culture' is agreed as the common denominator that has effect on establishing or decoding eye contact. Because of culture, eye contact language can change from one place to another

place. Culture affects the eye contact directly and can give different meaning because of different cultures. Participants from different nationalities indicate that there are some similarities and differences for decoding and getting meaning from eye contact. Scientist such as Johannasen (2010) and Scudder (2009) believe in the difference of eye contact in different cultures as well. As a result nationality background and culture has direct influence in eye contact this is based on the way how it is used and the duration of eye contact that takes up a variety of meaning in different cultures.

7-8-9) Does the context (bar, university cafes, house gathering, etc) where the eye contact takes place influence the decoding of eye contact and do males and females decode eye contact used in dancing, bars or public area differently?

When people talk and have an eye contact with each other, it is a signal of listening to each other according to researchers who are mentioned above like Pelachaud, Bevacqua, Mancini and Poggi (2005). Facial expression that humans understand from such as eye contact depends on many factors for judging those feelings. If someone has the same eye contact, in the same duration and position but in different places and environments, the meaning that is created can be totally different from each other. Places like bars where eye contact is established and decoded can give different meaning to the eye contact than in classroom. Participants mention a number of factors like music and alcohol that play role in giving different meanings to eye contact. They further mention that meaning given to the eye contact change from place to place based on these factors.

10) Do males and females decode eye contact used in media differently?

Understanding the data collected from participants suggest that, there is a difference in establishing and decoding eye contact in media. There are three reasons that decoding eye contact take place in the media directly affects understanding from eye contact. The findings suggest that the first is background and culture of the media text, the second is the bridge between the media text and the audience; and the third one is the background and culture of the audience.

In summary, the three data collection techniques used for the present study reveal that eye contact is a personal body language. Establishing eye contact changes from place to place; in other words, according to the context like bars, university cafés, restaurants, house gatherings, etc. Females can establish easy eye contact with males. Culture, media, context, relationship, etc are important factors as well in the way how eye contact is established and decoded by people. Participants agree that eye contact is introduced as the bridge of creating relationship and

flirting between people. It has a very important role to show if s/he is interested in someone. Eyes can be success director when two people dance with each other; in other words, eyes can lead other parts of body to make dance a success. It is the source of energy.

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## CRITICAL ESSAYS

# *Analysis on the use of different techniques based on three learning styles: visual, listening, and kinesthetic* \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ **Dr.Blegina HASKO BEZO** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ **Majlinda HALA** \_\_\_\_\_

### **Abstract**

*This article seeks to provide data on how well the learning styles are known and how they are used in teaching methods and techniques by teachers as well as how much student learning styles are identified, a factor that leads to motivation, development of knowledge, skills and building student attitudes or improving attained results. One of the characteristics of learning related with the observation, processing and transmission of information in different ways coincides with the learning styles utilized by the student and that is identified and should be used by teachers. Their identification leads to a quality learning, which motivates every student to have positive academic and artistic achievements. The article undertakes to bring a qualitative descriptive research, where the subjects are teachers and students of the Figurative Arts and Music Department of the Jordan Misja High Art School. To validate the conclusions of this article, two questionnaires were developed and employed, which were completed by research subjects (about 100 students and 25 school teachers). Responses obtained through questionnaires validated the results obtained and the analysis performed shed light on the deficient knowledge of the teachers regarding the three learning styles. An interpretation of the responses reveals that 32.5% of teachers employ the most evident styles including other teaching techniques. Responses received through student questionnaires and interpretations made from the results of the analysis show the three styles including: a) listening learning style (62.5%), b)*