

EMBODIED WAVE

*How Could We Communicate In The Future
When Our Language Delivery Is Empaired?*



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Introduction

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As I'm a Korean living in the Netherlands, I use English as my second language. To survive here in the Netherlands, I must use this language, which I am not that fluent in. For the past 4 years, I've been using it almost daily but am not nearly as articulate in it as I am in my mother tongue. In-person or face to face communication means breaking the blockage and connection between each other. For communication between people, we speak the verbal language. At the same time, it is important to engage in non-verbal expression, paying close attention to and grasping facial expressions, voice changes and body language to better understand what each other is trying to say in the globalised world.

Gestures and eye contact are two effective nonverbal elements to help communicate during Covid19. Firstly, a gesture as a symbolic action contains the linguistic messages of inner thoughts and values, establishing interaction in communication. Secondly, eye contact as a window to look into another's minds by synchronising brain waves reveals a lot about their feelings. This direct gazing strengthens the bilateral neural connection.

To succeed with gestures and eye contact during communication, I describe the core requirements as having contexts that a gesture is adding meaning in a situation, being a good listener who can wait and open senses to catch the meaning and a desire and will to understand. In a conversation with a person who can only speak her native language, which I don't speak, how could we communicate? And, how would it change in relation to different contexts? Kinesics as a tool to

overcome the limitation of language is able to empathise with the emotions, thoughts, expectations which are hidden behind the apparent behaviour, the desire to understand and be understood has to be based on. Also, there are always listeners to exchange ping-pong conversation.

Sometimes, when one uses gestures as part of their language, they might face difficulties due to cultural differences. In this moment, how do we overcome this and what kind of position and mindset do we have to have towards it? The key to making gestures is so that the other person can understand what you are describing, therefore I suggest keeping your gesture simple by conceptualising it to the core meaning and the simple gesture may be conducted to several words related to it. Furthermore, unifying language is rather poorly evaluated by users because it is taking away the cultural variances. Rather than making them one, we need multiculturalism, recognising the cultural uniqueness, learning from each other and respecting them equally.

This thesis examines the importance of non-verbal expression that I have found using my second language in a foreign country, being a Korean grown in Confucianism where it has frowned upon using body movement. Communication obstruction caused by the masks worn due to Covid19 can be overcome with gestures and eye contact. Also, looking at the gesture as a potential universal language, what attitude we should have towards other cultures that we encounter when using gestures.

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Since the Covid19 pandemic began, wearing a mask and keeping 2m distance threatened my life's survival strategy, analyzing nonverbal expression to be able to communicate with. It made me incapable of reading people's lips and facial expressions and verbally communicating with others. It's even hard to hear their voices because of the distance. Since most of our physical routines have moved online, some of us feel disconnected and have difficulties understanding non-verbal expressions because we can't see most of the body or sometimes people have their camera off. As we have suffered so much in these last two years, non-verbal communication is getting even more important, while at the same time, it's deficient. As a foreigner using a second language, I've met sudden verbal obstacles. It made me think deeply about how to overcome these predicaments. Based on this situation, my thesis explores the ideas of how we can communicate more effectively if the current phenomenon continues into the future. How could we communicate in the future when our language delivery skills are impaired?

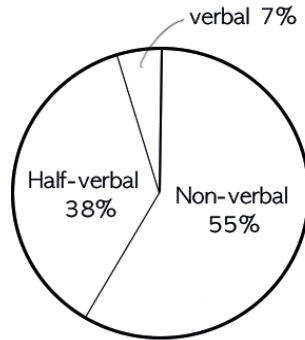
Communication

Communication is a behavioural process that shares knowledge, information, and emotions with each other.^[1] You cannot communicate alone. It requires someone else with you to communicate. In Korean, communication is 소통(疏通), 소(疏) means 'break the blockage', and 통(通) means 'connection between people'. So, it means we connect with each other by breaking the blockage. Genuine communication is interaction based on respect and understanding over simple expression. As such, communication is an essential tool to make us live as social beings.

Language is not the only way we communicate. There are verbal, non-verbal and half-verbal factors to consider. Verbal expression is a 'language' specifically speaking and writing. Non-verbal expression is an element that is not verbally expressed, such as facial expression, body and hand gestures. Half-verbal expression is a phonetic element accompanying language such as intonation, tone, strength or the pitch of voice.^[2] We normally refer to non-verbal and half-expression as a non-verbal expression collectively.

While we communicate we use all these elements. In how intentional or non-intentional, the non-verbal expression shows more meaning than verbal expression. There are many scholars who have studied that a significant amount of information in a message is transmitted non-verbally rather than verbally during a conversation. Gregory Bateson, an anthropologist, social scientist and linguist, said that the verbal message is first-order messages, the non-verbal message is second-order messages. This second-order message, namely

meta-communication, is used as a criterion to grasp the true meaning of verbal messages. Ray Birdwhistell, an anthropologist who founded kinesics, stated that language accounts for only 30-35% of the behaviour of conveying one's intentions and that the remaining 70-75% is non-verbal communication.^[3] Psychologist Mehrabian found that overall when messages are delivered, words convey 7% of messages, voices convey 38% of messages, and facial expressions convey 55% of messages.^[4]



For example, if your friend keeps talking to you when you are busy working, you might look at your wristwatch. If someone pushes you in the line, you might show them your palm and express not to.

The importance and influence of these nonverbal expressions have been studied a lot in human social development. According to a study from the International Journal of Early Childhood Education, infants who formed a stable attachment relationship with their mother positively performed demanding behaviour attempts, responses, and social interactions through non-verbal communication skills.^[5] Jun Kang, a researcher at Korea University's Interdisciplinary Emotional Neuroscience Lab, reported that salespeople who excelled in non-verbal emotional expressions

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have higher achievement in their field, furthermore, managers who more accurately perceive non-verbal emotional expressions received positive evaluations from both superiors and subordinates. Additionally, it has been found that medical staff with excellent non-verbal communication skills are highly evaluated by patients.^[6] When non-verbal communication skills are developed, not only one's mental and physical health, but also understanding and consideration of others can lead to social success.

Non-verbally Communication is getting more important in the globalised world. When we meet people from different countries with different languages, it is sometimes difficult to communicate perfectly with only the language. In this case, as non-verbal expressions supplement meaning, the power of non-verbal factors is further exerted. It can be very helpful for you to recognize which non-verbal expressions you are using and whether you are using them appropriately.

Communication in Covid19

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Covid 19, which first occurred in Wuhan City, Hubei Province, China in December 2019, has become a globally fatal pandemic, since March 2020. Covid19 is transmitted directly through saliva caused by coughing, sneezing and speaking, and indirectly by touching mucous membranes such as nasal passages, mouth and eyes with contaminated hands.^[7]

Since the Covid-19 has begun, we have made a lot of changes in our daily lives. In a crowded space, voice transmission is impaired significantly because we must



wear a mask and keep 2m distance from each other. A study has shown that the voice level transmitted decreases by more than 3 dB, depending on the material, thickness, density, and composition of the mask causing increasing inconveniences in

communication.^[8] In addition, by covering the lower part of the face under the mask, we cannot read lips and facial expressions. Conversation while looking at the lips acts as a factor that makes communication easier since you can understand the pronunciation more accurately. Also, it's even worse that we can not get close enough to hear it. In addition, those that use a foreign language rather than their mother tongue find even more communication difficulties.

As most of our ordinary physical routines have turned online, we have more communication through screens. The pandemic has advanced the daily life of

the distant future. Schools and workplaces are such places where people can gather in close proximity and have now shifted online. Most of the meetings have been conducted through the screen. Some of us feel a disconnection in communication via this medium. When meeting online, there is a problem that the voice coming out of the digital speaker is not clearly audible or sometimes it is mistaken or muted which irritates us. Additionally, too much concentration on the digital voice makes us tired quickly. Also, when a professor gives a class, only the professor's voice is transmitted unilaterally and when the student's cams are off, they don't know if the students are still listening or not. The non-response of the students inevitably leads to the feeling that communication is cut off. Similar problems can also be found in corporate video conferencing conducted in real-time in front of a webcam. The screen is limited to grasping the reaction and timing of the other parties. It makes it hard to determine when to engage in speaking. This makes it difficult to have a conversation and requires fine-tuning.^[9] In addition, since only the upper half of the body is shown on the screen, not the person's overall appearance, it is difficult to understand the non-verbal expressions. If we cannot check the person's current state, the emotions are easily forged, and hard to empathise with.^[10] If the non-face-to-face communication becomes more accustomed and if the ability to read the non-verbal expression in face-to-face communication deteriorates, it can bring struggles for understanding the emotions and intentions of others, as well as communicating your thoughts properly. Experiencing the limitation of direct communication from an early age can lead to more

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communication problems in adulthood.

The simple way to solve this is to take the mask off. However, due to the unstable situation of the virus, we should wear a mask and avoid physical contact to protect each other.

In the future, as a way to continuously solve these problems and lack of communication, the role and the importance of non-verbal expression such as the eyes and gestures mentioned above, is expected to increase.

In this situation, reading gestures and eyes, which are representative elements of non-verbal expression, have an important role in understanding the meaning of what others are saying and what we want to say with our masks on. In the future, it seems that the role of non-verbal expression might possibly be the major means of communication, just as much as how language or writing deliver meaning. How much more important is the role and level of non-language as a means of communication in the future?

Gestures

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Gesture means a whole-body sign with hands and legs like improvised dancing as a non-verbal alternative to verbal messages. It is a non-verbal act that conveys various communication information, including emotions and thoughts, by moving the hands. In other words, a gesture is a symbolic move that carries linguistic information of inner thoughts, psychological emotions, and values, establishing connection in communication.^[11]

Gestures can be classified into two such as “spontaneous gestures” and “emblems”, according to whether speech-language is needed or not, along with gestures.^{[12] [13]}

First of all, a spontaneous gesture is more deeply related to speech utterances. It is used unconsciously and while you are explaining something. Also, it can be subdivided into Iconic, metaphoric, deictic and beat gestures. The iconic gesture represents images of specific objects or actions. When we say ‘A man climbed up a ladder’, we will make climbing poses. The utterance and the gesture are complementary and co-expressive to each other. In some cases, we are expressing the shape of an object by moving hands as if touching the surface of an object (sculpting mode) and explaining the outline of the object using forefingers (outlining mode). The metaphoric gesture is mainly used to express abstract concepts or information. With the utterance “I’m going to talk about my work (or something)”, the speaker makes a circle shape with both hands. Although the work does not have a round shape, it can be figurative as a round object. In general, the act of pointing with a finger is called a direct gesture. Pointing to something

that does not exist during speaking is called abstract deictic.

Secondly, an emblem gesture is one that symbolically expresses linguistic features. It can express its meaning by itself without any utterance. It has a strong bond between the form of gesture and meaning. It's used consciously and more embedded in society and culture. In other words, spontaneous gestures are improvised when we speak, but the emblem is a specific handshape that already has a specific meaning. Emblems can be subdivided into three categories such as performative, word-like and expressive. Performative emblem refers to performing a social action with a gesture. A typical example is 'greeting'. In Korea, we put our hands on top of our belly button and bow down to greet. In India, they put their hands together raising to the chest level, and bow to greet each other. The word-like emblem can be used in place of a specific word in an utterance. For example, putting the thumb and forefinger together in a circle shape in Korea, one is making a gesture for 'money'. The expressive emblem is a gesture to express one's psychological state. For instance, sweeping a hand down on the chest expresses 'relief' or 'safety'.



down on the chest expresses 'relief' or 'safety'.



[14]

This is a failed example of an emblem gesture that has a different meaning in each country. President R.M. Nixon had an embarrassing experience because of a single finger gesture. In 1958, Nixon, who was on a tour of South America as then Vice President of the US, sent an O.K sign with his thumb and forefinger to the crowd at the airport. The crowd booed violently. It's because the hand signals used to mean "okay" or "good" in the US are harsh insults like "bastard" in South America. This is a representative example of the fact that even the same gesture can be read differently in different cultures.^[15]

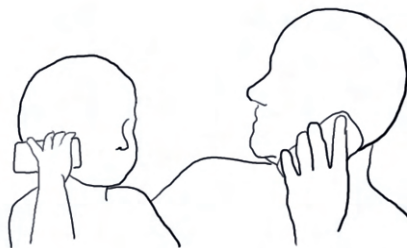
If he hadn't used the gesture, there might have been no such misunderstanding. It's literally even worse than doing nothing. It may be better not to do it if you are not aware of the meaning of the movement to the other person. In Korea, there is a proverb "if you stay still,

you will get to the middle”. It means to be still rather than pretending to know something when you don’t. This is saying that it is better not to stand out too much. This outstanding situation is often shown not only in words but also in gestures, so in Korea, which is based on Confucianism, I have been taught that I should refrain from using the body actively and show a calm side. It’s getting better nowadays, but the culturally embodied habit does not go away. For example, floundering your hands when talking to a superior or elders is a distraction for them. Furthermore, when talking with them, don’t stare at their eyes. Because when raising your head and looking straight into their eyes, it can be interpreted as disrespecting the person or having an aggressive attitude.^[16] Shaking one’s leg is also not allowed. This unconscious action can indicate your nervousness non-verbally and it’s a superstitious behaviour that you are shaking out your good fortunes.

Nonetheless, using and improving gestures is still much more important and beneficial in communication for both sides. Firstly, for the beholder, they can get engaged and have a better understanding during the conversation. When you talk with your body movements, it comes across more passionate and confident about what you are talking about. And it will catch people’s attention and make them connect with your speech more. Secondly, for the sender, it helps increase memory and release tension. According to a study, in the cognitive aspect, the teacher’s use of gestures was found to have a positive effect on listening comprehension. Psychologist Church, Ayman-Nolly, and Mahootian divided Spanish-speaking English

learners into two groups: one group was shown maths lessons in English without gestures, and the other group was shown lessons with gestures. As a result of the experiment, the group that took a class with gestures had higher achievement.^[17] This study was also conducted for elementary school students in Korea by Eun-A Kim. When the researcher showed elementary school students a file of recorded English text to two groups with only different gestures, the students who viewed the file including gestures had higher comprehension test scores.^[18] Personally, whenever I felt nervous about a presentation, I practised my script while moving my hands. Sometimes, I create some specific gestures for some words and it always helps me to remember what to say and think logically. Actually, I feel quite relaxed when moving my body and using hand gestures during presentations.

Properly developed gestures, one of the non-verbal skills, can activate the limbic system that regulates emotions, improving empathy and managing stress. The process of empathy that starts from the moment we read the emotions that emerge from the faces or gestures of others is due to the mirror neurons in our brains.



This neuron is fundamental to mimic people and this mimicking is necessary to empathise and understand others.^[19] It removes the barrier between each other

by reflecting the other person's experiences, desires and emotions like a mirror in your head. And on the other hand, they want the other person to see them as a mirror. They want you to be understood as much as you understand, and to empathise as much as you empathise.

[20]

For some cultures that are taboo on the use of the natural non-verbal body, it can be fatal to communicate that verbal delivery has been impaired due to wearing a mask and keeping distance in this COVID19 era. The gesture is not simply a means of assisting verbal expression, but can also be an equivalent and even more important means than verbal expression. For better communication in the future, we have to put a value on nonverbal expression.

Eye contact


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“The eyes of men converse as much as their tongues, with the advantage that the ocular dialect needs no dictionary, but is understood all the world over.”


- Ralph Waldo Emerson-


I have experienced that when someone shares something with me by using eye contact and body movement, the image is transmitted clearly into my head. I believe that light and dark exist in the eye. The light radiates my imagination and thoughts to the other party, and dark absorbs and scans the other person's light -> colour -> imagination -> thoughts. One day, a friend of mine was so excited to express his experience and he spoke too quickly and poured out vocabulary so fast that I couldn't catch up. By only hearing the language, I probably wouldn't have understood what he was saying, but I was able to get the sense of exactly what he was trying to say because I grasped the idea from looking into his eyes, intonation and gestures. Looking into each other's eyes allows us to see what we are imagining.

‘The eyes are the window to the soul’. Looking into someone's eyes can reveal a lot about their feelings and thoughts. Simon Baron-Cohen, a British scientist, experimented with ‘How well can people read emotions just by looking at the eyes?’ through ‘reading the mind in the eyes test’. If the score is more than 30 points, it means they are very good at understanding someone's emotions based on facial signals. In general, in the UK, the adults got 26 points and students got 28 points. This shows we can read people's thoughts through their eyes.^[21]

joking	A	insisting
		
amused		relaxed

arrogant	B	grateful
		
sarcastic		tentative

serious	C	ashamed
		
bewildered		alarmed

joking	D	cautious
		
arrogant		reassuring

- (A) insisting
- (B) tentative
- (C) serious
- (D) cautious

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However, in some cases, we can read thoughts through the attitude without making eye contact. In Korea, we have been taught, in Confucianism, not to look into an elder's eyes too much. Because staring into their eyes can be seen as being aggressive and disrespectful. As well, the attitude that you are not looking into their eyes and slightly nodding your head can also give the meaning that you are accepting their authority. Nowadays we are in conflict about which is a better way to communicate. I think it's important to know what feelings you have in your eyes and what kind of feelings you want to convey through your eyes.



Sometimes, the deep emotions and thoughts that people want to hide are shown through eye contact. We can see this in the performance called 'the artist is present'^[22] by Marina Abramovic, who is considered the best performance artist. It is a performance where Marina Abramovic and a participant simply sit face to face in a chair with a table in between and look into each other's eyes in silence. It seems simple like this, but the

way she communicates is not trivial at all. It has made a huge impression globally. Participants sat in front of her unexpectedly told her about their troubles, which they couldn't confide in anyone, and even though they were meeting her for the first time, they shed tears in front of her. She listened to this silently and answered with her eyes. Eye contact with her was telling a lot of stories without any words. They empathised deeply into an individual's inner self. Additionally, watching the moment when people interact with each other looking into their eyes, magically contagious emotions to the other audience. As I mentioned above, you can find the mirror neurons effect from this. You can empathise with what you see. When we empathise with someone, we are able to successfully connect with each other.



As her follow-up work, she collaborated with a brain scientist and continued an experimental performance. They measured the changes in the brains and brain waves of two people only by gazing without exchanging speech or language. Just by looking at each other's eyes,

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it shows the increase in empathy with each other and the connection of brain waves.^[23]

As seen above, while exchanging emotions and communicating effectively through eye contact, the brain waves are synchronised. This demonstrates that direct gaze improves the bilateral neural connection.



In an experiment, the changes in brain wave patterns when an adult and a child communicate through eye contact were analysed.^[24] The research team covered the heads of babies and adults with a device that seemed like a hat that gauges brain waves (electroencephalogram, EEG), and measured the brain waves that appear when they look at each other under different conditions. EEG recordings show aggregated electrical signal patterns occurring in brain neurons. In experiment 1, the 17 8month-old infants viewed videos of an adult singing a lullaby with various angles (looking forward, head and eyes averted by 20°, head averted but eyes oriented forward). Their brain waves differed depending on whether they made eye contact or not. In experiment 2, the babies viewed the adult singing a lullaby in real-time while gazing directly or indirectly. Among all the tested

cases, the greatest change in EEG of babies is shown when they saw the adult's eyes directly in real-time. At the same time, while the adults had eye contact, the brain waves were synchronised. The babies made more frequent voices when making eye contact, which evoked stronger synchronisation with the adults' brain waves.

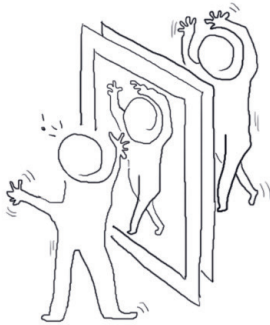
^[25] In this aspect, the EEG synchronisation between the infant and the adult is taken as a signal that they are prepared to communicate. Additionally, this is observed in fully grown people who understand and communicate with each other, and also in students who concentrate and participate in class.^[26]

As such, body language and eye contacts are definitely powerful communication skills and their power is amazingly effective.

Contexts
and ping-pong
for conversation

What are the core elements of communication?

I had an experimentation on how people can communicate only through body movements and gestures. For my test lab exhibition, I made an interactive installation with a two-way screen.^[27] By



using body gestures, two people can communicate with each other in front of it. A screen shows B's body mesh, B screen shows A's body mesh. The tracked body mesh into a simple figure helps to think of the body gestures as symbolic messages.

What I expected from the installation was that people would try to communicate and interact with each other by using body language through the screens. However, contrary to my intentions, they were just dancing in front of it or just mimicking the movement of the figure. I asked them "Can you move your body to say something to a counterpart by body language?" their response was, "To say what? Just Hi?"

In this experimentation, I realised people need some contexts for communication. Because it does not happen just by itself. People need to have reasons and topics to start and keep the conversation. In order to communicate, it is not enough just having two people together in digital and physical. They needed something to talk about. Communication does not take place without a purpose.

We can see how having the same contexts in the conversation is essential in this situation. When I was travelling in Vietnam, I met an elderly Vietnamese waitress who only could speak Vietnamese at a restaurant. I couldn't speak Vietnamese at all and tried to communicate in English, which is a universal language, but English was also difficult for her. However, I realised that we couldn't communicate in any spoken language. So, I pointed to the food image on the menu with my forefinger and raised that finger again to express 'one plate'. She nodded and smiled slightly to show that she understood what I meant. She made a shape of holding a cup with her right hand and pretended to drink something in



front of her face. 'What would you like to drink?'. I pointed to the water on the table and showed my thumb up. I touched my chest once with my palm and shook it left and right in the air showing my palm to her. 'I have this water. I'm fine.' After I was done with



the food I wanted to pay. I raised my palm to get her attention, and then I drew a small square in the air with my thumb and forefinger to convey the meaning of 'bill please'.

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In this situation, we could understand 100% through gestures. Rather than how articulate you are with body language, the key to success in this conversation was, in the same context, where we are, who we are talking with, and what we can guess next.



As well the meaning of the gestures can be translated differently depending on the context. For example, if I clasp my hands together in a church, you might think that I am praying. But if I clasp them on the street in the winter, you might think I'm cold. As such, we analyse the setting and external factors such as how, when, where, who, and what is expressed to understand the context of the situations. If we are not in the same context or missing context, we might be lost in misunderstanding.

In another case that I observed in the test lab, one person tried to send a message to the other in body language, but the other person did not understand the movement and thus did not respond. In communication, there are always more than two people, one talks to the other, and the other listens. The two roles are shifting and repeating. To be able to have successful ping-pong communication, listening is more important than speaking. A listening attitude makes us understand and realise the intention of the encounter's saying. Meanwhile, the empathic skill is naturally developed. This ability can be worked as a big advantage in business or any other human interaction in our life.^[28]

Desire to understand

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Pantomime is a silent play with no voice at all. Even without spoken language, actors can communicate 100% of the meaning they want to convey to the audience by making facial expressions and gestures without any devices or props. It is considered to transcend the individuality of time and space, and the specificity of history and culture. Mime functions as an all-inclusive language that transcends biological and cultural differences.^[29] Sung Kook Ryu who is one of the famous Korean mime actors said that the most required skill to be a mime actor is empathy. Because acting should draw many characters from within yourself and represent the characters' life. That is why you must empathise with others and you should train a lot to do so.^[30]

The basis of pantomime, kinesics, is one of the non-verbal communication skills including body movements, gestures, facial expressions and eye contact.^[31] It helps to enhance understanding even without any language link with each other. Understanding necessitates empathy, the ability to share another person's point of view.

^[32] Communication is a journey to find and respond appropriately toward the needs hidden inside the other person. So, If you judge it only by the apparent behaviour, you are almost 100% likely to make a mistake. Therefore, to be able to empathise with the emotions, ideas, and expectations that lie underneath the apparent behaviour there has to be a base of desire to understand and be understood.^[33]



I had an interesting experiment with one of my Chinese classmates Xiaoyao. It was about ‘Can we speak our own mother tongue through gestures?’^[34]. In the condition of not being able to use the same language, I wonder how much deeper can we understand each other? How does the non-verbal expression help for that? So, I spoke Korean to Xiaoyao and she spoke Chinese to me with active hand gestures and body motions. We had this session for 50 minutes from our classroom to a café having a coffee together. In the beginning, I thought it would be hard to converse with these restrictions as we have different ways of composing sentences and cultures. In fact, I didn’t understand some of her expressions at the beginning.

However, during the communication, we very much desired to understand and to be understood by each other. Somehow, we gradually built up the contexts by catching some words or nuances that we could guess. With those little hints, we kept conversing by paying attention to the tone and flow of voice, eyes and gesture. It was a beautiful moment that we were

co-learning, co-experiencing and co-creating the way of communication by developing our gestures on the spot. While we expanded our conversation little by little, we could understand each other from general topics such as what we did last weekend, the weather and the taste of this coffee, to deeper topics such as family, school life and the meaning of my name. The important point in this conversation was to express whether we understood each other or not. It helped us to use our hands to explain descriptively. Likewise, on the second experiment with Iseult who speaks French, which doesn't have any linguistic similarities with Korean, we were able to communicate with each other by creating this context for our conversation. We could share our stories of hometown, travelling, interests, family.

Non-verbal kinesics communication can overcome the limitations of language. When I first came to Europe, I found difficulties communicating with people because my English was not that fluent. Of course, there is no right answer or way of how to communicate, but when I speak the second language, not my mother tongue, I feel very rigid as if I was taking an English paper exam. What is worse was in the early days my hand gestures and eye contact were not well practised. As a result, I struggled more, because, in Europe, they consider the use of body gestures and eye contact to be seriously important in conversation. Sometimes, they treat talking without looking into the eyes as if there is something hidden or unsure. If you don't make eye to eye contact with them, they are likely to doubt the authenticity of your order, works and opinions. Similarly, my foreign friends also did not have easy communication with me at first.

We tried a lot of eye contact to talk together and used gestures to have a better understanding. While gradually mirroring them and using more body expressions, I was able to feel comfortable using my body naturally as well. I really wanted to be understood by them, so I did my best to express and use my gestures effectively and richly hoping this would improve my poor language skills. If I had no will to communicate, I would stay still and not realise the power of non-verbal expression.

Simplicity

Embodied wave

What words are essential in conversation? If we know how to translate the essential words into body gestures as a sign, can it be a benefit during the communication? How can we express them?

What if we are able to communicate with only 123 words? Will we be able to complete communication with the minimum amount of words? There is a constructed language called Toki Pona.^[35] The language was created by Sonja Lang and is supported by a community as more fans become interested in it. It's not an international language, yet sorted in logical language created under the influence of Taoism. Toki Pona consists of 14 phonemes and 120 vocabularies and is designed to express the concept as broad as possible with 120 minimal vocabularies. The vocabulary was sourced from English, Tok Pisin, Finnish, Georgian, Dutch, Acadia French, Croatian, Chinese and Esperanto. It is intended to be fairly easy to learn for people from all cultures and linguistic backgrounds. The ambiguity of the word, having typically a coverable range of related meanings, is the key to functioning as a language with this minimum number of words. For example, 'Jan' means a person, human, being, somebody, personalise etc. And 'Pona' means good, simplicity, positive, ok etc. So, if I put the two words together, 'Jan pona' means 'good person' and it can be translated to 'friend'.^[36] The context helps you understand which meaning is being used.

These are the overall meaning of the Toki pona words;

nothing, collecting, all,
down, different, or, stay, and,
shop, things(object), bed,
tool, inside, dirty, person,
yellow, feel, dark, end, bugs,
side, dish, good, same,
hot(fire), skin, what, up,
body, circle, new, you, front,
picture, know, big, mammal,
sun(light), horizon, sweet,
origin, but, go, water, time,
talk, house, two, sex, mouth,
fight, bright, one, beast,
strength, far, want, many,
additional, count, weird, way,
hill, it, name, field, eye, love,
open, break, do, stick, grain,
give, take, fish, sound, come,
plant, can, use, fruit, also,
public, stiff, semisolid,
air(wind), color, hear, group,
rest, blue, head(reader),
clothes, cold, small,
long(line), paper, red,
present(at), hand(five), look,
hole, land, parents, money,
woman, I, man, eat, die, back,
moon, delight.

What words are frequently used in conversation?

As of 2019, there were 171,476 English words published in the Oxford English Dictionary.^[37] This database is selected among the words that have been used a lot in newspapers, broadcast news, TV programs and movies in the US and UK. Linguist Stuart Webb, a professor at Western Ontario University in Canada, analysed these four sources and selected 800 commonly used words.^[38] He investigated how often these words are used in daily conversation and almost 75% of words can be found in communication. It means if we properly know these 800 words, the general conversation will be easier and have no problem.^[39]

Verb.

know, like, think, get, go, see, say, come, mean, want, work, find, help, talk, set, keep, love, call, feel, laugh, thank, share, care, open, pay, cause, guess, become, run, live, understand, wait, support, cut, end, report, bring, buy, meet, provide, return, check, eat, learn, lead, walk, record, agree, wish, try, visit, press, spend, consider, share, step, drink, cover, explain, charge, respect, forget, born, response, carry, fight, die

Noun.

I, you, it, He, She, We, They, All, What, My, time, people, home, house, government, place, number, school, month, week, god, case, today, system, problem, name, water, country, job, business, group, question, order, head, morning, car, example, book, matter, information, face, woman, city, language, wife, education, class, reason, human, university, friend, period, centre, town, music, street, news, future, plan, effect, subject, hour, month, middle, game, field, animal, bed, fire, baby, voice, chance, role, tomorrow, phone, season, movement, Christmas, Sunday, daughter, wall, organization

Adjective.

good, okay, new, old, same, own, different, sure, big, happy, general, young, hard, social, national, bad, large, pretty, front, wrong, close, particular, short, special, difficult, strong, total, various, alone, ready, similar, individual, complete, fair, cool

Adverb. Preposition.

up, well, really, only, too, never, again, less, later, together, back, first, down, after, past, under, without, Here

work, take, make, look, put, need, give, tell, use,
know, able, read, try, change, believe, start, play,
and, turn, hear, study, move, stop, hope, interest,
see, watch, write, stand, increase, listen, speak,
trade, send, approach, fall, pick, pressure, drive,
expect, kill, follow, include, design, offer, begin,
direct, point, close, rest, hold, doubt, wonder,

way, thing, man, day, word, course, life, world,
they, year, thought, place, part, fact, bit, night,
country, room, mother, father, sister, hand, mind,
center, area, power, person, company, party, form,
stuff, idea, line, office, level, sometimes,
city, body, child, air, research, light, data, road,
death, process, meeting, son, west, art, result,
action, team, sound, yesterday, doctor, nature,
sea, dark, picture, colour, sign, fish, authority,
attention, structure, average, page, television, key,

high, whole, important, small, real, best, nice,
very, early, possible, present, local, certain, free,
available, common, happy, low, easy, private,
local, international, necessary, poor, forward,
small, little,

ago, often, out, when, who, how, into, over,
however, inside, upon, beyond, below,

Embodied wave

According to an English educational book in Korea, “I can speak in English as long as I know these 20 verbs. (영어, 아는 동사 20개면 나도 말할 수 있다^[40])”, This book is about how you can explain and speak everything if you know these 20 verbs, such as; bring, come, feel, get, give, go, have, hear, keep, make, meet, put, speak, stay, take, talk, tell, think, try, turn. For example, “discuss” can be transformed to “talk about”, “procrastinate” can be altered to “put it off”. As you imagine the scene of the word that you want to say, you can just add some prepositions to make a sentence. Communicating by disassembling words in simple and basic words, we can easily build up the conversation and convey what we want to deliver.

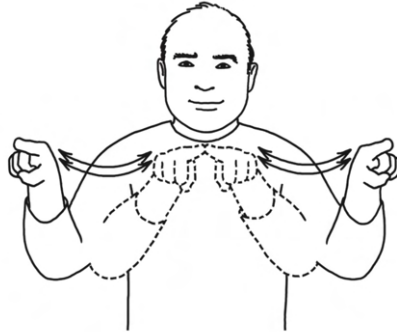
But, in these simple words, you cannot feel the charm of the message given by the rich vocabulary. Even though these too perfective and efficient words could connect more people, how do you write poetry and how do you tell a story in an interesting way? The meaning could be too shallow and childish in some way.

Nonetheless, What happens with gestures? When I saw those words I was thinking of how do I physically act them and use body language. To deliver the meaning by gesture, you have to consider if the encounter can understand what you are describing through your gesture. If the gestures are too complex then it is not helpful during the conversation. Rather, a gesture that is conceptual and can easily understand the core can be effective. In this book, ‘Simplified Signs: A Manual Sign-Communication System for Special Populations, Volume 1’^[41], they considered the sign, firstly, should be

easy to remember and look like what they mean. Second, it should be simple to form because they don't utilise complicated postures or motions. Third, it should be simple to use since the signs are imaginary, which means that one symbol could also be used for multiple words.

For example, this sign means music.^[42]

This gesture is easy to remember since it depicts a maestro leading an orchestra. Its simple concept does not need precise finger positioning or hand movement.



And it may be utilised to signify multiple words and thoughts within the context of the music. It might refer to a musician, a song, an orchestra, a choir, a concert, or playing a musical instrument. It varies according to the situation.

If we know how to simply express the core meaning of the words with gestures and practice to transfer the image, I think our communication will be easier and more effective.

Embrace embodiment

Embodied wave

While I experimented with other international people conversing using their own mother tongue and body gestures, I was thinking; “Culture is embedded in what they speak and how they gesture. Wouldn’t it be a truly global way of communication to understand the content with senses and to have the will to continue communication?”. When we each are from different countries, we usually use English. In general, when learning a second language, you must also study the culture of the country of that language. No matter how fluently I speak the language, I think it takes a lot of time and effort to acquire all the cultural knowledge of that country as my own. Because the culture of my mother tongue is established as my first culture. In addition, since hand gestures also come from the culture in the acquired life background, the use of gestures may be different even if we speak the same language.

What if there is a language and sign for international use, how does it work? Are there any cultural problems? Then what kind of position do we have to have to deal with cultural diversity?

The most well-known example is Esperanto. Esperanto is one of the international auxiliary languages, with an estimated 2 million speakers worldwide, which is the highest number among structured languages. Ludoviko Lazaro Zamenhof, a Polish doctor, created this artificial language in 1887 intending to link people all over the world through this language. Białystok, Poland, where Dr.Zamenhof was born, was ruled by the Russian Empire at the time and was populated by various ethnic groups including Poles, French,

Russians, Germans, and Jews. The conflict between them was intense. Dr.Zamenhof thought it was because of a lack of linguistic communication and invented Esperanto to make a language that anyone can learn and communicate easily.^[43] On the contrary, Esperanto can be seen as undermining the diversity of language by such an international language. However, the good purpose of why this language was created criticises the reality that powerful languages like English or French are imposed on other peoples under the guise of international languages as aiming for language equality. Also, by supporting the one-person two-language movement, the idea of using Esperanto is positive between people who speak different languages while maintaining their own language and culture.

Though, the limitation of Esperanto is that it still has biased language features. It has been made based on European languages like Romance, Slavic, Spanish, French, and Latin, so some non-Europe users like anyone with a different alphabet or writing system can find it harder to learn. Furthermore, as a feature of the structured language, the changes are unacceptable even if the necessary linguistic expressions change naturally, while the cultures, geographical regions, and generations have transformed. If you accept the changes, you lose the advantages of structured languages such as no irregular verbs and regular pronunciation, and eventually, it becomes like any other natural language.

Sign language for Deaf people is called International Sign (IS) rather than International Sign Language (ISL). The reason why 'Language' doesn't follow behind the

'International Sign' is there are no sign words specifically fixed for the deaf all over the world and the sign is rather a form of communication that arises on the spot. So, it's too vague to set it as a language.^[44] Basically, each country has a different sign language. When you say 'I love you', Korean is '사랑합니다', Japanese is '愛してる。', Chinese is '我爱你', French is 'Je t'aime'. There are different sign languages, just as there are diverse spoken languages. Then you may ask, can't they use the 'English Sign language' as a global platform for the deaf just as we use English? However, the important thing is that sign language is independent of spoken language and has a different origin. American Sign Language(ASL) and British Sign Language(BSL) are using the same shape of hands to spell English, yet the meaning of hand sign is completely different.^[45] There was a moment when a standardised international sign language was needed. The first start was in 1924 when the International Game for the Deaf (known as Deaflympics) was held and deaf people from over the world gathered. To communicate with one another at the time, they tried to figure out what their languages had in common. People have continued to construct informal sign language in the years since, using terms from their own lexicon to interact with one another.

In 1975, the World Federation of the Deaf(WFD) published an international sign language standard book, which is 'Gestuno: international sign language for the deaf', describing 1500 words, but it was not widely accepted by people. Deaf people began to claim that the signs in the Gestuno were not distinctive enough to be clearly understood. Another difficulty, similar to

Esperanto's, was that the majority of the signs in Gestuno were from a number of European and American sign languages, with only few from African and Asian sign languages. Therefore, the signs in the dictionary did not consider the plurality of sign languages all across the world, nor the diverse interests and perspectives of Deaf individuals who used them. People simply continued to build language naturally, focusing on iconic or pantomimic structure and pointing to a nearby item at times.^[46] Because sign language is also a language which is greatly influenced by local culture, even inside borders, cultural variances on signs must exist. Unifying language takes away diversity.

Through this whole example, it's difficult to make everything in one different and various culture. Instead, we need multiculturalism, which recognizes cultural uniqueness, allows us to learn from one another, and respects all cultures equally. It's important to embrace and understand the culture and gestures that have already been embodied and established. We have to take the culture with an open mind, learn things that are beneficial and interesting to us, and build up our abilities to develop them.

Conclusion

Embodied wave

Using a second language in a foreign country and when you are not fluent enough in that language, like me, it can be a hurdle in face to face communication. I used to rely on non-verbal elements to catch the conversation. Since the Covid19 began, wearing a mask to protect ourselves and the changes in daily lifestyle, like switching to screens, has made troubles in some non-verbal elements, especially, not being able to fully see facial expressions and hear voices which can be crucial to someone like me who speaks it as a second language. Some of those non-verbal communication skills are lacking, gestures and eye contact are needed much more. For me, gestures and eye contact is a life strategy, in this globalised world, to be connected with people by breaking the blockage.

From the exploration in this thesis, I gained knowledge that we are required to use gestures with eye contact as a universal way of communication to connect to each other. Communication is all about sending and receiving information. Improvising body gestures and eye contact can be a big part of conveying a message. To be able to communicate through gestures, body language, or eye contact, we have to empathise with each other. Empathising comes from a desire to understand and to be understood. It can be confusing without context. But if we are in the same context of location, or people surrounding is valuable to understanding each other in a completely different language with the help of using gestures. Gestures might be culturally different. However, if it's unified, as how Esperanto and Gestuno are, we will miss our fundamental personalities and cultural diversity. Difference is not a wrong thing. It's

cultural diversity. If we take the differences as diversities and uniqueness, we can go beyond. While embracing and opening our minds by co-learning, co-experiencing and co-creating gestures together, we can expect the gestures as a universal tool to communicate in the globalised world.

It's important to be enlightened about the possibilities of non-verbal communication. Bodily communication is not taught widely enough, so I want people to take more chances by co-learning a bodily language, co-experiencing the culture and jumping off miscommunications. With my artistic practice I aim to create interactions between two or more people where they are moving and using their gestures, and I hope these opportunities show the possibilities of non-verbal communication when moving your body. With improvised bodily language, we make the wonderful experience of being able to communicate despite language difficulties, especially for those who speak the local language. The body language is already there.

I hope my readers are moved to understand that, in order to overcome the communication difficulties from language, gesture has potential as a global language if we can visualise the meaning of what we are saying and understand by co-creating them. I want readers to recognise the embodied culture behind the gesture during a conversation, not undervalue the movement, and feel its charm and possibilities with curiosity for better communication.

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How Could We Communicate In The Future When Our Language Delivery Is Empaired?

Embodied Wave

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