

NATIONAL SPECIFICS OF GESTURES AND HABITS IN ENGLISH AND UZBEK CULTURES

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Annotation: This article explores the national specifics of gestures and habits in English and Uzbek cultures. It analyzes how non-verbal communication and everyday behaviors reflect deeper cultural values such as individualism, collectivism, hospitality, and politeness. By comparing the similarities and differences between these two cultures, the article emphasizes the importance of cultural awareness in promoting effective intercultural communication. The study concludes that understanding gestures and habits can bridge cultural gaps and enhance social interaction in a globalized world.

Keywords: gestures, habits, English culture, Uzbek culture, intercultural communication, non-verbal communication, cultural values

Culture plays a crucial role in shaping the way people communicate and interact with one another. Among the many aspects of culture, gestures and habits are essential elements that reflect the unique identity of a nation. Gestures, including movements of the hands, face, and body, often convey emotions, attitudes, and social norms without the use of words. Similarly, everyday habits reveal the values, traditions, and ways of life that are deeply rooted in a community.

A gesture is a form of nonverbal communication or non-vocal communication in which visible bodily actions communicate particular messages, either in place of, or in conjunction with, speech. Gestures include movement of the hands, face, or other parts of the body. Gestures differ from physical non-verbal communication that does not communicate specific messages, such as purely expressive displays, proxemics, or displays of joint attention. Gestures allow individuals to communicate a variety of feelings and thoughts, from contempt and hostility to approval and affection, often together with body language in addition to words when they speak. Gesticulation and speech work independently of each other, but join to provide emphasis and meaning.

The importance of understanding gestures and habits becomes even more significant in an era of globalization, where people from different cultural backgrounds communicate and collaborate more frequently. Misinterpretations of non-verbal cues or unfamiliar behaviors can sometimes lead to confusion or even conflict.

This article aims to explore the national specifics of gestures and habits in English and Uzbek cultures. By comparing the similarities and differences between these two cultural frameworks, the study seeks to highlight how non-verbal communication and daily practices reflect broader cultural values. Furthermore, it emphasizes the necessity of cultural awareness for successful intercultural communication.

Gestures are a vital part of communication, complementing spoken language and often conveying messages more effectively than words. However, the meaning and usage of gestures vary greatly across cultures.

According to Mavjuda Bolibekova's article which was written in 2023, one of the similar features of English and Uzbek is the way of greeting between man and man who shake hands while greeting each other. However, generally asking loads of questions, such as about family, work, health during the greeting is typical of Uzbek people from the point of politeness and no detailed response for every question is accepted as a normal case that does not occur in the same way as English greeting. In addition, according to Uzbek culture, women greeting women, the older ones may grip an arm of each other. Friends and family members exchange kisses on the cheek and hugs each other. In England, the first meeting between women are generally done by shaking hands.

It is the fact that in English-speaking cultures, gestures are generally modest and controlled. For example, a common gesture is the nodding of the head to indicate agreement and shaking the head for disagreement. Also, handshakes are widely used during greetings and farewells, symbolizing professionalism and respect. Waving the hand is another common gesture used to greet someone informally or say goodbye. Eye contact is considered important in English culture, as it demonstrates confidence and honesty. However, excessive gesturing with hands during conversation is often viewed as unprofessional or overly emotional.

When it comes to Uzbek culture that places a strong emphasis on respectful and ceremonial gestures. Greetings are often accompanied by placing the right hand over the heart while slightly bowing the head, reflecting sincerity and warmth. In formal situations, especially among elders, a slight bow or lowering of the body is a sign of respect. Shaking hands is also common among men but is usually softer and often accompanied by verbal greetings. In family and community gatherings, gestures like offering both hands while giving something or using the right hand for respectful actions are deeply rooted in tradition. Maintaining modesty and politeness through gestures is a central value in Uzbek society.

The differences in gestural communication highlight the broader cultural priorities: English culture values personal space and individualism, while Uzbek culture emphasizes hospitality, respect for hierarchy, and collective harmony.

Habits reflect the everyday behaviors and routines that are typical within a culture. They are shaped by historical, social, and environmental factors, and they provide insight into the collective mindset of a society.

One of the other point in English-speaking cultures, is punctuality which is highly valued. Being on time for meetings, appointments, and social gatherings is seen as a sign of respect and responsibility. Personal space is also important; individuals tend to maintain a certain distance during conversations, and uninvited physical contact is generally avoided. Another notable habit is the strong emphasis on politeness and formality, especially in the use of phrases like “please,” “thank you,” and “sorry” in daily communication. Moreover, English people often engage in small talk about neutral topics like the weather before moving into deeper conversations. Individualism is a core trait, so people are encouraged to express their opinions openly but respectfully.

In Uzbek culture, habits are heavily influenced by traditions and a strong sense of community. Hospitality is considered a sacred duty, for example, welcoming guests warmly, offering food, and showing generosity are deeply ingrained practices. Time is viewed more flexibly compared to English culture, with personal relationships often taking precedence over strict adherence to schedules. Respect for elders is paramount, and it is common for younger individuals to greet older people first and offer assistance as a sign of courtesy. Daily life often involves collective activities, such as family meals and community gatherings, where social bonds are strengthened. Furthermore, maintaining harmony and avoiding direct confrontation are essential parts of interpersonal habits.

While both English and Uzbek cultures use gestures and habits as integral parts of communication, the underlying cultural values they reflect are quite different. One major similarity is the use of gestures to express respect and politeness. In both cultures, greetings involve physical gestures — handshakes in English culture and placing the hand on the chest or a light handshake in Uzbek culture. However, the emotional expressiveness differs: English gestures tend to be restrained and formal, while Uzbek gestures are often more heartfelt and symbolic, especially in showing respect to elders or guests.

Regarding habits, both cultures value politeness, but it manifests differently. In English culture, verbal politeness (saying “please,” “thank you,” and “sorry”) is emphasized, while in Uzbek culture, actions such as offering food, standing up to greet someone, and helping elders demonstrate respect and kindness.

Another significant contrast lies in the concept of time and social interaction. English culture highly values punctuality and efficiency, often keeping personal and professional lives separate. In Uzbek culture, time is more flexible, and maintaining strong personal relationships often takes priority over rigid schedules.

Furthermore, individualism versus collectivism is a key difference. English-speaking societies generally encourage independence, self-expression, and privacy. In contrast, Uzbek society places greater importance on community ties, mutual support, and collective decision-making.

These similarities and differences highlight the importance of cultural sensitivity. Being aware of such nuances can prevent misunderstandings and foster deeper intercultural communication.

Gestures and habits are powerful reflections of a nation's culture and values. The analysis of English and Uzbek cultures shows that while both societies use non-verbal communication and daily routines to express respect, politeness, and social norms, the ways in which these elements are manifested are influenced by their distinct cultural priorities.

English culture emphasizes individualism, efficiency, and verbal politeness, where gestures are moderate and habits reflect personal responsibility and privacy. In contrast, Uzbek culture highlights collectivism, hospitality, and respect for social hierarchy, where gestures are rich in symbolism and habits focus on maintaining strong interpersonal relationships.

Understanding these differences is essential for effective intercultural communication. Awareness of national specifics not only prevents misunderstandings but also promotes mutual respect and cooperation in our increasingly interconnected world.

In conclusion, studying gestures and habits offers valuable insights into broader cultural systems and helps individuals navigate social interactions across different cultural settings with sensitivity and competence.

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