
| RESEARCH ARTICLE

Paralanguage Influences in Intercultural Communication of Foreign Nationals in Cebu, Philippines

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| ABSTRACT

Paralanguage is a vital component of metacommunication in human interaction that allows people to convey nuanced meaning and emotion and add layers of meaning to their spoken utterances through manipulation of the manner of speech. This is why paralanguage is suggested to be considered as the primary facet of communicative competence in effective communication. However, this is adversely hampered by the challenges between people with different cultural backgrounds. This is because cultural differences have many effects on communication since people from different cultures communicate using distinct styles of their language, words, gestures, phrases, and other non-lexical components of speech, such as diction, pitch, and tone. Intercultural communication also includes low and high context cultures. Hence, the need to conduct this study is crucial to explore the influence of paralanguage on communication among speakers from different cultures and understand the influence of culture on the communication experiences of people coming from varied speech communities. The study employed narrative analysis as a lens to collect and analyze the data gathered from the participants. The foreign nationals were interviewed as study participants to deliberately examine the intercultural challenges in paralanguage. Data were deduced using Miles and Huberman's thematic analytical framework. Findings revealed that paralanguage greatly influenced the communication engagements of foreign nationals with the local people and that this influence is also associated with the existing cultural background of the foreign and local communicators involved.

| KEYWORDS

Paralanguage, Intercultural differences, Narrative analysis, Communication

| ARTICLE INFORMATION

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1. Introduction

The borderless societies ultimately led to migration or only for a temporary vacation. Nevertheless, both demand the concept of communicating with the locals in the community where the migrant or the traveller has stayed. Along with this is the need to maximize communicative competence, particularly when the language of the foreigner is not linguistically parallel with the language of the local people. This includes the use of paralanguage. Paralanguage is a vital component of meta-communication in human interaction that allows people to convey nuanced meaning and emotion and add layers of meaning to their spoken utterances through manipulation of the manner of speech, such as in the case of foreign nationals in Cebu, Philippines. Hence, it is interesting to explore how paralanguage influenced their communication experiences along with the possible role of culture as an intangible factor to consider.

2. Literature Review

In normal social interactions, society communicates ideas and thoughts using a nonverbal language known as paralanguage. Trager (1958) proposed the concept of "paralanguage," which states that spoken words and the meanings they convey are distinct, for instance, from language and the other communicative features of human speech. It only shows that paralanguage is unique in its usage, but it conveys a meaningful and powerful channel to convey meaning. Employing paralanguage inadequately to convey

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ideas may vary across cultures. Culture can change the paralanguage that the natives use in a certain place. Different places differ in their way of underlying meaning through actions, and it sometimes serves as a barrier to communication (Roger, 1991). He argues that in order to prevent misunderstandings, paralanguage should be taught and used before traveling to or leaving other locations. Therefore, it is important to use paralanguage correctly and appropriately in the local setting to prevent confusion between what it means verbally and nonverbally. For instance, Lustig and Koester (1999) define culture as a complex whole that includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, customs, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by men as members of society. Numerous linguists have come to the conclusion that paralanguage varies and is culture-specific. For instance, Wolfgang (1985) has noted the employment of additional linguistic components connected to speech in a cross-cultural setting. Other than that, Weitz (1972) described the effects of paralanguage on black and white American interactions. These factors influence customers on an unconscious level.

Thus, there are differences between blacks and whites in nonverbal communication, and it has been proposed that blacks may pay more attention to facial than spoken clues. Additionally, in Western societies, direct eye contact is seen as advantageous when conversing or interacting with others. However, African-Americans in the USA make less eye contact while listening and more when speaking. It can be helpful to know and appreciate how paralanguage affects clarity in order to have more productive conversations. Consequently, this could be the cause of some racial misunderstandings in the US. Particularly in other cultures, a longing look is perceived as a sign of sexiness.

In this connection, nonverbal actions are thus important forms of intercultural communication and a critical mode of human interaction in a European nation. However, because of their diverse cultural origins, their behaviors are very dissimilar from one another, which could cause misunderstandings. Due to their ability to hinder effective interpersonal and professional communication, cross-cultural communication challenges have grown increasingly important in the process of globalization (Bunina, 2010). Different cultures employ different paralanguages, or non-speech sounds, to transmit the meaning of their speeches. For instance, using rising and falling intonation could signify a lot. Tannen (1984) gives a case of culturally insensitive intonation. In a cafeteria at London's Heathrow Airport, there were Indian and Pakistani employees who were eating, and the staff perceived them as being quite rude because they did not use a rising intonation with the word "gravy." The British heard the Asian employees saying, "Gravy—take it or leave it!" because the falling intonation in this situation is seen as abrupt and rude. The rising intonation of "Gravy?" in British English conveys a kind request, as in "Would you like some gravy?" Not only that but also using pitch to signify differences and meaning also matters. For example, Japanese females adopt an extremely high pitch, separating themselves from Japanese males. Whereas for English speakers, the male pitch is less differentiated from the female pitch. Other examples include power and clarity, which, like volume, convey meaning. Indian English speakers use loudness to command "attention," whereas British English speakers use volume to convey "anger."

In the local setting, although nonverbal communication is a universal occurrence, nonverbal cue meanings are not. For instance, in Cebu, Philippines, either people usually communicate with a native without completing statements and with a high or low tone, in vernacular or in the English language, because the culture paralanguage may differ. For example, in the northern part of Cebu, people have a high tone when speaking in a normal setting, while in southern Cebu, native speakers speak slowly and calmly. They are in the same region but speak different languages. This is perhaps one of the most vulnerable areas of conducting business because the implications of non-verbal communication vary depending on the culture (Lacson Jr., 2005).

Filipinos communicate in ways that can be seen as distinctive to their way of life. Multiple meanings for words and common meanings have been observed either to be obtained in mutual approval with one another, out of convenience or to accommodate both parties. To draw attention to themselves and the things they want to draw attention to, Filipinos use displays. The displays could be one-of-a-kind, such as pointing one's mouth in the direction of the target or using a universal paralanguage like "Psst" to draw someone's attention among a throng of people. One can draw attention to themselves by doing nothing at all, like standing still and looking up in a crowded place. In no time at all, others would be casting similar glances. Displays are used in a variety of ways to draw attention to them as well as to divert them.

Filipinos enjoy being distracted by and attracted to others. Particularly in these times, Filipinos have a worldview like this that is very common (Foley, 2010). Substituting occurs when non-verbal behavior replaces verbal messages (Cilliers & Louw, 2003). Substitution often occurs when barriers to verbal communication exist in the environment, and it is used for emphasis (Hong-li, 2011). In this way, the study was carried out to discover the influences of paralanguage on effective communication among foreign nationals in Cebu and explore how cultural differences influence the communicative process involving paralanguage.

3. Methodology

This study is qualitative in nature and uses narrative analysis as a lens to examine the participants' stories. As pointed out by Bamberg (2012), stories, also called narratives, are told to normalize happenings in the lives of people as they are used to explain

how and why things happen. Hence, in this study, the narratives of foreign nationals in the speech community of Cebu City in the central Visayan region of the Philippines served as critical data to understand the contributions of paralanguage in their communicative interactions with the locals that led to an effective process of exchanging messages. Moreover, these narratives were also studied according to their structures (Labov and Waletzky, 1997) and the ways they developed in dialogues and interactions (Bamberg, 2012). Hence, it is important to explore the possible ways in which cultural differences that existed between the participants and the locals influenced the communicative process involving the use of paralanguage.

3.1 Environment

The study was conducted in Cebu City, located on Cebu Island's eastern coast. It is one of the country's largest cities and a bustling port. Cebu Island is one of the most beautiful tourist destinations in the Philippines. It is at the forefront of the Philippines' sustainable tourism movement, leading to a growing flock of tourists and foreign nationals residing in the area. Cebu City clearly is a melting pot of cultures from foreign nationals traveling and eventually deciding to stay a bit longer, allowing themselves to get further exposed to the culture and the language of the natives of Cebu. This means that Cebu City is becoming more diverse in culture; thus, cultural differences are at stake. In addition, it is noteworthy that in the context of the study, cultural barriers constrain communications and pose a challenge in paralanguage. Issues are prevalent in a diverse environment.

3.2 Participants

There were seven participants in the study who were foreign nationals such as Japanese, Koreans, Nigerians, Americans, and Irish. They were selected using a purposive sampling technique. This means that, given due consideration of the nature of the study, these participants were identified based on the data from their experiences that can be extracted and were helpful for the investigation.

Moreover, they were identified based on the selection criteria, which are (a) being a foreigner in Cebu, (b) staying in Cebu for at least a month, (c) not being able to communicate using the Cebuano-Visayan language, and (d) learning to communicate with the locals. The criteria were essential to establishing a commonality or basis for conducting the study. The study focuses on how the participants convey and interpret meaning during face-to-face interactions or taped interviews as they come up throughout the natural course of the interaction with the interviewer.

3.3 Instruments

The instrument used in this study is a semi-structured interview. It includes an ordered list of open-ended questions wherein the participants can narrate freely and elaborate on their answers based on their experiences. These questions were arranged logically to facilitate the flow of ideas from the participants. Thus, the questions were grouped according to the type of opening, content, and closing type of question. To capture the verbatim responses, audiotapes were utilized. This is done in consonance with the concept of Creswell (2012), that it allows a more accurate and consistent transcription.

3.4 Data Gathering Procedures

The data gathering commenced after receiving permission to conduct the study coming from the proper authority. Then the participants were contacted to determine their most convenient schedule for the in-depth narrative interview. In the actual gathering phase, the scheduled participant for the in-depth narrative interview was oriented in terms of the things that may happen along the process. The rights of the participant and appropriate actions that are options to be done in the middle of the data gathering were also informed. Hence, every participant has full knowledge of and voluntary participation in the gathering of data. Finally, in the post-gathering phase, the data were treated with confidentiality by making sure that the identities of the participants were kept secure. Moreover, the data were stored on a single drive, with access limited to the researchers.

3.5 Data Analysis

The analytical framework of Miles and Huberman (1994) was used in order to deduce the participants' narratives. The framework consists of three stages, as reflected in the study of Ramos and Baldespiñosa (2021), which include data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. Under the data reduction stage, the transcripts of the narratives are guided by the concept of selectivity, which is based on the research questions and ideas raised. Hence, words, phrases, and sentences that are of connection to or relevance to the research questions were highlighted as part of the codified information. Moreover, in the data display stage, the codified information was organized and compressed into closer relevance with each other in order to direct the researchers to the next and final stage. This means that in this stage, as advised by Glaser and Strauss (1967), constant comparison of codified concepts coming from the transcripts of narratives was done. Finally, in the third and last stage, known as conclusion drawing and verification, researchers moved back to see the whole picture based on the deduced data. From there, the implications in relation to the study are reached. To be sure that there is relevance and accuracy in the drawn conclusion, the verification part came in by cross-checking the emerging themes found in the data.

3.6 Evaluative Criteria for Quality

The criteria for quality in this study are based on the evaluative criteria by Lincoln and Guba (1989). These criteria are credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. They provide a normative framework used to determine the merit or worth of a study. Hence, strategic actions are taken to ensure the validity and quality of the research.

As for credibility, there were engagements and random interviews (processes and techniques) conducted. There was also a peer debriefing done to fully review and assess transcripts and other observational notes. Many writers have suggested that peer debriefing enhances the trustworthiness and credibility of a research project (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Spall, 1998; Janesick, 2011; Spillett, 2003).

In the transferability context, a detailed description was attained by providing a robust and detailed account of the researcher's experiences during the data collection, where the researcher makes explicit connections to the cultural and social contexts (Yilmaz, 2013). While in dependability, there were detailed records of the raw data collected during the collection process and the outlined drafts of the study measures (Franklin & Ballan, 2001). However, confirmability, like reflexivity, triangulation, and an audit trail, were provided, which highlighted every step of data analysis to provide a rationale for the decisions made. This helps establish that the research study's findings accurately portray participants' responses (Campas Jr., 2020).

3.7 Ethical Consideration

The ethical consideration for this study is anchored on the criteria of Brinkmann and Kvale (2015), which include (a) informing consent, (b) confidentiality, (c) consequences, and (d) the role of the researcher. Thus, ensuring interview questions align with the research questions, constructing an inquiry-based interview, receiving feedback on interview protocols, and piloting the interview protocol is strictly done. In conducting the study, the participants were provided with pertinent information in line with the research to make them oriented and guided with the rights they have during the interview process. That they can make decisions intelligently, participate voluntarily, and even withdraw if they choose to before doing the interview. They were informed that the information gathered would be documented.

Also, there is confidentiality with the participants' identities to show them respect, especially since they are foreign to the country and they might have private dealings with the place. Ensuring the security and preservation of the respondents' privacy are heightened. Furthermore, there were roles observed where the researchers made sure that the study participants could speak openly and comfortably during the entire interview without inhibitions. That all their opinions are valid and accepted without fear of the interviewer's acceptance, rejection, and condemnation. Lastly, the researchers were tidy, presentable, and professional in conducting the interview to maintain rapport between the interviewer and the interviewee to obtain a successful interview.

4. Results and Discussion

Table 1
Influences of paralanguage to effective communication

Themes	Categories
Signal	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Body language• Facial Expressions
Supplement	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Convey meaning• Extract information
Transmitter	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Rapport ideas• Encode

This section of the study covered the influences of paralanguage on effective communication among foreigners residing in Cebu City. Evidently, there are three emergent themes found in the study. These include the fact that paralanguage turned out to be a signal, a supplement, and a transmitter.

4.1 Signal

In the intercultural communication experienced by the participant with the natives of Cebu Province, it became undeniable that paralanguage is a reliable component in the exchange of ideas. This is because of the language barrier that exists between the foreign participant and the native of Cebu Province; it turned out that paralanguage acted as a signal to facilitate the flow of information and ideas.

The Queen City of Cebu is composed of diverse and unique cultures. The Department of Tourism recorded 2.2 million tourists in 2022 (PNA, 2022). This data demonstrates the island's massive human interaction creates a big problem in communication; however, with the use of signals, communication with native and foreign nationalities has been successfully transmitted. Signaling

devices in communication as communication tools aid in the establishment of a strong foundation among Cebu's various cultures and nationalities. According to the Google Dictionary, "signal" is defined as a gesture, action, or sound that is used to convey information or instructions.

One of the signaling devices used in Cebu is body language (body movement and posture). Through this signaling device, the foreign national can comprehend the ideas presented by the Cebuano with whom they converse. One good example of the signaling device is the way they stand or express ideas by standing while conversing.

When I initially arrived in Cebu City, Philippines, I was concerned that I wouldn't be able to comprehend the locals. Although not everyone in Cebu can answer all of my inquiries, we are still able to communicate based on how they act through body language. – Participant A

Based on the responses, the foreign nationalities understand the native Cebuano with the help of body language, which is used in the normal setting. Facial expressions are another signaling device that aids in communication. Native Cebuanos are known for their expressive facial actions. The facial expression conveys countless emotions without verbal language. The facial expressions of happiness, sadness, anger, surprise, fear, and disgust are the same across cultures (Frank, 2001). With these facial expressions made during a conversation with native and foreign nationalities, communication is easily transmitted.

I was born and raised in the US, where people tend to speak directly without using much facial expression." However, in Cebu City, people mostly communicated with their facial expressions, which I thought to be highly effective even though they frequently left incomplete statements. -Participant B

Evidently, through this natural occurrence, both Cebuanos and foreign nationalities exchange information with the help of facial expressions.

4.2 Supplement

Millions of foreign nationals have been experiencing a language barrier in Cebu. One approach to dealing with this phenomenon is to use supplementary as a paralinguistic. According to Smith (2017), "supplementary" refers to all components of communication that convey meaning. In this regard, conveying meaning as an auxiliary in communication serves as a vehicle for the transmission of a message. Part of this category is vocalics, which is a form of non-phonemic communication. Vocalics includes the way people speak, such as the tone of voice (Herity 2022). Cebu has a rich and diverse culture, and because of this, they use elaborate words for emphasis.

I was amazed at how people in Cebu emphasize ideas through emphasis. They usually use variations of expression with their voice. It's kind of unique because they add expressions without completing the statement; however, for me, it is somewhat effective. -Participant C

In this regard, extracting information as a tool to understand information from non-native speakers like foreign nationals in Cebu is very crucial. Foreign nationals make connections by extracting supplementary information from the natives. With the help of key words with an accent, make use of extracting meaning. According to Zaldo (2018), typically, audiences understand only 7% of what speakers are saying through their word choices.

Since I've been in Cebu for about 4 years now, I've learned their way of communicating, even when it isn't a complete sentence, like when they speak just a word and add emphasis to it. By that, I can understand what they mean. - Participant D

These categories, such as meaning conversion and information extraction, assist foreign nationals in relaying information from native Cebuanos.

4.3 Transmit

Another helpful category in fostering information for both Cebuanos and foreign nationals is "transmit." Cebuanos are hospitable, friendly, and approachable. Cebuanos typically utilize paralinguistic to convey concepts when communicating. Both native and foreign nationals transmit ideas through the rapport they both conceptualize.

The Cebuanos are highly accommodating and kind, and because of that, it is easy to start a conversation with them. It is tough for me to express what I want to say because I don't speak English well, but how they say something can have an impact on me.

Another category in the world of paralanguage is encoding. Encoding is the process of interpreting ideas through paralanguage (Open Library, 2019). Encoding ideas helps establish a rapport on both ends of the communication. It captures the distinct way of developing ideas.

Using nonverbal language helps me encode the meaning or ideas of the Cebuanos I talked to. It gives me a full understanding of what they mean without words coming out of their mouth.

Table 2
Influences of cultural differences in the communicative process involving paralanguage

Themes	Categories
miscommunication	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• diction• tone
misinterpretation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• high and low context• touch

When it comes to efficacy, paralinguistic communication can make a significant difference. However, when culture conforms to the communication process, it can either benefit or hinder how one individual is perceived. In a high-context culture, meaning is deduced from the location or context rather than the words employed. Social standing, interpersonal ties, romantic history, environment, and nonverbal signs are among the contextual clues that can be used to understand messages (eye contact, facial expressions, body language, and use of silence). Silence is a symbol of respect (allowing people to express themselves without interruption or shame), reflection, and thinking in high-context societies (Ang, 2003).

4.4 Miscommunication

There are several factors contributing to ineffective communication. It is necessary to stress a message with strong paralanguage when it has important points to make (Elcomblus 2020). When a term or phrase is unclear or has varying cultural connotations, miscommunication can result. Misunderstandings may result from verbal or nonverbal cues we are sending that are not accurately interpreted. Improper diction can lead to communication problems. Language is ingrained in the culture. In Cebu City, numerous and countless people come in to visit or live there without the knowledge of the place, and this is one of the reasons why there are so many scenarios of miscommunication among them in the place. Language connects people with similar experiences and histories, and these histories, in turn, give rise to words that are unique to our culture. Have you ever been in a group of people discussing a common experience when someone says something that you find completely incomprehensible while everyone else laughs? This inside joke makes you feel left out and demonstrates how meaning is influenced by the common cultural experience. It could be difficult to comprehend without understanding the culture behind the terms (Madison, 2021).

I moved to Cebu three years ago, and I still have trouble understanding them because of the language they use. One of the issues I had was with the diction. I become annoyed by the way people enunciate their words. There were times when I thought they were making fun of me because of the way they spoke. - Participant F

Aside from the diction, one of the problems foreigners encounter is the tone. 10% of conflict is due to differences of opinion, and 90% is due to the tone of voice (anonymous). Most of the time, people are able to control the types of words they use when communicating with others. Depending on the size of the audience, the speaker should change the loudness of his voice. The voice should be louder the larger the audience. The discourse is effective when the volume is varied. Occasionally, switching from soft to loud or from loud to soft will produce the desired result.

Being a foreigner in Cebu, I frequently run into individuals from all cultures, and despite Cebu being a small island, they all talk in a variety of tones. People used to speak with a pronounced accent when I visited the northern region of Cebu. At the time, I believed they were insane. Additionally, the southern region has a pleasant accent when speaking. - Participants G

4.5 Misinterpreted

Understanding the cultural difference in nonverbal communication through context indicates that either high- or low-context cultures use verbal communication less frequently than high-context cultures do. Without proper knowledge of certain cultures, misinterpreted expressions can lead to miscommunication and discomfort for both parties. More and more foreign nationalities visit or live in Cebu City, and there are numerous instances where they encounter misinterpretations from the native people. To express meaning, they rely on close ties, social standing, and cultural understanding. Words hold more significance in "low context" cultures. Relationships start and terminate swiftly, communication is straightforward, and hierarchies are relaxed (Pointpark, 2021).

It can be difficult and enjoyable to communicate with Cebuanos. They are kind, and they make things go smoothly. However, there are instances when I feel like I'm being left out, particularly when they converse with the native in front of me. I don't see why they take this alternative tack. That's why I keep bringing it up. - Participant H

In relation to misinterpretation, touching someone, such as holding hands or kissing on the cheek, may be customary in other nations. In Cebu City, it could be against the law to touch someone casually during a chat. Touching is one of the problems that visitors from other countries frequently run into as they take in Cebu's natural beauty and the warmth of the locals. It is a great deal for Cebuanos to display a close connection to someone because they are renowned for being conservationists and unassuming. It is an event based on the response of the respondents.

I am from a country where people are free to express emotions through hugging, kissing on the cheek, or touching hands. But this isn't acceptable here in Cebu City. People here are afraid of showing their emotions. When I used to learn their culture, that was the time I understood and respected the people. - Participant C

This illustrates how culture serves as a focal action in paralanguage based on the details and in-depth analysis of the data offered above. It acts as the impetus for someone to act and respond. It is best to research a place's culture before traveling there to prevent misunderstandings. It's crucial to have effective communication among people of different nationalities.

5. Conclusion

This is a qualitative study using narrative analysis of which stories of foreign nationals residing in Cebu, Philippines, were deduced using the analytical framework of Miles and Huberman. The focus was to examine the influence of paralanguage utilized by foreign nationals to effectively convey and communicate and to determine the influences of cultural differences in the communicative process that involve the use of paralanguage.

The investigation reveals that paralanguage serves as signal, supplement and transmitter in their continuous engagement with each other. Moreover, culture tends to create miscommunication and misinterpretation in the exchange of ideas that may consequently produce a conflict if not avoided.

The findings imply that paralanguage is a helpful tool for the transmission of information. Yet, speakers should not only rely on the success of the communication process by utilizing paralanguage, specifically when it involves individuals with different cultural backgrounds.

Finally, considering the sample size, which is small in number due to the nature of the research approach and design utilized, it is recommended that replication may be done with more varied participants. Accordingly, the findings of this study can be used as the foundation for a more in-depth investigation, taking into account the preliminary findings and limitations.

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