

ON NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION

*Excerpted from the Study Abroad Toolkit &
based on the intercultural films and videos by
Crossing Borders Education and the
Facilitator Manual by SIT Graduate Institute*

Step 1:

The Power of Language (15 minutes)

Facilitator (F): Read the clip summary aloud

Students discuss the power of non-verbal communication. They gain insight into how people employ different types of non-verbal communication to themselves and interact with others—and how these types of non-verbal communication may differ from one culture to another.

Show film clip 2.1: On Non-Verbal Communication (4 minutes)

F: Student Discussion

Ask the group to brainstorm some of the elements of non-verbal communication and write them on flip chart as they are stated. Possible examples include:

- tone
- facial and body gestures
- eye contact
- proximity
- volume
- posture..

F: After generating the list of non-verbal cues, have participants think about their experience in this host culture to date.

Direct them to think about and make notes on times:

- When have you misunderstood someone here because of non-verbals
- When have you been misunderstood because of your non-verbals?
- What do you think you have learned about non-verbal communication in this host culture?

Then ask participants to share in pairs their responses to the last question.

Step 2:

Large Group Debrief & Closure *(10 minutes)*

F: In the large group ask the participants for a few examples of what they have learned about non-verbals in the host culture. Ask if in their experience in this host culture (or in other cultures when you've been traveling):

- Have they been surprised when someone has misunderstood what they were saying in the host language?
- Can they tell if it is the non-verbal action or the language that is confusing?

Facilitator can give an example from his/her experience if the participants are unable to generate any. It could be ordering something at a restaurant and something else comes; a taxi that takes you to a different place than you wanted to go; someone who seems insulted by what you said ...

Acknowledge that there may not be agreement or shared understanding here. Part of our ability as individuals to live with the mixed explanations of these non-verbal examples is our understanding of cultural context.