LARA

LEARNING AND RESIDENCE ABROAD

UNIT THREE

Non-verbal Communication and Social Space

CONTENTS

SECTION ONE

1. Introduction

Bud Wittrick said, "Aw, its great. They're friendly, they're warm". He meant that the Chinese knew how to scuttle around and pour tea. They knew how to be polite, but that did not keep them from staring at our big noses and our huge flapping feet. This fascination - or perhaps horror - was mistaken for affection; and every grimace was interpreted as a Chinese smile. (Theroux, Paul. 1988:56)

It is an instructive sight to see a waiter going into a hotel dining-room. As he passes the door a sudden change comes over him. The set of his shoulders alters; all the dirt and hurry and irritation have dropped off in an instant. He glides over the carpet with a solemn priest-like air. I remember an assistant maitre d'hotel, a fiery Italian, pausing at the dining room door to address an apprentice who had broken a bottle of wine. Shaking his fist above his head he yelled (luckily the door was more or less sound proof): "Tu me fais......! Do you call yourself a waiter, you young bastard? You a waiter! You're not fit to scrub walls in the brothel your mother came from. Maquereau!"

Then he entered the dining room and sailed across it dish in hand, graceful as a swan. Ten seconds later he was bowing reverently to a customer. And you could not help thinking, as you saw him bow and smile, with that benign smile of the trained waiter, that the customer was put to shame by having such an aristocrat to serve him.

(George Orwell)

The major theme of this unit is non-verbal communication (NVC) and how it helps to create and regulate interaction. The minor theme is the use of space in the environment and how it has social and symbolic meaning. The quote from Paul Theroux above illustrates how easy it is for non-verbal communication to be misunderstood and that it is not possible to read off a particular attitude or orientation from some aspect of facial or bodily gesture. NVC is part of a set of meanings or semiotic signals (see Unit 4) which make up the context that interactants draw on to understand each other. Talk is, of course, another, as is the wider environment which creates the social space within which we act out our everyday behaviours. The waiter, in Orwell's description of his work as a plongeur in Paris restaurants, uses the 'backstage' space of the kitchen to enact one role and the 'frontstage' space of the dining area for another.

Methodologically, this unit helps students to start undertaking careful observation of interactions around them. Conceptually, it helps them to examine how meanings are constructed in the social and physical world. In particular, it helps them to question social interaction and the use of space and not to see them as givens, normal or natural, but as socially and culturally constructed. At this early stage, students often feel that the course is not specific and concrete enough. They want facts and

certainties. Close, detailed observation of NVC can give them some reassurance. Most of them know something about 'body language', so it is not totally unfamiliar and the familiarity can then be used to take their thinking further, beyond the observable.

2.   Links with the other units

This unit links up with Unit 8 on participant observation and with Unit 4 on shared cultural knowledge. The notion of frame which is discussed in this unit has already been introduced briefly in Unit 2 and underpins some of the main issues in Unit 14. One of the video examples in this unit looks at the contrastive use of space by female and male teachers in a staff meeting and the gender theme here is picked up again in Unit 6 on Gender Relations.

3.   Background notes

The way people organise and present themselves and the environment around them has both social and symbolic meaning. As social animals, we use our bodies and space around us to manage our relationships with others and create places where we can be social together. But people and objects also 'give off' messages all the time which symbolise particular meanings; for example, the way they dress, the way they organise their room, how they talk and how they sit. This can be done either consciously or unconsciously. The two main areas to look at in this unit are:

♦   interaction and non-verbal communication

♦   the organisation of social space

3.1   Interaction and non-verbal communication

Interaction is absolutely central to the ways in which society is maintained and organised. How do people take account of each other and manage every face-to-face encounter they experience through the day? What relationships do these dealings have with the more general ways in which society is structured and organised? For example, children tend to become less physically intimate with their parents at a certain age. What does this tell us about family and maturation in western society? Or, think of a law court and the way in which it is set out physically to symbolise the adversarial quality of the judicial process.

Until the late 1960s, interaction was mostly studied by social psychologists to explain such things as individuals' attention and motivation. Since then sociologists have been concerned with explaining the nature of interaction or what Erving Goffman, the key researcher here, calls 'the interaction order'. By this he means that there is a level or domain between the individual/psychological and the wider structures and activities of our society. This is the domain of interaction which has its own 'order' – its own conventions and ways of doing things which make it worth studying in its own right if we are to try to understand how groups and societies act and believe.

Goffman (1959, 1963, 1974, 1981) was concerned with the detail of how we present ourselves to others - what are the procedures and practices we use to organise the face-to-face dealings with each other. There is some kind of social interaction going on, Goffman argues, when we are perceived by others and we are aware that we can be perceived. He calls this 'co-presence'. For example, in the tube, when someone sits next to us, we may shift our position to account for their physical presence and this then can be called social interaction, even though it is of a very minimal kind.

Goffman argues that information in interaction is both given and given off. In other words, there is one track, when the explicit message is conveyed and an additional one – the disattend track – when messages are given off by others, or indeed ourselves, which we are aware of but which are not the main focus of our attention (rather like punctuation in writing). However, the disattend track is very important in all face-to-face encounters. For example, notice how people get ready to end a conversation while still talking on a topic by beginning to move away, use longer pauses and so on. We notice these things going on, and take account of them – subconsciously – while listening to the explicit message. The subtle details of verbal and non-verbal practice are used by all society's members as resources to manage the thousands of interactions we have each day.

Goffman suggested two major types of interactions:

Focused Gathering	Unfocused Gathering
Where people meet for a specific purpose e.g. supper time, a seminar or a job interview	Where people are together but for some other purpose e.g. waiting room, queueing or a football match

But even the unfocused gatherings have attributes of focused gatherings e.g. the spatial organisation in a waiting room, where people choose a particular seat with 'waiting' in mind. Goffman characterises unfocused gatherings as having at least a minimal 'interactive ritual' which he calls 'civil inattention'. Cultural practices vary as to the extent of this inattention and to what extent it is appropriate to attend explicitly to strangers in unfocused gatherings. For example, in many western societies, it is not polite to stare at someone unknown to you, but you are 'civil' in the sense that you do not ignore other people completely – you will not sit too close or talk loudly across them and so on.

Sociological and Anthropological Perspectives

Goffman's concern is with face-to-face interaction as a domain in its own right (the 'interaction order' and the ways in which people present themselves to each other in everyday life) and these ideas are grounded in his observations of everyday life. For example, he studied the practices of waiters in restaurants and interpreted their behaviour in terms of a performance metaphor in which they were either 'backstage' or frontstage' (Goffman 1959 and see the Orwell description at the beginning of the unit). Goffman, himself, was influenced by the anthropologist Gregory Bateson

3

(1973) and two of his key concepts, metacommunication and frame, are briefly discussed. (The notion of frame has already been introduced in Unit 2).

Metacommunication

The idea that every message that is communicated has a message about that message (what Goffman describes as 'giving off'). This metamessage may be conveyed through paralinguistic features, aspects of the physical or social context or through NVC. These metamessages either give off a message that reinforces it – for example, beginning to distance yourself, physically, from someone as you say 'Well, I must be going,' – or a message that contradicts the words. For example, in the BBC's Arena programme about 'the face' (a small extract from which is on the video), there is an excerpt from an interview with the spy Kim Philby in which he denies having close relations with other British spies. The Arena commentator shows that there is evidence, from the way in which he adjusts his clothing and (literally) puts his tongue in his cheek, that he is lying. So his explicit message was at odds with the metamessage. These metamessages are not simply a matter of personal behaviour, they are, like language, socially and culturally constrained. For example, Susan Phillips's work on the native American Indian people of the southern USA suggests that, in public, they tend to keep their faces relatively immobile as compared with white 'Anglo' groups. Such immobility metacommunicates in different ways to the different cultural groups.

Frame

This concept is closely linked to metacommunication and extends the idea beyond the level of utterance or a particular aspect of NVC to show how a whole sequence or event is given particular meaning. The idea of 'frame' came to Bateson when he watched monkeys playing at the zoo. They seemed to be fighting but were showing, in less obvious ways, that they were playing. In other words, they had 'framed' their fighting with a 'play' frame. They did this by using features of the context to show how their behaviour should be attended to and interpreted. Such features of play fighting would be: exaggerated facial expressions, heavy grunts, the use of 'weapons' to attack but not hurt and so on. Both Bateson and Goffman (1974, 1981) use the term 'frame' to define a particular moment of social reality rather like a window frame or a picture frame constrain what you see and give a particular focus of attention. So, at any point in an interaction, we are identifying what frame we are in: is it an interrogation frame, a processing intellectual knowledge frame, a joking frame and so on? For example, when, a few minutes after a teacher has come into the room, she raises her voice and says 'Right' or 'OK' and moves to the front of the class, the students know the 'lesson' frame has been set up. The teacher may, of course, break the lesson frame by talking, for example, about the next day's fire drill and this will be done not only by changing topic but by other contextual features such as changing position, using a different tone of voice etc. The important point is that listeners need to be tuned in to the speaker's frame and frame mismatch may cause misunderstandings and have longer term negative effects.

Goffman extended Bateson's notion of 'frame' to talk about the three main conditions in which, he asserted, interaction takes place: frame attunements, system requirements, ritual requirements.

Frame attunements

How someone tunes into what is significant – how to interpret the signs they are picking up, i.e. are they tuning into how the speaker is metacommunicating? For example, at what moment do you tune into the fact that the man or woman sitting next to you in the bar is chatting you up? It can be quite difficult to pick up the signals to show when a frame shifts, e.g. from an apparently friendly conversation to a chat up or, for example, an interrogation. Misunderstandings occur when there is a frame mismatch: you think this is a passing comment, he's in a chat up frame! And frame mismatches are much more likely to happen in intercultural encounters (see Unit 14).

System requirements

These are what we can call technical matters in conversation (see the assignment for a list of such features). They include such NVC as proxemics (the relative closeness to others within the social space), kinesics (bodily and facial movement) and other devices such as ways of getting messages re-run, held up or interrupted. They also include some of the basic requirements for the relevance of talk by showing how the speaker's turn connects with previous utterances. Again, many of these system requirements vary, cross-culturally. Some of them may be similar to the norms we are used to, while others are different. The trick is to monitor carefully every social interaction to look out for patterned differences.

Ritual requirements

Although Goffman was interested in the technical practices of interaction, the system requirements (what he called the traffic rules), he primarily saw interaction as a **moral** activity, in which participants are concerned with such matters as how showing involvement conveys politeness, or how we monitor effectiveness or lack of it or sincerity or fraud. These moral aspects he called 'the ritual requirements' because they are less about the basic functions of getting messages across and more about how we take account of others in social interaction.

Central to the ritual aspect of the interaction order is the notion of 'face' and what Goffman (1981) calls 'facework'. There are certain ritual requirements to preserve your own and others' face in both talk and NVC. Most of the studies of 'face' have concentrated on the linguistic aspects of politeness (see Unit 14) but we also do 'facework' using NVC and social space. For example, the amount of social space you take up when sitting in a chair or the extent to which your physical face expresses certain emotions is both an individual and social matter, depending on the rituals or etiquette of a particular social group. Of course, Goffman did not assume everyone behaves in a moral way and he was particularly interested in people who consciously manipulated unconscious rules such as con men. The fact that some people manipulate or flout the rules, and we are often aware of this, shows that there are rules or at least conventions which most of us normally adhere to.

Context Analysis

Adam Kendon (1990) has done extremely detailed analysis of certain aspects of NVC. His work shows that features of NVC e.g. a cough, a shift in posture and so on only have meaning in that particular context – hence the term 'context analysis.' People bring their cultural resources (language and NVC) into a particular situation and make them meaningful. For example, a shift in gaze to show listening behaviour will depend absolutely on the particular context in which the speakers are interacting. A listener may only gaze at the speaker when they think they can take their turn to speak or when they want to show they are paying attention and so on. Similarly, a shift in position might mean, for example, 'I'm trying to distance myself from your personal space' or it might be used to try and control the situation and get 'the floor' i.e. the chance to speak.

Kendon shows that NVC, like language, depends upon customary knowledge and use. He also shows how NVC is hierarchically structured, just as language is. Language is made up of phonemes, grammar and vocabulary and discourse, NVC is made up of nods, hand movements and extended patterns of movement.

He is particularly well known for his work on gaze. He shows that in interactions between white 'Anglo' speakers there is relatively more gaze focused on the speaker than there is with other groups. This group also tends to look at the speaker at the end of an utterance or when they want to monitor long complex turns. Gaze functions to:

- regulate
- control
- monitor
- show affiliation
- create arousal

Edward T. Hall (1952) in his book *Beyond Culture* looks at the notion of synchrony. He suggests that people interacting together set up a kind of rhythm and use NVC according to that rhythm which helps them work harmoniously together.(see the additional reading below). People both synchronise their own bodily movements with their language but also set up a kind of rhythmic synchrony in conversation with others. The urge to synchronise seems to be universal but different groups will synchronise in different ways and bring different meanings to their synchronised behaviour. The anthropologist Frederick Erickson (1979) has extended Kendon's and Hall's work into the field of intercultural communication. He argues that gaze and other ways of showing you are listening are used differently by black and white Americans and these differences contribute to the 'talking down' phenomenon so frequently experienced by black people when talking to white. Here, white people explain a situation in increasingly simple terms because they do not pick up on black ways of showing listening and understanding behaviour. Extending Hall's work, he has shown that in intercultural communication, there can be uncomfortable moments which are revealed by a lack of rhythmic synchrony – asynchrony – between interactants. The important point here is that aspects of NVC such as gesture or rhythmic synchrony are cultural resources which may be used differently by different groups but also that NVC is context-specific. A particular gesture cannot be read off as having a fixed meaning for a certain group. The meaning resides in the specific

context in which that action took place and is, indeed, part of that context. So, the search for patterns has to take account of particular contexts as well.

3.2   The organisation of social space

The way in which space is used is obviously significant in non-verbal communication as suggested above. For example, Goffman's notion of co-presence and the work on context highlights the importance of body movement, proxemics and so on.

Locations and physical space also have social and symbolic meaning. For example, the area around a photocopier may become a place where people chat or talk about aspects of their work in rather different ways from those they use in the office. Symbolically, it is an area where people do not have to act out their professional role but nor is it a designated relaxation area. It is a relatively 'free' space on the margins of other more fixed areas of activity.

The key concepts in the organisation of social space are outlined in Sutherland's chapter (see student reading). In particular, she discusses the notion of boundaries, both real and symbolic, in the use of space to designate for example public and private, sacred and secular, culture and nature or a change in status from single to married. Goffman, in studying the 'interaction order' was also interested in boundaries. For example, he discusses the need for ritual when people meet and part because such moments involve boundary-crossing. The ritual greetings that conventionally mark meetings are a way of managing that difficult boundary-crossing from not noticing or attending to someone to some sort of social engagement with them.

So, boundaries are established and/or crossed all the time. Some of these are 'micro', like the ritual greetings just mentioned. Others are much larger boundaries represented by a physical building like a church or are socio-psychological such as a change of state from childhood to adulthood or from married to unmarried. Here the use of space has a more complex and fundamental significance as part of people's beliefs and value systems. This may be evident in ritual elements such as in Bali, as Sutherland describes. But concepts of space are also deeply embedded in the language of western societies. For example, spatial metaphors, as Lakoff and Johnson have shown (1980), structure our thinking in a typically hierarchical way. So, in English, 'up' usually means good and 'down' bad. This shows that even when we are not using space physically or socially, we may be using it to draw mental maps to evaluate states, events and so on.

NVC and the use of social space are integrated in any encounter. For example, in a pub or bar, the area where drinks can be ordered is a particular social space where people attend to each other (perhaps in conversation with others at the bar or in getting the bar person's attention) and disattend to the others around them who are also trying to buy a drink. Within this social space, the proxemics, the bodily gesture and gaze may all be co-ordinated together to do the work of getting the attention of whoever is behind the bar. The assignment concentrates on NVC but wherever students do their observation will be a 'social space' and they should be aware of this. They could also use the experience of social space to discuss the Sutherland reading.

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SECTION TWO

1. Outline of a session

1. Introduction: interaction and non-verbal communication

2. Student assignment

3. Concepts of: Metacommunication, Frame, Synchrony (use the Hall reading here)

4. Female/male interaction, Video 1: *Kingswood Comprehensive*

5. Regulating talk: Student observations of their own classroom

6. Discussion of the reading: Anne Sutherland's Social Space; and optional discussion of recommended further reading: Edward T Hall's *Rhythm and Body Movement*

2. Description of a session

2.1 Introduction

Use the background notes to introduce the concept of micro-ethnography, i.e. the very detailed, fine-grained account of a single event or activity, e.g. a classroom, a family supper, greyhound racing etc. and how these are made up of talk, NVC and the use of social space (as well, of course, as physical space). Students also need to start observing and thinking about this behaviour as both socially and culturally organised. All interaction is social because it is behaviour which is continually taking account of the other. But interaction is not only about maintaining levels of participation and involvement: it is also about constructing particular meanings through interaction and so is cultural as well as social. Sutherland's reading makes the point well.

Students should be able to relate some of the aspects of NVC and social space to familiar events and activities in their lives, including the experience of being in the classroom at that moment. The idea of micro-ethnography should encourage students to think about taking a narrow focus when selecting a question to research and to start thinking about the *detail* in everyday lives which makes up social and cultural practice. The key objectives of this unit are to encourage students to start scrutinising the non-linguistic aspects of interaction. The concept of frame is particularly important as it can be used to analyse and explain oral and non-verbal communication. If there is no time to discuss the readings in depth as a separate item, both readings can be drawn on in discussing the assignment, the concepts and the videos. At this point, two students could be asked to monitor the NVC and use of social space in this ethnography session. They will be asked to report back in Item 6.

2.2 Student Assignment

Elicit student observations based on the assignment set in the previous session. Small groups (about 4 each) can be productive. Encourage them to relate their observations to the reading and the guidelines given in the assignment. Then use Item 3 as a way of taking feedback and integrating some new concepts.

2.3   Concepts of: Metacommunication, Frame, Synchrony

Take feedback from the groups and relate their comments to the concepts of metacommunication, frame and synchrony.   (See background notes for a brief discussion of these concepts). The notion of frame will be a particularly helpful one for students: firstly, it should help them think about **context** and the need to interpret what they observe and hear in context; secondly, it should help them understand the need to question any simple interpretation of behaviour by considering what frame they are using for interpreting that behaviour. We use frames all the time in the process of interpreting. We ask ourselves such questions as 'What's going on? Why that, now, to me?' But usually we are only aware of these interpretive processes when the normal and routine is challenged or flouted, e.g. if you went into a traditional gypsy caravan, patted the dog, shook hands all round and then accepted a cup of tea, your frame might be 'I'm a sociable, gregarious person, making social contact with a group of people I would not normally interact with'. The frame of the caravan owners might be 'We have certain rules of cleanliness in our home and this stranger, by her behaviour, has broken these rules and polluted our home'.

Ask students to think about what frames the people they observed were in. Were there obvious shifts in frame e.g. in a lunch-time conversation from gossip to criticism? If students are from different linguistic/cultural groups, then it is possible to compare and discuss similarities and differences in 'framing'.

The discussion on synchrony could be illuminated using Hall's text if there is not enough time to discuss in more detail later. Students are much more likely to have observed synchrony in focused gatherings, but as Hall and other researchers have shown, it is present in unfocused gatherings such as the school playground taken as a whole.

2.4   Female/male interaction: Video 1, *Kingswood Comprehensive*

This is a brief extract from a BBC series first transmitted in 1981. The fact that it looks dated is an interesting aspect of self-presentation and makes the point that cultural differences are to do with time as well as social groups. (See L.P. Hartley's *The Go-Between* which opens with the lines 'The past is a different country'.) The series documents various aspects of school life in this Leicestershire comprehensive. The extract is taken from a programme which charts the procedures and debates surrounding the appointment of a new Deputy Head. The Headmaster has decided to call a staff meeting to discuss the issue of whether the school should try to get a Deputy Head who is a woman. With the retirement of the current Deputy, the senior management team will be all male. This extract creates a lot of interest because of the gender issues debated by the staff.

Issues

Students may want to react first to these issues before looking at NVC. If so, they should be encouraged to observe and not make snap evaluative judgements.   In particular, they should listen for the detailed ways in which the men and women present themselves:

e.g.: How categorical men and women are in their use of language, e.g use of modifiers such as 'I think' and who uses them; how people show agreement and disagreement; to what extent they show balance in their argument;

e.g. How ideas and people are referred to, e.g: 'this women's lib thing', 'girls', 'political pressure' etc.

e.g. How men and women present information differently, e.g. how 'logical' and 'rational' they present themselves as being; the extent to which they appeal to authority or legality or to more personal or deeper, less defined issues; to what extent they rely on 'tribal' support for developing their topic.

NVC

Consider:

- how people are grouped (or not) in the staff room;

- how people use social space; how body movements apparently synchronise or not with people's oral contributions;

- what messages are given off (metacommunicated);

- whether there are patterned observable differences between the way men and women use aspects of NVC and what this might tell us about the way men & women accomplish their gender interactionally,

- what system requirements can be identified (i.e. turn-taking) and what ritual requirements (i.e. of saving face or not).

Then consider ways in which the messages both verbal and non-verbal given and given off by men and women present clear patterns of difference which define them as culturally different groups (or not); identify where there are obvious changes of frame; where there are moments of synchrony and asynchrony.

2.5   Regulating Talk

If there is time, raise the issue of how NVC and use of social space regulate talk: here, the students' monitoring of their own classroom practices can be used. Students should have noted both their peers' behaviour and that of the lecturer. They may have noticed how language and NVC are used together to regulate or control talk or how the lecturer uses different NVC to control and regulate the session.

2.6   Reading

Anne Sutherland: *Social Space*
This text is from Anne Sutherland's book published by the BBC and accompanying a TV series on anthropology. Several of the points from this reading may have emerged during the session(s) and this is an opportunity to revisit some of them by way of a conclusion. The discussion of the reading can be structured by the five questions given. Links with the rest of the unit need to be emphasised:

11

(i) * The idea of physical space to create a boundary around individual or group (physical as a metaphor for the social). Use the example here from a student's home ethnography: *Things you can't get at Safeways,* Jane Freshwater, 1991 (see Handout). This was a short study of Portobello Market: 'I wanted to understand what the market was all about, what was happening and how it works'. Most of the data was collected on walkabout. There were also two traders who were key informants. One of the areas of most interest centred on the idea of 'boundary' and the use of space.

(ii)   The concept of boundary crossing as dangerous or problematical (to be followed up later in Units 16 and 17, Belief and Action) and therefore requiring ritual. (See Goffman on opening and closing conversations/events and the discussion about boundaries in the background notes.)

(iii)   The notion of space as always relative – links to the general notion of cultural relativity.

Edward T Hall: *Rhythm and Body Movement*
Although the book by Hall *Beyond Culture* from which this extract was taken was written in 1952 and assumes a lack of awareness of ethnicity which reads uncomfortably in the 90s, most of what he says seems as fresh and relevant today as when it was written. It was a remarkably influential book because it attempted to pull together a range of features such as concepts of time and space as well as NVC to analyse some of the organising principles which make social interaction meaningful among different cultural groups.

This reading is not provided with the materials but can be referred to and discussed if there is time.

3.   Advice and comments

This session is usually successful from the students' point of view. They can work directly from their own experience and can start observing and analysing their own and their friends' interactions immediately. For example "I looked round the class at the time and noticed the same was true of our class. Men occupied more social space. One guy was spreading his legs right forward and was extremely relaxed while the females in the class, as in the extract, were crunched up and making themselves small".

If anything, students tend to stay at this surface level of behaviour and find it difficult to talk about the patterning and cumulative effect of certain behaviours in constructing, for example, gender identity. They also need to be constantly helped to think beyond what is normal and natural to them and to see it as culturally specific and symbolically ordered.

> It is amazing how something as evident and present in everyday life such as NVC can be ignored by millions of people. I say 'ignored' because, although I know what a gaze means or what frowning or nodding want to express, I have never realised or thought of them as a way of

communication, or as a very useful feature of cultural patterns.

I suppose the whole reason behind the ethnography exercise is to make students more aware and sensitive to other people's reactions in different situations.

SECTION THREE

ASSIGNMENTS, HANDOUTS AND READING

The Assignment will need some explanation to help students distinguish between focused and unfocused gatherings, to introduce them to Goffman as a sociologist and possibly explain the idea of turn-taking.

The only handout in this unit is an excerpt from a student's 'home' ethnography: *Things you can't get at Safeways* (see Handout 1)

The Sutherland is given as essential reading and a reference is provided for the Hall, along with questions on the text. These can be looked at if time permits.

1. ASSIGNMENT

Observe and **take notes** for 5-10 minutes on **ONE** of the following:

1. Focused gathering, e.g. informal conversation at lunch-time, the opening minutes of a lecture or seminar, etc.

2. Unfocused gathering, e.g. in the street, in a hospital/doctor's waiting room, on the underground, queueing, etc.

    Either observe how talk and non-verbal communication (NVC) work together to initiate, maintain or end a conversation

    Or observe how NVC is used in gatherings where there is no or minimal talk.

    Use the following checklist (based on Erving Goffman's work):

    Check the right environment exists for messages to be received, e.g. it is not too noisy to have a conversation and non-verbal signs can be seen. Observe some of the NVC signs that show that speakers are being attended to, listened to, understood etc. (or not). In particular, note the following:

    ♦   Posture (leaning forward, arms crossed, sitting sideways, etc.)

    ♦   Gaze (how eye contact is used)

    ♦   Head and face gestures (nodding, smiling, eyebrows raised etc.)

    ♦   Closeness (how closely people sit or stand together)

    ♦   Rhythm (e.g. whether people rhythmically nod their heads to show agreement in time with the speaker or between utterances in a way which fits rhythmically with the speaker)

    ♦   Body movement (movement of the body, arms, legs, etc.)

3. If appropriate, observe how interactions begin and end, e.g., at a party, how do people begin to orientate towards each other before they speak?

4. Turn-taking (in any verbal interaction). Note how people get to take their turn in a conversation or a more formal encounter. Is this done verbally or non verbally?

5. Observe at which points talk and NVC are used simultaneously either to reinforce a point or to send one message but meaning another, e.g., when someone says "that's interesting", but they are leaning back with their arms folded.

HANDOUT 1 –Jane Freshwater, *Things you can't get at Safeways*

This was a short study of Portobello Market done as a home ethnography by a student. "I wanted to understand what the market was all about, what was happening and how it works". Most of the data was collected on walkabout. There were also two traders who were key informants.

One of the areas of most interest centred on the idea of 'boundary' and the use of space. The following is an extract on the use of space:

SPACE

Controlled space.

As I have already mentioned, the market office rules what goods can be sold where. It also exercises control over who can trade. If you trade without their permission, their officers will come and make you move, sometimes with the backing of the Police (pp.19-20). There are also illegal stalls that are regularly used by the same people, and if you try and trade there,

"You can get beat up by other people that are his friends, 'cos that is HIS place ... first they say, move it, it's not the right place, so if you move it alright, but if you don't move you're in trouble"

The way traders control their stall space seems to vary too. On one 'antique' stall it said: Please do not touch the goods, if you want to see anything we will show you. Whereas on another stall in the F and V section there was one person trading and another controlling the space. The latter was standing at the front of the stall (by the display on the pavement side) and the server was at the back (by the street) with the queue. At the front, people were picking up green peppers, turning them over and having a real good look at them. It was as though they were encroaching on the stall space, but this was tolerated and as soon as they moved he rearranged the vegetables so that they looked good again. On one antique stall, goods were laid out on velvet except for a few items which were kept in a glass case - the implication being that they were more expensive. Some stalls have proper tables and covers with sophisticated tiers to display goods to advantage. The way they order the goods on their stalls is one way they attract people. Others are just tables and some are just piles of goods on the road. Many antique shops are actually arcades made up of lots of small stalls.

Stall holders often control part of the opposite side of the road as well. Some antiques people have cars (often smart ones) parked on one side of the road all day. F and V stall holders all have supplies to constantly top up their stalls which are kept in vans and lorries parked opposite the stall or in a garage in a local mews and under the stall itself.

Unit THREE – Non-verbal Communication And Social Space

READING

♦ **Sutherland, A (1978) 'Social Space' in** *Face Values.* **London: BBC pp. 46-68**

This text is from a BBC book which accompanied a TV series on anthropology. The original includes photographs and diagrams that we were unable to include in this booklet. As you read the text consider the following questions.

1. In what sense is the anthropologist's view of physical space different from that of, say, a geographer or an estate agent?

2. Why does the crossing of physical boundaries tend to be accompanied by some kind of ritual? Can you think of some more examples from your own experience?

3. What are some of the differences and similarities between the terms 'social space' and 'sacred space'?

4. How does the treatment of social/sacred space in Malta compare with the meaning attached to churches etc. in your own cultural environment?

5. What can understanding the symbolic use of space, e.g. in Bali, tell us about the ways in which a society is experienced and interpreted by its members? Think of some further examples of symbolic space in the university.

Inside the house, in the street, behind the counter, in church: each of these locations has its own particular social meaning to us, and our confusion when confronted with an unfamiliar society stems partially from the unfamiliar way space in that society is organised. One task of the social anthropologist is to understand the spatial order or boundaries created by society because space is one of the ways in which society is experienced.

Boundaries of space appear in many contexts. They may be tangible, physical boundaries such as a wall between two rooms, or they may be intangible spatial boundaries such as the amount of space people leave between themselves when passing each other on the street. We are, all the time, dividing up space into bounded areas. We draw boundaries between our private living area and areas of public activity, between religious activities and secular situations, between people we can be physically close to and those from whom we keep a correct distance. In all of these cases, both the way the space is cut up and the behaviour appropriate for a particular piece of space, is determined by the social context.

Both the society we are part of and the natural physical environment influence our perception of space. So whether you live in the Saharan desert or the Amazon jungle will have an effect on the way you perceive, for example, distance. When we try to understand how

18

UNIT TWO – Non-verbal Communication and Social Space

RECOMMENDED FURTHER READING

♦ Hall, E.T. (1952) *Beyond Culture.* New York: Anchor Books, pp 72-84 Rhythm & Body Movement

As you read the text, consider the following questions:

1. What does Hall mean by synchrony? Observe the way people around you synchronise their body movements. In particular, how people talking together synchronise their body movements with their talk.

2. In what way could culturally specific interactions lead to negative stereotypes and discrimination? Think of some examples of ways of interacting that you have observed that are different from your own. In what ways have these differences helped you think about your own ways of interacting?

Monitor your own non-verbal communication when interacting with others. Can you explain why you moved in a certain way?