

LORRAINE KIRK and MICHAEL BURTON

PHYSICAL VERSUS SEMANTIC CLASSIFICATION OF NON-VERBAL FORMS: A CROSS-CULTURAL EXPERIMENT

INTRODUCTION

Judged similarity tests have been used with increasing frequency to study the cognitive organization of verbal materials. In this paper we extend the existing methodology to a new domain. Here we investigate judged similarities among nonverbal acts. One simple question motivating the research is whether or not the judged similarity test (in this case the triads test) can elicit nonrandom judgments of similarity among the elements of nonverbal behavior. A second question motivating the work is whether people will classify nonverbal acts on the basis of anatomy and motion or on the basis of semantics.

The elements of nonverbal behavior considered in this paper will be called emblems. Ekman and Friesen (1972) define emblems as:

those nonverbal acts (a) which have a direct verbal translation usually consisting of a word or two, or a phrase, (b) for which this precise meaning is known by most or all members of a group, class, subculture, or culture, (c) which are most often deliberately used with the conscious intent to send a particular message to the other person(s), (d) for which the person(s) who sees the emblem usually not only knows the emblem's message but also knows that it was deliberately sent to him, and (e) for which the sender usually takes responsibility for having made that communication. A further touchstone of an emblem is whether it can be replaced by a word or two, its message verbalized, without substantially modifying a conversation ... Emblems, as we have defined them, are communicative and interactive acts.

According to Ekman and Friesen's definition, an emblem can be interchanged with an equivalent verbal form. We have chosen to leave as an