HERITAGE AND CHANGES IN THE NONVERBAL LANGUAGE OF ETHIOPIAN NEWCOMERS*

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The Ethiopian immigrants to Israel come from a quite isolated culture which is extremely different from that of modern Israel. Their acculturation and integration depend heavily on their ability to communicate effectively with Israelis. The first part of this study explores the nonverbal communication heritage of the newcomers and its expected understanding by Israelis. The second part tests the newcomers' initial perception of emblems used in Israel and the changes in their understanding after two years in Israel. The findings show a high similarity in the performance of gestures, but also many divergences in their decoding even by "veterans". Both populations should be aware of the expected misunderstandings and effort should be devoted to promoting effective mutual intercultural understanding.

THEORY

A. The nonverbal channel of communication

Every communication process is based on three content factors: the intended meaning of the sender's message; its "encoding" into the signs that are to transmit it; and the ability of the receiver to translate the signs back into their meaning, to "decode" them. Human messages are transmitted by two different kinds of signs: the verbal, human-specific ones which use symbolic signs, called words, and the non-verbal, "body" signs, which are partly shared with non-human animals.

"Body language" (Fast, 1970; Sheflen, 1972) includes all the communicating movements of the whole body and of its various parts which Birdwistell (1970) named "kinesis": the placement of the body in the available space, called "proxemics" (Hall, 1963); the way in which the different limbs are posed simultaneously, the "posture" (Argyle, 1977; Lamb and Watson, 1979); movements of certain parts of the body, particularly the head, hands and shoulders, called "gestures" (Ruesch and Kees, 1972; Morris, Collet, et al., 1981); and the facial expression – the "mimics" (Argyle, 1977). Those gestures or mimics which have a certain meaning that can be expressed also through words, are called "emblems" (Eckman and Friesen, 1981).

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The present study concentrates on emblemic gestures and their functions. They can be classified according to different types. "Analogic" or "iconic" gestures (Ruesch and Kees, 1972; Poyatos, 1984) express meanings by imitating certain actions or situations, or by pointing at a certain part of the body to hint at the sender's intention, e.g., the imitation of throat-cutting or the vertical placing of the finger across the lips to indicate silence. "Symptomatic" expressions are based on the biological state of the communicant, such as changes in respiration or pupil size (Cronkhite and Liska, 1980). Both of these types may be decoded sufficiently from some existing correspondence between how they are performed and what they wish to express. In contrast, a third type of gesture is based exclusively on conventions about their meaning prevailing between the communicants. These are called by Eckman and Friesen (1981) "arbitrary coded" gestures, because there is no correspondence between their forms and the intended or "digital" meanings, similar to the phonetic alphabet or the number codes used by computers (Condon and Yousef, 1981; for a comprehensive discussion see also Kendon, 1983), e.g., clapping of hands to summon a waiter or a taxi-cab.

Spoken words are always expressed by means of an additional component of non-verbal language (NVL), the "voice quality" or "paralanguage" (Trager, 1958) with its changing volume, intonation, rhythm and shades. Verbal language, mainly serving cognitive statements and messages, is often accompanied also by certain NV gestures or mimics for illustration and emphasis.

However, many NV signs are used even without words for a variety of other functions: the expression of emotions; agreement or objection; the initiation of contact and the regulation of the beginning, continuation and ending of any single communication episode; the transmission of orders and directions; and even for the sake of deception (Knapp, 1972; Argyle, 1977; Morris, 1982). For a functional model, see also Heslin and Patterson, 1982. One of the most important, yet generally neglected functions of NVL, is its use as the carrier of feedback (Wiener, 1948; Eisenberg and Smith, 1971) which is sent, often unconsciously, by the "recipient". Verbal feedback is relatively rare, and when it occurs it is usually postponed until the sender's message has been completely delivered. In addition, it is usually limited to one person at a time. NV feedback, on the other hand, often begins immediately after the first words of the sender, at least at the level of acceptance-rejection, positive-negative and attitudinal responses, and is sent generally simultaneously by most, if not all, of the recipients even in a crowded lecture hall or at public meetings.

The ability to perform the correct movement in order to be understood by the partner is important. However, a more crucial issue is the ability to know how to "read" and to interpret correctly the feedback messages of the sender's message. The further flow of communication should be directed and determined by the outcome of this "reading". On the other hand, misinterpretation of these NV signs, either of the messages or of the feedback, will inevitably lead to misunderstandings and often even to a breakdown of the communication process. Failure of communication may be caused by attributing to the gesture a meaning other than that intended by the sender (Salomon, 1980). The main source of these NVL misunderstandings may be the cultural differences between the communicating parties.

B. Nonverbal behavior and culture

Some expressive gestures and mimics are universal and are common even among some animals (Eibl-Eibesfeldt, 1979; Morris, 1982 and others). However, most non-verbal behavior is culture-bound (Ruesch and Kees, 1972; Condon and Yousef, 1975; Asante and Barnes, 1979; Kendon, 1984). NVL is much more differentiated and multifaceted than verbal language (Argyle, 1977). Furthermore, in almost every group of countries that have a common language, many different patterns of NVL can be found, and even in a single country NVL may differ remarkably from one locality to another (Morris, Collet et al., 1981).

Therefore, it is to be expected in any case of intercultural encounter that such misundestandings or even "discommunications" may occur (Condon and Yousef, 1975; Shuter, 1979). As Morris (1982) puts it: "What matters with gesturing is not what signal we think we are sending out, but what signals are being received!" The probability of misunderstanding grows with the increase in differences between living styles, mentality, social structure, values, norms, folklore and other cultural factors (Sitaram and Haapenen, 1979). The greater the gap between the cultural background and the personal experiences of the communication partners, the smaller the common pool of knowledge which is essential for any sharing of communicated meanings (Steinmuller, 1977).

Paradoxically, a tourist arriving in a foreign country tries to make his point or to express his requests or replies by mimics and gestures based on his own cultural pool of knowledge, which is often not shared by his partner. Simultaneously, he also tries to interpret and to understand the NV cues of the other. This effort often results in comic situations, and sometimes in tragic ones, but both of them are only temporary and usually without severe or lasting consequences for the stranger.

Much more serious and even crucial is the situation of an immigrant. His physical and psychological well-being depend, to a large extent, on the correct mutual understanding between himself and his new environment. Verbal language may be changed relatively easily by learning and everyday interaction, but research has found that this is not the case with non-verbal language. As Hall (1979) writes: "No matter how hard man tries, it is impossible for him to divest himself of his own culture, for it has penetrated to the roots of his nervous system and determines how he perceives the world".

Thus, for immigrants to Israel, sufficient knowledge of Hebrew will not ensure efficient communication as long as the NVL remains different and misleading, since communication is always an interaction between two or more people with a steady circlelike flow of mutual turn-taking (Eisenberg and Smith, 1971). The difficulties in communicating with immigrants exist on both sides when each one functions as sender and as receiver as well, in the effort to understand and to be understood.

An even greater communication barrier than usual is to be expected with Ethiopian immigrants to Israel. These immigrants have been raised in an ancient, steady and quite isolated culture which is extremely different from Israeli society, more so than any of the earlier cultural groups of immigrants who came to Israel.

C. The studies

The communicational integration of immigrants is influenced by two factors: first, their cultural heritage, i.e., all their learned culture-based communication signs; and

second, the intensiveness of the adaptation process of the new communication patterns. The intensiveness of the process depends on the initial similarity or dissimilarity between their own heritage of communication signs and the communication patterns used by the absorbing society, and on the readiness and ability to change, i.e., to adapt, as far as necessary, these patterns for their own use.

In order to gain data-based insight into the communications aspects and prospects for the integration of the Ethiopian newcomers into Israeli society, two small-scale descriptive studies were conducted. The first one (A) explores the Ethiopians' heritage of NVL signs in comparison with their common uses in Israel. This study seeks to find out the initial state of existing mutual "communication gaps". The other study (B) intends to test how Ethiopian newcomers initially understand common Israeli emblems and what changes will be found in this understanding after two years of living in Israel.

STUDY A: THE HERITAGE

The objectives of the study were:

(a) To find out how Ethiopian newcomers use NVL for their intercultural communication, and
(b) To find out which of the described or observed Ethiopian emblems are identical with those used in Israel, and which ones are misleading or irritating.

Our hypotheses were:

(a) Many Ethiopian gestures will differ completely from the Israeli ones and will therefore not be appropriate for intercultural communication.
(b) Identity or at least similarity between Ethiopian and Israeli emblems will be found mainly withthose performed by analogical gestures.
(c) Some emblems will be performed by gestures that are common for Israel but serve other meanings than those intended by the Ethiopian communicants.
(d) Differences in decoding will also be found by Ethiopian respondents coming from different parts of that country.

Procedure

Several documentary films, photographs, and literature written by eye witnesses and newcomers themselves were used to set up a primary list of Ethiopian emblems and some other NV language signs used in the Gondar, as well as in other parts of Ethiopia (for details, see Appendix I). All the listed emblems were presented to Ethiopian immigrants, mainly from the Nordia absorption center, most of them from the Gondar area, who were ready to cooperate. The respondents were asked about the meanings of each gesture (for details about the decoders, see Appendix II). These findings were evaluated against our earlier empirical knowledge of the NV language signs of Israel. In this study we had to content ourselves with a verbal documentary description of the gestures, due to the strong objection of the newcomers to expose themselves to photography and even more so to video recordings.

Findings

The findings of this study will be presented according to the different sources and in relation to their expected functions in intercultural communication. (For a comprehensive list of the recorded emblems, see Appendix III.)

Sources 1,2 — Films and pictures. The documentary film (Source 1) demonstrates some kinetic language signs of a Jewish priest in Ethiopia, accompanied by talking in Hebrew. Four gestures standing for "the time has come", "it is near", "we will collect it", "I will blot out", were not decoded by any of the Nordia group or any other decoder and even the movements as such were not identified by them as gestures. The gesture for "just now", which is made by quickly lowering the open spread hand, was decoded by seven of the Nordia group (87.5%) as the emblem for "sit down". It was completely unknown to the others. We have no evidence whether the priest was from the Gondar area or not.

Source 2, a still picture, showed the pointing of the stretched top of the finger near the left eye, without any evidence of its intended meaning. No one could identify it as a particular emblem. Of these five gestures, only one has been decoded ("just now") and even this one was misinterpreted by most of the Ethiopian immigrants. Apparently, all these emblems are specific ones and are used by certain people in certain areas.

Sources 3,4 — Israeli literature and eye witness. The author of "Black Brothers", Yael Kahana, observed the behavior of Ethiopian Jews in many of their settlements and described the use of several emblems in various situations.

One group of NV signs were greeting gestures. The usual ceremony opens with a slight lowering of the head towards the partner, followed by a series of mutual cheek-kissing while holding the partner's chin. This continued kissing is accompanied by the verbal question, "How are you?" The Nordia group[1] affirmed that this ceremony is widely used, generally with about 20 rounds of kissing or even much more depending upon the closeness of friendship, degree of kinship and the length of time that has passed since the previous meeting.[2] Kahana writes that, after her own exchange of kisses with women, she shook hands with the males. According to the Nordia respondents, however, this exchange may occur between the sexes as well. This was indeed also verified by the interviewer's own observations.

The Nordia group also reported a specific use and form of hand-shaking. In the greeting ceremony between a young man and an older one the older man will stretch his hand in order to catch and shake that of the younger man. The younger man will do the same but will support his stretched forearm by gripping it with his left hand. This exact form of greeting has also been reported by Lang (1928) for the Bajangis in West Africa.

A much more formal greeting ceremony was reported by Kahana for the meeting between young people and very old or distinguished persons. The youngster bows down to kiss the old man's knees, as a gesture of self-deprecation reminiscent of the well-known foot kissing in ancient Egypt, described by Eibl-Eibesfeldt (1976) and others. The old man holds the chin of the youngster, lifts him up and kisses him on the cheek. This knee-kissing is practised by sons, according to Kahana, with regard to father and mother as well. This kind of greeting was affirmed by all male and female

youth from the Orli workshop, coming mostly from the Gondar, although they were unwilling to go into further details.[3]

These young Ethiopians (Source 5) demonstrated another form of greeting used by young people only. One partner moves both of his outstretched hands palm down, quickly downwards towards those of his partner's, moving upwards, palm-up. After clapping of the hands the role are changed. A very similar form of greeting has been found by Eibl-Eibesfeldt (1976) among some Papuan tribes in New Guinea and Wickler and Urhig (1969) also reported it as a form of greeting of chimpanzees. Like some other gestures, this one was perhaps seen by young people studying in the town of Gondar or even at the Addis ababa University among people from other areas and countries and adopted by them.

The second group of NV signs described by Kahana are three gestures regulating and terminating conversation. A deep sigh and closing of the eyes; a wide yawn with stretching of the muscles; and the host leaving the room. All of them imitate consciously physiological phenomena, with clear meanings for communication goals. (The host's leaving the room is a very clear hint for the visitor!) The Ethiopians of the Orli group affirmed these NV expressions, but for different functions: the first two for temporary interruption of the conversation, and only the last one for terminating it.

Another important piece of evidence connected with the regulation of conversation was reported personally to the interviewer by M.A. Gil'ad (Source 4): Meetings of priests or elders of the community may go on for hours. After someone has spoken for a while, he closes his eyes and complete silence is kept for up to half an hour until he himself or some other participant continues. This silence is an integral part of the whole conversation. Similar and further functions of silence in communication have been found also among Red Indians, Shottland Islanders and others (Key, 1975).

The findings from these sources show specific forms and kinds of greeting ceremonies and regulation of conversation. Although widely verified by the Nordia group, hardly any of these are practised in the same way or even known by the general Israeli society.

In the case of one factor – eye contact, which plays an essential part in face-to-face communication, we found differences which are expected to cause much inconvenience in intercultural conversation. The Orli group reported Ethiopian behavior differing from the Western custom of continuous eye contact by the listener and varying contact by the speaking partner, and from the black American behavior (La France and Mayo, 1976). A young person avoids eye contact during the whole communicative interaction with an older one or a person of higher status, while the older person keeps continuous contact all through the meeting, as has been reported also for West African cultures by Johnson (1971) as cited by Wolfgang (1979).

Sources 5, 6: Ethiopian immigrants. The following 20 gestures, detailed in Table 1, were demonstrated by Ethiopians of the Orli workshop, mainly from the Gondar area (Source 5), and in one case, by the chairman of the Union of Ethiopian Immigrants (Source 6). Thirteen of them have been verified, at least by the majority of the Nordia decoding group. The others could not be verified but since they come from the same source as the former ones, we may include them in our findings. Table 1 presents the cumulative evidence for the Ethiopian heritage of NVL signs, each one with its reported meaning (the emblem), describing also the relevant kinetic movements (the

gesture). The emblems have been grouped according to their communicative function for Israel:

(a) Emblems that are similar in gesture and meaning to those found for Israel in our earlier studies.
(b) Emblems that are not used in Israel but may be understood due to their analogical gestures.
(c) Emblems performed through gestures known to Israelis for a quite general meaning, at least in some subgroups, but expressing more specific or slightly different meanings for the Ethiopians.
(d) Ethiopian emblems performed by gestures that serve the Israeli subgroups for clearly different meanings, thus potentially leading to misunderstandings.

TABLE 1: Emblems Performed by Ethiopian Immigrants

The communicative function for Israel	The emblem	The gesture	Remarks
A. Generally known and used	1. Thinking	The cheek stroke (see Study B)	Illustrated in Figure 2
	2. What can I do?	Rising of shoulders, stretching arms to the sides with open hands	
	3. Just a moment!	Pushing forward of the palms at shoulder height	
	4. Killing	Grasping the neck from the front	
	5. Handshaking	Shaking of right hand, supporting forearm with left hand	In Israel – without left hand motion
B. Unknown but understood by	6. Be quiet!	4 stretched fingers put diagonally over the lips	In Israel – the finger is put vertically
	7. Enough!	From position one: Elbows join the body, both hands at shoulder height, palm outwards with spread fingers, to position two: turning both forearms sideways with slight outward turning	
	8. They change	Turning the right hand and forearm leftwards in a circular motion	

C. Only partly or approxi-mately	9a. Come here	Stretched arm waving with one hand only, by closing the fingers on the hand, accompanied by vocal signs	Used for far distances
	9b. Come here	Elbow joining body, rising fore-arm, palm towards face, waving by closing fingers on hand	For medium distance
	9c. Come here	Lowering the chin until it touches the sternum (breast) bone)	From very near. Rarely used in Israel and may be mis-understood
	10. Angry	Biting the lower lip	Partly also found in Israel.
	11. Finished; is passed	Clapping hands in vertical motion	Partly found in Israel
	12. Sorry for you	Inclining the cheek joining open palm	Partly found in Israel
	13. I have lost something	Quickly lowering the hand with slackened fingers, until a click is heard	Used some-times for desperation
D. Known gestures with dif-ferent meanings (misleading)	14. I under-stand	The hands purse (see Study B)	Used some-times for: "But you have to understand"
	15.Begging	*The hands purse	Found also in Study B, will be inter-preted for slowly"
	16. Very quickly	Repeated closing of fingers on downward palm with stretched forearm	May be mis-understood for "Come here"
	17.Sorry	Hearable intaking of air, exposing the teeth	For anger
	18. Very sad	*Open hand with joined fingers stretched horizontally above the forehead, thumb joins the temple	For head pains or shadowing the eyes
	19. I love you I love you	Hitting of fist on the heart Greeting	For "I swear" "tied up'

This table represents a variety of emblems and expressions: emotions, directives, orders, informative messages and feedbacks. The performance of these NV signs showed that almost all gestures, as movements of NVL only, are known by Israeli society, although some of them with slight differences, but the communicative functions of these gestures in the intercultural encounter are widely different. Out of all emblems reported, only a few are understood correctly by Israelis. The others may be understood by their analogical gestures. In the third group, which consists of a third

of the emblems studied, we find emblems which may not be understood correctly or only partially by many of the Israeli veterans and some of which may lead to misunderstandings. The last third of the emblems are the most problematic: the "reader" (decoder) of each of the performed gestures attributes to them a meaning rooted in his own life experience. Therefore he is quite certain about the correctness of his interpretation and will act according to this, albeit erroneous, understanding. Although this list of emblems is only arbitrary and partial, it shows the wide range of different communicative functions that could be expected in the acculturation process of the Ethiopian immigrant to Israel.

DISCUSSION A

The aim of this study was to gain insight into the intracultural use of NVL patterns by the Ethiopian newcomers and their deviations from the Israeli ones. The Ethiopian NVL signs that were recorded from six different sources comprise a variety of different communicative functions: greeting ceremonies, regulation of conversation, informative messages, orders and directives, feedback and emotions. The gestures, demonstrated by the first and second sources – a film and a picture – were generally unknown to all respondents. Apparently these gestures were specific ones used only in isolated areas or by particular people or on special occasions. Therefore, they will not be discussed further.

The third source, from descriptive literature and an eye witness report, includes NV signs used for two important social events: greeting ceremonies and regulation of conversation. Four different gestures were reported for the greeting ceremony, and each one has been found to serve a different function reflecting the social structure of the Ethiopian family and community. Different functions were also found for the three kinds of gestures regulating conversation, and an additional source added conversation rules for specific meetings. Unique behavior has been found for eye contact, not common either in the western or the oriental subgroups in Israel. The last two sources were Ethiopian newcomers themselves, who demonstrated various emblems from many types of communication. Here we also found distinct gestures for different stages of a single purpose, as demonstrated in the "come here" emblem. The other signs were single emblems of different kinds. All of these may reflect the Ethiopian heritage of communication patterns.

Our first hypothesis assumed that many unique gestures would be found in the Ethiopian communication heritage. Contrary to this hypothesis, almost all of the demonstrated gestures *are* known as NV signs, either generally or at least by many subgroups, in Israeli NVL, except for those used in the greeting ceremonies. This is true for the more analogical as well as for the symbolic-digital ones. The unique gestures demonstrated in the film and the picture were known neither to the Israeli population nor to the Ethiopian respondents.

The second hypothesis predicted a similar understanding by Ethiopians and Israelis mainly for the typical analogical gestures. The reported gestures nos. 6-8 ("be quiet", "enough", "they change") that are not used in Israel will indeed be easily understood for their analogical performance and their similarity to the Israeli ones. On the other hand, there are also some with common meanings which are presented by similar gestures of the digital type. Analogical gestures do indeed contribute to intercultural communication, but not exclusively, as hypothesized. However, the analogical NVL

seems to be the most promising language sign of intercultural understanding due to its easiness of interpretation, at least as long of the movement represents an unmistakable message. Ramsay (1979) found that, initially, analogic learning is faster and easier than digital learning.

The following hypothesis that some Israeli gestures may express very different meanings to Ethiopian newcomers has been widely verified for the majority of the demonstrated gestures (groups C and D in Table 1), and we may add to them also the reported patterns of eye contact. All these common communication signs have therefore to be categorized as "multi-message gestures" (Morris, Collet, et al., 1981). The different meanings that have been reported are not unique for the Ethiopians. Throughout our presentation we could have shown identical meanings, although often in far-away cultures with no obvious connection to the Ethiopian one. This discrepancy between common gestures and not-shared meanings may be regarded as the main source for communication barriers between the newcomers and the absorbing society. As long as there is awareness of the lack of understanding, or at least doubt about it, an attempt will be made to search for other supporting factors: verbal expressions, context, mimics and posture, etc., until sufficient understanding is achieved. The "communication quality", as Schneller (1984) called it, may after all be quite high. The communication will finally achieve its aims.

This will not occur, at least in the initial stage of interaction, however, when the "reader" is quite sure of the correctness of his interpretation of a "known" gesture, not being aware of several possible differences in its meaning. In many instances, e.g., lack or poorness of the spoken language, new situations, orders or information delivered non-verbally only, the recipient will rely on his erroneous understanding and act accordingly. In this case the "communication quality" will be very low due to the fact that the gesture is known, but misleading. This situation holds in our case for each of the parties, complicating their understanding of one another, and no less the crucial need to be understood.

The last hypothesis, supposing diversity of encoding and decoding between newcomers of different parts of Ethiopia, could not be verified by this study. The NV expressions recorded were decoded mainly by newcomers from the Gondar area. At this stage, therefore, we may only state that correct understanding by these respondents still does not predict the same interpretation – correct or incorrect – by newcomers from Tigray and other parts of the country. We will return to this issue in Study B.

This study has opened up a certain insight into the Ethiopian heritage of NV behavior patterns. These patterns may be relevant for the everyday intercultural communication of the Ethiopian in his new homeland, contributing to his successful acculturation. However, the findings also revealed some problematic communication barriers, due to the similarity of gestures for different meanings. But even more important than this insight is the other side of the issue: How do the Ethiopian immigrants understand initially the emblems that are generally used in Israel and what changes can be found in this understanding later on? This question will be dealt with in a further study.

STUDY B: UNDERSTANDING AND CHANGES

In Study A we concentrated on the Ethiopian heritage as a subject of our inquiry and evaluated its expected decoding by Israelis. This second study will use the Israeli NVL as the subject and frame of reference for testing its initial decoding by the newcomers and the changes in understanding after two years of residence in Israel.

The objectives of this study were:

(a) To find out how Ethiopian immigrants perceive common Israeli emblems, and
(b) To identify factors that affect changes in the perception of these emblems.

Our hypotheses were:

1. The newcomers will generally recognize the demonstrated movements as emblems, but will "decode" them differently from the Israelis.
2. Ethiopian immigrants who have lived in Israel for at least two years will adapt the meanings of some of the Israeli emblems according to functional factors, but will not adapt the meaning of others.

Procedure

In the first study we explored a component of the Ethiopian culture by using an "emic" approach (Jones, 1979) that tries to understand the various cultural issues from the "inside", concentrating solely on this culture as the subject of investigation. The second study tests the perception of Israeli emblems by Ethiopian newcomers by the "etic" approach – from the "outside" – in order to identify possible communication barriers and to evaluate the communicative aspect of the integration process of the Ethiopian immigrants.

For this testing, seven gestures were selected for presentation. These gestures have been identified by Morris, Collet, et al. (1981) to serve as culture-bound, and Schneller (1983) found them in the repertoire of the Israeli NVL. Six of them have generally common meanings in Israeli society, whereas one is unique mainly to Yemenites who were in the past geographically closest to the Ethiopians.

These movements were presented in the form of still pictures and were also demonstrated by the interviewer in turn to each of seven male newcomers aged 15-25 from the Gondar as well as from the Tigray areas, who had arrived in Israel two days previously. Each respondent was asked (in Amharic) the following questions about each movement: "Are you familiar with it?", "What does it mean to you?", "Are you certain about the correctness of your interpretation?" and "Do you know other meanings for this movement?"

A second group was tested by the same procedure, but directly in Hebrew. These "veteran" respondents had lived in Israel for two years, were of similar age and came from the same areas as the first group.

The analysis and the following discussion are based mainly on the comprehensive book by Morris, Collet, et al. (1981), which offers theoretical considerations and broad evidence for the distribution and functions of many emblems.

The pictures and verbal definitions of the seven gestures are presented in Figure 1.

FIGURE 1: The Emblems and Their Codes

(a)  The hand purse

(b)  The hands push

(c)  The hands flick

(d)  The cheek stroke

(e)  The nose tap

(f)  The temple tap

(g)  The ear touch

Findings

The following tables present a comparison of the interpretation of the presented gestures by the newcomers and by the "veteran" Ethiopian immigrants.

The dominant and secondary meanings of each gesture in the Israeli NVL, as found by our earlier studies, are marked in the tables for comparison. Tables 2 to 5 present the first group of the various gestures and their interpretation by newcomers versus "veterans".

TABLE 2: The Hand Purse (a)

	Slowly! Be patient!	Emphasis of spoken word*	Asking a question	Begging for food
Newcomers	–	(1) 1	1	6
"Veterans"	6 (3)	(1)	–	1 (1)

* = known meaning in Israeli NVL
** = dominant meaning in Israeli NVL
( ) = secondary meaning

The Hand Purse (a)

This gesture is widely used almost all over the western and oriental world – except for the northern countries – albeit with different meanings. It is also well known by all cultural subgroups of Israeli society, as shown by the meanings marked in our table. All the newcomers recognized the gesture but only one knew it, at least as his secondary choice, in the Israeli sense. The other six respondents, surprisingly, reported it as an emblem for begging for food. This meaning is not included at all in the six different meanings found by Morris, Collet et al. (1981) for Europe and Tunisia, or in four others reported by Israeli respondents from many oriental cultures, as found in our earlier studies. It seems obvious that this meaning is the outcome of their life experiences, especially during the past few years in their hunger-stricken homeland.

Thus, this emblem should not be regarded as an Ethiopian heritage but as an acquired functional meaning. This meaning was either introduced as a new kind of gesture, unknown before, or had conquered an existing gesture, "displacing" its former emblemic meaning according to the new needs, as has been found by Morris in similar situations. Indeed we have additional evidence for this interpretation of begging for food from some North African immigrants who remembered its use in some of the transit camps in the '50's while on their long trip to Israel, obviously for the same reason. Almost all of the veterans dropped this interpretation, which with time became inappropriate, and adopted instead the dominant Israeli use. Although two of the veterans still recognized its original meaning, one of them adopted the new one as well, probably at least for its intercultural use.

TABLE 3: The Hands Push (b)

	Slow down Calm down**	Stop! Don't approach!*	Wait! Enough!*	Greeting
Newcomers	–	1	(1)	6
"Veterans"	(3)	5	(3)	3

* = known meaning in Israeli NVL
** = dominant meaning in Israeli NVL
( ) = secondary meaning

The Hands Push (b)

This emblem is of special interest because it serves also as a substitute for the hand purse emblem for "slow down". As has been shown in Table 2, this emblem was not recognized initially by any of the newcomers, but has been finally adopted by almost all of the veterans. Therefore we assumed that the hands push gesture would possibly be interpreted with this meaning. Our table shows that this assumption was not

realized. Almost all of the newcomers interpreted it as a form of greeting – welcome and goodbye – which is completely unknown in Israel and no one mentioned its expected "slow down/calm down" meaning.

Another interesting finding is the shifting over to the "Stop! – Don't approach" sign. This sign is usually made in Israel and other cultures as well, by raising the hands straight towards the addressee and usually also at the height of the shoulders, but not in a downwards motion of 45° as had been demonstrated in our study. It may be suggested that this incorrect adaptation is a case of "gesture blurring" as Morris (1981) described: After the dropping of the original meaning of a gesture, in this case as a result of the contradictory and confusing meaning of the Ethiopian and the Israeli interpretations, the respondent searches for another appropriate meaning which may fit this gesture.

The Hands Flick (c)

TABLE 4: The Hands Flick (c)

	I love you (to a woman)	Greeting	"tied up"	Hurt hands	unknown
Newcomers	4	1	1	1	–
	(1)			(2)	
"Veterans"	–	1	2	2	3
		(1)		(1)	

This gesture was introduced into Israel by many of its subgroups mainly as an emblem for an emphasized "enough" or "nothing". Here too, neither the newcomers nor the veterans mentioned this meaning. The reason may be that this gesture is already tied to another very important Ethiopian meaning: the declaration of love to a woman, or greeting, as reported by most of the newcomers. Its total dropping during the two years is most probably the result of the confusing experience when its use for love is misunderstood and reacted to as an expression for finishing or refusing. But even among the veterans no one adapted this gesture for the Israeli common emblem. We suppose that in the Ethiopian NVL there exists another well known emblem for "enough" and/or "nothing" thus already "filling the niches" as described by Morris. He found that in this case it will be hard to impose any new gesture. On the other hand, this movement had been demonstrated to them as a gesture inviting some interpretation. Therefore at least part of them tried to give it some plausible meaning. It has often been found that in this situation the decoder tries to derive its meaning from visible hints or analogies rather than to search for symbolic abstract quality which has no simple equivalent in the world of objects and movement (Morris, 1982). This happened apparently also in our case: injured or bound hands as had been suggested by the greater part of the veteran respondents. Since a very similar gesture means "imprisoned" for south Italy (Efron, 1972) it may be that this meaning penetrated into Ethiopia during its occupation by Italy. However, since this gesture

with its Israeli meaning is used very frequently in army life, it is likely that this emblem will penetrate soon into the NVL of the Ethiopian immigrants.

The Temple Touch (d), The Cheek Stroke (e), The Nose Tap (f)

The second group of three gestures will be analyzed together because of their similarity of results. All of them showed almost exclusively the dominant meaning of "thinking" for Israel as well as for the Ethiopian immigrants and no change has been found between the newcomers and the veterans. This similarity is most complete for the temple tap since this emblem derives its meaning from the placement of the finger on the human brain. It is analogically understood in both of its meanings – "thinking" and "clever/stupid". This may account for its unchanged use by the Ethiopians, as it had been found also in almost all subgroups of the multicultural Israeli society.

Although the cheek stroke is not directly connected with a thinking part of the head, it is widely known in this meaning in other cultures. Its origin is not clearly known. Only a few interpreted it as "tooth-ache" – a typical analogical decoding. For the nose tap, on the other hand, we may be able to show the reason for the consistency of its main meaning and its origin. We found very little knowledge of this gesture as such among most of our Israeli respondents, although the few who recognized it reported it as an emblem for thinking. Therefore there was no reason for the newcomers to change this gesture as it was well known to them from their own communication heritage. The origin of the Ethiopian meaning of this gesture may be found in nearby countries: it was recorded by some of our Israeli respondents who had immigrated earlier from India, Pakistan and Afghanistan. Perhaps it was introduced by merchants visiting Ethiopia or at least its ports (on the important sea-ways from Asia to Africa and Europe), a phenomenon found in many similar geographical and economical situations. The alternative interpretation of this gesture was "something bad has happened". A variation of this emblem has been observed by Efron for South Italians and it may be that this gesture was also adopted, slightly differently, by the Ethiopians during the years of the Italian occupation, but it may also be associated with the analogical "bad odor" meaning which has been mentioned by Efron (1972) and by Morris, Collet, et al. (1981).

The Ear Touch (g)

Unlike the six above-analyzed gestures, the ear touch is the only one without any common widespread meaning in Israel. Generally, it is quite unknown to most Israelis with only a few mentioning "thinking" and some analogical associations. Only in the Yemenite Israeli subgroup did we find one common symbolic meaning, known to most of the respondents: a sign of severe warning. Since only the narrow Bab-el-Mandeb sea strip separates the only two Jewish communities in this area, one may assume that this emblem crossed this distance with some travellers and therefore may be found also with the Ethiopians.

TABLE 5: The Ear Touch (g)

	Warning	Thinking*	Listening*	Don't want to listen	Hurt ear	Effiminacy	unknown
Newcomers	–	2	1	1	1	1	1
"Veterans"	–	1	1	–	6	–	–

As can be seen, this table does not show any influence of the Yemenite community but demonstrates again that if no common symbolic meaning is known an analogical interpretation will be offered, even if only a functionasl or an anatomical one. Although only one of the newcomers decoded it as a sign for effeminacy, originating apparently in the wearing of an earring, it is worth mention that this meaning, which is the dominant one for this gesture in Europe, is found almost exclusively in Italy (Morris, Collet, et al. 1981).

DISCUSSION B

The aim of this study was to find out the perception of common Israeli emblems by the recent immigrants from Ethiopia and to identify factors for the changes in their understanding.

According to our findings we may divide the presented gestures in three groups. The first group includes the Hand Purse (a), the Hands Push (b), and the Hands Flick (c). None of these was identified correctly according to the Israeli meaning by any of the newcomers, and a different interpretation, shared by the great majority of respondents, was offered for each of the three. Taking into account that these alternative meanings are completely irrelevant or contradict the Israeli ones, the use of these gestures by either of the partners may be expected to lead to a state of misunderstanding or even breakdown in communication. This will occur especially where no verbal or contextual support is available. In this case the communication process may not only be unable to contribute to the newcomer's integration, but will even deepen his already existing "cultural shock".

Most of the immigrants who had lived in Israel for two years had dropped the original meaning of these three emblems, apparently after recognizing their inappropriateness and irritating quality. Instead they accepted the Israeli ones, but very differently: the "hand purse" emblem, in its Israeli context, was taken over almost completely, while with regard to the "hands push" this was done only by the majority of them, and not at all with respect to the "hands flick" gesture. These findings verify the first of our hypotheses for a similarity of gestures but divegences of encoding. The different adaptation by the veterans may be explained by various factors and mechanisms, most of them also mentioned by Morris (1981; 1982): gesture acquirement, gesture replacement, gesture niches and gesture blurring.

Gestures for which newcomers cannot find a certain symbolic meaning are usually interpreted analogically. All these factors and processes did indeed change the immigrant's perception of Israeli gestures. However, since all of the gestures of this group are "multi-message" ones, one can predict only with difficulty which of its emblemic meanings will be chosen by the immigrant. Therefore, although some of

these changes will contribute to a better understanding, others, at least for the time being, will not.

This also verifies the second of our hypotheses for a selective adaptation of Israeli emblems. The second group includes another three gestures: the "temple touch" (d), the "cheek stroke" (e) and the "nose tap" (f). All of these may be almost entirely defined as "single-message" gestures, at least on the symbolic level, for Israelis and Ethiopian immigrants as well. The meaning of the "temple tap" is similar in the two populations as it was in earlier studies with respondents from 10 different countries from all continents. This uniformity may be explained by the identity between the analogical and symbolic meaning of this gesture. In contrast, the other two gestures of this group bear their dominant meanings for these two populations only. The "cheek stroke" as an emblem for thinking has been found by Morris only for northern France and Wales, while in other regions it had five more meanings, and the "nose tap" for thinking was not mentioned at all as one of its six reported meanings. One should categorize these two as typically culture-bound and multi-faceted gestures. Therefore the uniformity of their interpretation in Ethiopian and Israeli NVL only is surprising and we have no explanation.

The last gesture, the "ear touch", which has no dominant meaning in Israel, was chosen for the testing of its possible "border crossing" from a nearby country to the Ethiopian Jewry. No evidence was found for this. In fact we found for this gesture the greatest diffusion of meanings, contracting after their two-year stay to a very simple, almost complete anatomical analogy, obviously due to the absence of any symbolic use of it in Israeli society.

CONCLUSIONS AND OUTLOOK FOR THE FUTURE

Both of our studies presented samples of the Ethiopian communication heritage. From these findings one can conclude the following:

(a) Ethiopian NVL uses gestures that are very similar to those used in Israel.
(b) The *meanings* of most of these gestures are different from thoe common in Israel.
(c) The meaning of some of the gestures has been changed by Ethiopian immigrants who have been here for two years.

The main factors for change that have been found are: the irrelevance or inappropriateness of the old meaning and the practical need for the new one, while the main factor for restricting change was the desire to keep a certain gesture in its former context, either for its central place and practical use or for historical, ritual or emotional reasons.

We will conclude this paper with a consideration of what can be expected to happen to the Ethiopian newcomers' NVL heritage and what impacts on the acculturation process the expected changes may have. It is well known that cultural groups immigrating into other dominant cultures may try to segregate themselves or more often to assimilate completely. They may also perhaps adapt many culture-traits and forms while keeping others unchanged, as a kind of integration into existing cultural pluralism (Bochner, 1982). This adaptation may be complete, blotting out old patterns, or only functional, used for practical purposes, mainly to ensure a smooth co-existence with the dominant culture.

In Israel we find, at least for first and second generation immigrants, the phenomon of bilingual behavior, mainly for verbal communication, and the same has been observed in a recent study by Schneller (1985) for NVL as well. Therefore we must consider separately real adaptational changes in NVL and those acquired for intercultural use only. The first emblems expected to be changed are those of interactions such as greeting and farewell emblems, eye contact and regulation of conversation, mainly for functional use. After these one could suggest adaptations of "orders" or "directive" emblems, particularly since most of these stand for words and often have no verbal or contextual support. Since their different use at home and outside the home would create confusing ambiguity, the old ones may be retained mainly for some occasional family or community use.

Initially, the learning of analogical gestures will be faster than that of digital ones (Ramsey, 1979). Emblems accompanied generally by verbal language, and even more those gestures that only *illuminate* the spoken word, are expected to change slowly, if at all, in the first generation. Much will depend on the environment. If the newcomers are concentrated in absorption centers or are settled in special sections of existing towns, the process of acculturation will be protracted and this holds also for communication patterns. One must expect the process of change to begin with the children due to their social and interactive needs with schoolmates and teachers, and it is they who will be responsible for introducing the new patterns of NVL into the home. While the young generation will adapt them soon for their regular behavior, their parents are expected to use them, if at all, as additional functional means of communication.

Typical cultural ceremonies will continue to function for intracultural occasions only and these mainly for the adult generation. Generally we may predict a continued struggle between the desire "to become like the others" which has been found to characterize this group of immigrants, and their desire for continuation of their old established customs and cultural patterns. This struggle represents one of the most problematic psychological aspects of the socialization of immigrants. While most other subgroups coming to Israel had to change only part of their former pattern of life, this population has to change much more. They were asked to change even their religious concepts and behavior – which they expected to continue as the most stable reason for living in Israel. Enforced changes contribute to a lowering of self-esteem, a weakening of the feeling of security and the loss of identity. Perhaps, therefore, these newcomers will try to keep many of their former cultural patterns including the communicative ones, as a measure of some constancy, at least in their family and closed community life.

The difficulties of intercultural communication are found on both sides. The newcomers need to undestand, as much as possible, the Israeli meaning of gestures and other NV expressions. To no less a degree, the Israeli communicators and decoders must be aware of the possible ambiguity of the presented NV signs. For any real understanding in the intercultural encounter one has to demystify the partner's culture (Asante and Barnes, 1979) by gaining some knowledge about its roots and expressions (Kaplan, 1970; Asante and Barnes, 1979; Pearce and Crown, 1980). Useful ways for improving intercultural communication have been suggested by some authors (Galloway, 1979, 1984; Soucie, 1979; Wolfgang, 1979, 1984).

One should remember that each new subgroup has also contributed to the Israeli communication patterns, and we would not be surprised if some emblems brought by

the Ethiopian newcomers will be adapted by the Israeli community, especially those gestures which are more differentiated than the existing ones.

FOOTNOTES

[1] For completion of the picture of greeting gestures we will insert in the description of this source some additional evidence from Sources 5 and 6, the immigrant group.
[2] The decoders were ready to talk about this ceremony but not to demonstrate it, on request, for outsiders!
[3] Apparently they regarded it as primitive and shameful to speak about it in a modern society.

APPENDIX I

THE SOURCES FOR ETHIOPIAN EMBLEMS

1. Archive film by J. Goddard, No. 71911. The Israeli Broadcasting Authority.
2. Exhibition on Ethiopian Jewry, Museum of the Diaspora, Tel Aviv.
3. Black Brothers, by Yael Kahane, Am-Oved, 1978.
4. A. Gil'ad, senior official in the Ministry of Housing who has worked for 14 years with Ethiopian immigrants and spent some weeks in Ethiopia itself.
5. A group of 14 newcomers in the Orli absorption center, Netanya, who participated in the "communication workshop" conducted in connection with this study.
6. The chairman of the Union of Immigrants from Ethiopia on a TV newscast, December 1984.

APPENDIX II

DECODERS

1. Source 5.
2. A group of 10 Ethiopian newcomers in the Nordia absorption center near Netanya, mostly from the Gondar area.
3. The interviewer, Mrs. N. Cohen-Aviram.

APPENDIX III

Comprehensive List of Emblems Recorded in Study A

The time has come!
We will collect it.
Just now!
Thinking
Just a moment!
Come here (various stages)
Begging for something
Finished!
Be quiet!
Very quickly
Sadness
Several greeting gestures
It is near!
I will blot it out.
They change.
What can I do?
Killing
I understand
Anger
I am sorry for you
Enough!
Something has been lost
I love you!
Several gestures regulating conversation

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