

Non-verbal Communication in Tshivenda: A Folklore Analysis

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Abstract

This article examines the role of non-verbal communication in Tshivenda. It focuses on two major types of non-verbal communication that Tshivenda speakers use regularly. These are silence and kinesics. However, there are other types of non-verbal communication such as posture, facial expressions, haptics, and proxemics. The article reveals that non-verbal communication and culture are inextricably intertwined. Thus, in order to understand the use of a specific type of non-verbal communication in Tshivenda, one ought to be familiar with the Tshivenda culture. Otherwise, misunderstanding and miscommunication are likely to occur. In addition, the article indicates that non-verbal communication in Tshivenda is gender-based. Crucially, the article, among others things, posits that life is dynamic and that some Tshivenda cultural attributes that were the norm in the past are no longer relevant in the modern time. For instance, Tshivenda culture favours silence most of the times as it denotes respect, honour, satisfaction, and dignity. However, the study cautions Tshivenda-speaking people not to suffer in silence, but to express their feelings when the need arises.

Keywords: culture; kinesics; non-verbal communication; respect; silence

Introduction

The aim of this article is to examine the role of two categories of non-verbal communication among the Vhavana from a folklore perspective. These are silence



and kinesics and these two forms are critical in the daily interactions of Vhavenḁa. Unlike verbal communication systems, there are no dictionaries or formal sets of rules that provide systematic lists of the meanings of a culture's non-verbal code systems in Tshivenḁa. Although studies concerning non-verbal communication are well-documented, including research works by Barker and Gaut (2002), Cleary (2008) and Demir (2011), little research has, however, been conducted on this topic in Tshivenḁa. This underscores the importance of a study of this nature as its results may, perhaps, highlight important issues relating to the restoration and promotion of non-verbal communication in Tshivenḁa. Its outcomes may also alert readers of certain expectations relating to daily interactions in the Vhavenḁa culture. In order to achieve its aim, the study posed the following questions:

How do Tshivenḁa-speaking people use silence and kinesics as non-verbal communication?

What are the various meanings of silence and kinesics as part of non-verbal communication?

Background

Non-verbal communication can be described as non-written or non-spoken intentional and unintentional messages that speakers send through body movements, gestures, facial expressions, the tone of voice, eye movement, including the use of space, time and touch (Nagel and Lubinga 2015, 88; Steinberg 2009, 90). This includes all messages conveyed through physical appearance, silence, gestures, voice, facial expressions, eye contact, touch, space and time. During non-verbal communication, messages are transmitted through means other than words that communicate or affect the message contained in the words (Alberts, Nakanyama, and Martin 2012, 139; DeVito 2012, 117; Huebsch 2000, 8). Cilliers and Louw (2003, 100) define non-verbal communication as the study of messages conveyed through the body; through touch; as well as through vocal variations such as space, time and objects. This means that non-verbal communication embraces items that are non-verbal.

Non-verbal communication constitutes more than 65 per cent of the meaning in a message (Nagel and Lubinga 2015, 88). Esposito and Marinaro (2007, 45) write:

In daily human-to-human interaction, we usually encode the messages we want to transmit in a set of actions that go beyond verbal modality. Nonverbal actions (grouped under the name of gestures) help to clarify meanings, feelings, and contexts, acting for the speaker as an expressive resource exploited in partnership with speech for appropriately shaping communicative intentions and satisfying the requirements of a particular message being transmitted.

From this exposition, it is clear that both non-verbal communication and speech play an important role in the expression of meaning. In fact, the two are partners in shaping communication and providing kinetic, visual and auditory dimensions to thoughts (Esposito and Marinaro 2007).

A further concept that needs attention is silence which, according to Nagel and Lubinga (2015, 103), can communicate strong meaning. Manning (2007, 88) claims that silence occurs when there is no sound or when nobody is talking. The expression of silence is found among all cultures. The ideas of what constitutes silence are instilled in members of all societies by their culture and are passed on from generation to generation. Myers and Myers (1988, 146) stress that there are many different types of silence, each with a meaning of its own, different implications and consequences for communication. These include embarrassing silence, silence in anger, and silence of grief. All these types of silence have received attention in greater detail in this article. More importantly, they are discussed from the perspective of Tshivenda folklore.

Lastly, kinesics is the study of body movements such as gesture, posture, and head, trunk and limb movements (Cleary 2008, 24). It also includes adaptors and eye behaviour (Alberts, Nakanyama, and Martin 2012; Nagel and Lubinga 2015). According to Steinburg (2009, 96), kinesis refers to the movements of hands, head, and body, which is closely coordinated with speech and can be used to add emphasis to the message. Furthermore, kinesis can also be indicative of an emotional state. Barker and Gaut (2002, 61) classify body expressions into five specific types: emblems, illustrators, affect display, body manipulators and body movement, and posture. Emblems, as non-verbal signs, have a direct verbal meaning such as a wave of the hand to mean "hello" (Hartly 2007, 147).

On a different note, illustrators are gestures and movements, which illustrate what people are saying (Hartly 2007, 147). Barker and Gaut (2002) regard affect display as body changes that convey our emotional states. This display may involve facial expressions such as angry stares or wide-eyed fear, or body movements such as trembling hands, winking and raising or lowering of the eyelids and eyebrows. Regulators are part of kinesis that involve actions that help to initiate and terminate the speech of participants in a social situation. Lastly, manipulators are observed when people manipulate an object or part of their body and when they seem to be trying to handle an emotion in a situation (Hartly 2007, 148). For example, cutting nails with teeth when asking for a date (Barker and Gaut 2002).

Theoretical Framework

In order to properly interpret non-verbal communication in Tshivenda from a folklore perspective, it is helpful to invoke two theoretical frameworks, namely, Afrocentricity

(Asante 1987) and Ethnography theory of communication (Hymes 1974; Saville-Troike 1989). Afrocentricity is relevant in this case because it is a “frame of reference wherein phenomena are viewed from the perspective of the African person” (Asante 1988 171). Similarly, Modupe (2003, 70) posits that Afrocentricity focuses on highlighting African people's relevance in the world. This can be achieved if African customs and beliefs are interpreted from an African perspective, not the Western perspective, as is currently the norm. Therefore, in this case, Afrocentricity has been invoked because the article endeavours to interpret non-verbal communication from a Tshivenda folklore perspective.

Furthermore, Ethnography theory of communication is also apt in this instance because

ethnography is a field of study which is concerned primarily with the description and analysis of culture. It is also understood as a method of studying about a person or a group of people. Typically, ethnography involves the study of a small group of people in their environment (Saville-Troike 1989, 1).

In this case, therefore, the Tshivenda participants who took part in this study become a speech community because they “share rules for using and interpreting” (Carbaugh 2007, 3) non-verbal communication as it pertains to Tshivenda.

Research Methodology

This is a descriptive and exploratory study within a qualitative research approach. The choice of this approach was informed by its focus: to understand human social interactive, cultural and situational norms pertaining to non-verbal communication. This choice is supported by McMillan and Schumacher (2010), who maintain that qualitative researchers are interested in the world as defined, experienced and constituted by the subjects as long as that world forms part of the problem they are studying.

Purposive sampling was used to select the study participants. In utilising Ethnography theory of communication as a basis, the intention was to investigate a small distinct group of participants who are assumed to have relevant information and experience with respect to the role that non-verbal communication plays in Tshivenda. First-hand information was sought from forty-two (42) participants selected as follows: six (6) traditional leaders (i.e., two from each region) from different regions in Vhembe district, namely, Mutale, Thulamela and Makhado municipalities; six (6) lecturers in Tshivenda; six (6) Tshivenda traditional healers; six (6) elderly people; six (6) pastors; six (6) Tshivenda-speaking youths; and six (6) educators in Tshivenda. The following codes were used to identify the various participants:

Table 1: Codes for identifying participants

<i>Type of participants</i>	<i>Codes</i>
Traditional leaders	A
Lecturers	B
Adults	C
Traditional healers	D
Youth	E
Educators	F
Elderly people	G
Pastors	H

All these participants were relevant to this study as traditional leaders, traditional healers and elderly people are regarded as custodians of Tshivenda folklore. The selection of the youths was also fitting because they are well-versed in modern-day non-verbal communication techniques, which would be used for comparative purposes with traditional non-verbal communication in Tshivenda. The inclusion of the youths also buttresses the fact that although folklore has its roots in the past, it, however, “continues to be created up to this day” (Muwati and Mutasa 2009). The interviewees provided information, knowledge and their experience of Tshivenda culture with respect to the use of non-verbal communication. Although there were no structured questions as such, generally the interviews were based on the following questions:

Why do Tshivenda-speaking people use silence and kinesis as part of non-verbal communication?

What are the merits and demerits of silence and kinesis as part of non-verbal communication in Tshivenda discourse?

Data Analysis

The researchers used a descriptive method to analyse the gathered data (McMillan and Schumacher 2010, 10). The data were then described, classified and interpreted. Themes pertaining to the use of non-verbal communication in Tshivenda were identified and classified. The interpretation of the data was done on the basis of explanations and knowledge of folklore provided by the participants regarding silence and kinesics as part of non-verbal communication in Tshivenda.

Silence

A majority of the participants supported the idea that silence in Tshivenda denotes respect. One of the older participants (G1) said that if a speaker curses a child and the latter decides to keep quiet, this does not mean that the child is unable to respond. In Tshivenda culture, arguing with adults is regarded as a demonstration of lack of proper manners. Sometimes a parent may accuse an innocent child, and the child may remain silent out of respect for the parent. The child may even cry as an indication that he or she is not guilty. However, the child will remain calm out of respect for the adult.

There are some instances which demand silence because one's response may reflect disrespect and an unbecoming behaviour in Tshivenda. This informs the Tshivenda proverb that says: *u kona gumba ndi u mila, u tafuna li a silinga* ("to eat an egg is to swallow it; when you chew it, it is nauseating"), meaning whatever one hears, they should keep it to themselves. In support of this proverb, another respondent (D1) said: "Speech is silver, silence is gold." It can be observed that this is related to the English adage: "Silence is golden."

One elderly person (G2) pointed out that during mealtimes; children remain silent as an observation of good manners. Besides inculcating manners in children, silence also reflects wisdom. Another respondent (C4) added that the Tshivenda-speaking people have a tendency of not responding; they will decide to keep quiet during a discussion. Once they participate in the conversation, it is when one observes their great intelligence. The discussion thus far has shown the positive aspects of silence. However, sometimes silence is associated with negative attributes. For instance, another participant (D3) associated silence with gossip. The following song is proof:

(1) *Mubva zwitshela,*

Ni do mu vhona

A nga si see na kathihi,

A tshi tshimbila,

Ni do mu vhona,

O kukumusa gulokulo.

("The source of gossip, You will see him or her, He or she will never laugh at all, When he or she walks, You will see her or him, With bloated Adam's apple").

The same participant (D3) further indicated that silence could be practised in a gathering where a person does not want to engage in or be delegated to conduct a certain task.

Another participant (A3) drew attention to a distinctive feature peculiar to the Vhavenda people. Although it sounds like a stereotype, the participant was adamant that Tshivenda culture does not encourage speaking. When a person is too talkative, he or she opens himself or herself up to easy conquest. Talkativeness also opens oneself to nicknames, such as the following:

(2) a. *Mbalavhali*

This name is given to someone who is always talking for no apparent reason.

b. *Tshitekeshi*

This one is given to a person, especially a woman, who is talkative and is fond of vulgar language.

c. *Tshelevhete*

This refers to a woman who talks with a loud voice. She wants to be seen and heard and as such, people no longer trust her because she claims to know everything.

d. *Vhutzhanzhi*

This is used for a person who irritatingly speaks loudly without listening to what others have to say.

e. *Tshitohwio*

The name is given to one who is too talkative and, therefore, is compared to a bird called *tshitohwio* which chirps incessantly.

f. *Mulomoni*

This name means being imprudent. It is given to a person who is not only insolent, but also has rude manners.

Some proverbs in Tshivenda are based on talkative people. These proverbs are meant to discourage Tshivenda speakers from this apparent bad linguistic behaviour. Examples include the following:

(3) a. *Mulomo a u dalelwi nga mulambo*

(“The mouth can cross every river no matter how full it is”). This means that one says something which is impossible to perform.

b. Ntsa ya mulomo a i na nguvho

(“The duiker which has a mouth has no blanket”). This means that a talkative person is usually purposeless.

Pastors, in some instances, associate silence with demons. One pastor (H1) posited that the reality of demon possession was clearly evidenced by keeping quiet, and the dramatic events which may occur while one is being prayed for, such as rolling all over the place without uttering any word. When the pastor asks: “Who are you?” the person will squint his or her eyes without giving a response. All this, according to pastor H1, denotes a person who is haunted by demons.

The majority of the participants agreed that silence has its advantages. According to the traditional leaders, silence makes one to be highly respected. Silence is regarded as a characteristic of people with deep thoughts, who avoid gossip and conflict, and who bind themselves to certain ideas, thereby remaining safe. It is also an indication of people with good listening skills. This was supported by the pastors, the elderly, educators, and the youth, who believed that those who remain silent gain favour and trust from their audience. Important themes that emerged from the study, as advantages, are listed in Table 1 below, using frequency and percentages.

From Table 2, it is evident that for the participants, the most important advantages of silence are trustworthiness (100%), good listening skills (100%), being respectful (87, 5%), commanding attention when speaking (87, 5%) and using silence in order to avoid conflict (62, 5%). The least important meanings associated with the advantages of silence, in a descending order, are to avoid gossip (37, 5%) and being safe (25%).

In contrast to the foregoing exposition, a number of participants indicated that being quiet has many shortcomings. The most serious is that one can be regarded as a witch. One participant (C1) maintained that in the case where a child does something wrong, and the adults want an explanation if the child remains silent, he or she will be seen as a witch. The adult then, will utter such words as *lo sokou hwi lo ruḍa maṭo sa muloi* (“he is silent with wide open eyes like a witch”). To be accused of witchcraft in South Africa has serious repercussions for the accused in that he or she may be assaulted or even killed by the community, as it often happens.

Table 2: Advantages of silence in terms of frequency and percentage

<i>Advantages</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Good listening skills	8	100%
Trustworthiness	8	100%
Highly respectful	7	87,5%
Get attention when speaking	7	87,5%
Ally	6	75%
Conflict avoidance	5	62,5%
Always full of joy	5	62,5%
To avoid gossip	3	37,5%
Safety	2	25%

Another participant (B2) believed that silence makes one seem foolish and, as a result, people may develop abhorrence for that person. Furthermore, it is thought that people who are quiet are unable to share their problems, which may easily lead to illnesses. One saying states that laughter is the best medicine. One participant (B2) added that the majority of suicidal people are those who have a tendency of being silent. This may not have been scientifically proven, but it is an idea that people have regarding the consequences of someone who keeps quiet most of the time.

Kinesics

Kinesics consists of many aspects such kneeling, the placing of hands in various positions; supporting the chin, putting them in pockets, rubbing them, crossing arms, and lying on one's back or stomach, among others. Due to the limited required words, this article focuses on one aspect of kinesics: kneeling. As far as the participants were concerned, kneeling may denote a variety of meanings in Tshivenda, one of which is showing respect. One way of doing this is by kneeling down. Kneeling in Tshivenda is part of the greeting: *ndumeliso (u losha)*, which is shown by humbly putting the palms of the hands together. When receiving something from an elderly person, one must kneel down and put his or her hands together. This form of respect is also shown between the father and his children, or between the chief and his subjects. A well-groomed Muvenda man or woman may be identified by the way he or she conducts

himself or herself through this type of kinesics. One can recognise a person who has been brought up well by the way he or she relates to the elders and to the chief.

As a way of showing respect, both males and females would sit down and kneel before their father, put the hands together, and say *ndaa* and *aa*, respectively. When a man meets a chief on a pathway, he should step aside, sit down, put his hands together, and say: *maila u sumbwa, marunga dzi ndevhelaho*, which means the one who is not worthy to be pointed with a finger; the one who stabs those that knowingly commit mischief. The chief is not required to put his hands together; he stands still. This age-old custom ensures peace and respect among the people in communities.

Traditional healers regard someone who is too lazy to kneel down as unmannerly and boorish, and who does not salute others properly as *damba-u-losha*. One participant (D5) indicated that it was regarded as taboo not to greet others, as such an uncouth person should be made to salute a tree. He (D5) believed that in the Vhvenḁa culture, to pass people and not to kneel towards them is an expression of rudeness. In fact, one may be regarded as a little monster. This type of behaviour by any Tshivenḁa-speaking person is viewed as utterly improper.

Greetings can be defined as “the exchange of expressions, pleasantries or good wishes between two people or a group interacting for the purpose of fulfilling social obligations or for the purposes of establishing interpersonal relationships” (Akindele 2007, 4). Adults and traditional healers indicated that greeting may also show being welcomed and appreciated. According to Hornby (1998, 522), greeting is a noun derived from the verb, to greet, which means to give a sign or a word of welcome or pleasure when meeting somebody or receiving a guest. Manning (2007, 646) states that greeting is to welcome with gestures and words. Words used in greeting are part of a sequence of acts that include bodily movements and cannot be fully understood without reference to such movements (Durant 1992, 657). This may be observed when people return safely after visiting their friends or relatives. In Tshivenḁa in order to show welcome and appreciation for safe return, the people may put the palms of their hands together and participate in the following exchange of words:

- (4) a. *Vhatshimbili* (“Visitors”.)
- b. *Vhatshimbili ndi vhano* (“We are indeed visitors”.)
- c. *Vho tshimbila hani* (“How did you travel?”)
- d. *Ro tshimbila zwavhuḁi* (“We traveled safely”.)
- e. *Ri a livhuha arali vho tshimbila zwavhuḁi*

(“We are thankful for your safe journey”.)

This form of greeting shows that the people at home are concerned about the visitors. They are happy that they have returned home safely and in good health. Should the above exchange not take place, the returnees would not feel welcomed.

In addition to this type of greeting, there is another kind of greeting which is called an informatory greeting (Akindele 2007). An informatory greeting may take place when a person has just arrived home after performing a certain task. This may happen when a girl falls in love with a certain boy. Members of the boy’s family decide to visit the girl’s family. After welcoming each other by means of greetings, members of the boy’s family kneel down, put the palms of their hands together and state the reason for their visit; “our son is in love with your daughter.” As an indication of acceptance, welcome and appreciation of the visitors’ message, the hosts also kneel down and put the palms of their hands together. By so doing, the girl feels that her parents support her pending marriage to the boy. The importance of this type of greeting lies in the fact that it serves both as an introduction and a gauge of the type of people the girls’ parents are, in terms of their hospitality, warmth, openness, and friendliness, among others. The greeting has to be done properly; otherwise, the whole greeting sequence may misinform the conversation.

When a headman dies, *dzama* (“one is not allowed to say the headman is dead”), another headman receives the message by way of kneeling down. This contrasts with the death of a commoner where one is not allowed to kneel until the period of mourning is over. The act of greeting also occurs when a girl experiences her first menstruation, *u sema vhakegulu*. The person who is informed about this maturational development of the girl is expected to kneel down as a way of saying “thank you.” A paternal aunt, *makhadzi*, is also expected to inform the headman of this new development also by kneeling down.

Another participant (F1) indicated that kneeling down is another way of saying “bye-bye.” For instance, it is performed when a girl wants to pay a visit to a friend or relative. In order to convince her parents of her determination to go, she will kneel down and put her hands together as a way of showing respect as she asks for permission to pay the visit. On the day of her departure, she has to bow down again as a sign of saying good-bye. This also applies when one needs something from the headman; it is not allowed to simply make a request without paying homage. There is a Tshivenda saying: *phanḁa ha ndau a hu yiwi u si na tshikuni* (“you cannot appear before the lion without a piece of firewood in your hand”). This means that one cannot visit a chief without bringing a gift.

According to one participant (A2), a woman is expected to greet everybody who is older than her, whether male or female. In so doing, she is expected to kneel down at the same time. In essence, lying on her side with her hands on top of each other and fingers facing upwards is a symbol of submission, kindness, and honour. In this regard, Stayt (1968, 157) describes the action:

A woman kneels with her buttocks on heels and body bending forward, head bent and eyes on the ground, she places her hands together in the same way as the man, but instead of clapping them, lifts the two forefingers up and down.

An elderly participant (G4) was of the opinion that kneeling in the presence of a king or any other powerful leader was a universal sign of respect and submission. If the headman comes to a gathering to convey a message, men in the gathering should squat with one knee on the ground, and women should lie on their right side with their hands together. With this act of greeting before the king, one acknowledges that the king is greater and that one's life is in his hands and at his mercy. When a migrant labourer (*garaba*) returns home from work in the cities, he goes to the headman and kneels, saying: "I brought the gifts." This shows that the former has not lost touch with his roots despite the Western culture he has been exposed to in the city. The elderly participant (G4) further indicated that putting the hands together while in the graveyard is an expression of respect for the deceased and the environment. This non-verbal communication shows that people continue to respect the dead even in their absence. Another participant (C2) said that for her to kneel down in the graveyard is to pay her last respects and to communicate the message that she would never see the dead again in this physical world.

An elderly participant (G1) expressed the belief that the act of kneeling down by a woman to her husband is an expression of his greatness and her subordination to him. Evidently, one participant (D6) indicated that when she brings food to her husband, she kneels down and lies on her side to demonstrate her respect for him. This act maintains peace between them. The same elderly participant (G1) spoke about forms of kinesics expressed by a boy when greeting an elderly woman. If the boy arrives home and comes across an elderly woman or any woman of his mother's age, he is expected to kneel down opposite her in order to greet her. If a man meets his mother-in-law after paying *masintshavhe* ("money paid by the groom so that his in-laws should not hide when seeing him"), the participant (G1) continued, he has to move to the side of the path where he kneels on one knee in order to greet her. When a girl salutes her father, she kneels down with her head bent and places her right hand over the palm of the left. This form of greeting is also used if she meets her grandmother or any other elderly person. When adults greet each other in a sitting position, they bend their heads and place their right hand over the left palm, gently running it down the left forearm while saying *ri a vusa?* ("How are you?").

The older participants averred that nowadays, things have changed. The participants were of the opinion that nowadays the youth do not regard kneeling as important, but rather, as a form of punishment and as an uncivilised way of interlocution. One pastor (H3), for example, lamented the fact that young boys and girls are often seen passing old people without greeting them. It is reasonable to suggest that the abandonment of the practice of *u losha* (“greetings”) is contributing to the violent conduct and general misbehaviour of children. When a child does not show respect for his parents, not much can be expected from him in terms of behaviour. A child who does not show respect at home cannot be expected to show it in public. Young people think that greeting people by kneeling down does not only make them dirty, it is also time-consuming. They have, apparently, adopted the Western lifestyle of shaking hands and standing up as ways of greeting and showing respect. This includes shaking each other’s hands when they come together, which is followed by hi-fiving one another on the side of their hands.

The findings of the study suggest that there are many advantages associated with kneeling in the Tshivenḁa culture. One participant (F2) indicated that when visitors come to his house, he feels proud when his children come, one by one, and kneel down to greet them. More importantly, kneeling promotes the spirit of respect to all. Everyone would like to be accorded the respect he or she deserves. As a result, peace, harmony, and love are promoted in society.

In this study, educators believed that because of the promotion of gender equality and Westernisation, kneeling is no longer practised by most women, especially educated women and those who have migrated to urban areas. Women think that it is too strenuous an activity; they argue that, among many other reasons, the types of clothes they wear do not encourage it; and that they are equal to men and that this type of greeting reinforces their inferior status in the community. Nevertheless, traditional leaders and traditional healers, educators, pastors and other adults hold the view that this type of greeting should be instilled in children at home and at school as a way of expressing and maintaining respect and honour in the Tshivenḁa culture. Children should grow up knowing that elders must be greeted kindly, and thereby accorded the respect that they deserve. The picture painted here is, however, contrary to the Vhavenḁa culture.

In Tshivenḁa, greeting a stranger expresses respect and shows humanity. There are proverbs which state *muthu ndi muthu nga muḁwe* (“you become a person because of being among other people”), which means that people should help each other. Additionally, *vhathu ndi mapfura vha ya ḁoliwa* (“people are cream they can be smeared”), which suggests that one should handle people with care. In general, these proverbs demonstrate the spirit of *ubuntu* (or *vhuthu* in Tshivenḁa), which is associated with respect. Euvrard, Findlay, and Normand (2013, 52) argue that ubuntu

means that we are human only through the humanity of other human beings. People are urged to show respect for everyone. One way of doing this is to greet strangers. One participant (C3) believed that after greeting an unfamiliar person, deep down in one's heart, one feels content because of accomplishing one's norms and traditions.

Conclusion

It has emerged that humans communicate through a gestalt of actions, which involve much more than the speech production system (Esposito and Esposito 2011). Both silence and kinesics provide information to the communicative act; thereby supporting the language user's communicative goal. In addition, these forms of non-verbal communication enable the speaker not only to pass his or her message across, but also to add a variety of other pieces of information to his or her messages, including his or her understanding of Tshivenda culture, his or her state, his or her attitude towards the speaker, and so forth.

This article has revealed that Tshivenda mainly advocates for silence as it is deemed to be virtuous. The adage "silence is golden" is applied in this instance because silence brings about positive results in people's daily activities, including respect, honour, satisfaction, dignity, to mention just a few. However, the study cautions that using silence indiscriminately may tend to produce unintended results. For instance, it may lead to more oppression of women as the Tshivenda culture advises women to keep quiet, even in unbearable situations. However, it is advisable that people must not suffer in silence. It should be noted that the merit of silence depends on the context. It has also been shown that "kneeling" is an important part of kinesics in the Tshivenda culture. This practice still occurs today in the lives of the Vhenda. Having considered the pros and cons of this posture, it is recommended that kneeling down should continue to be practised as it brings about peace among people. However, it must be done voluntarily, not enforced, and beneficiaries of this practice should not regard it as their right, regardless of the context.

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