

The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology: Division of
Humanities/Center for Language Education

HUMA 1000: Cultures and Values: **Cover sheet for final essay**

Full name	
Student ID	
Writing workshop section number	
Writing workshop instructor	
Title of essay (please copy and paste from the document on Canvas)	Identity is a dynamic construct and multifaceted, assembling ones' racial, ethnic, social, cultural, and gender properties, each in a state of flux. Do you think your body can be a site where your identity is constructed, communicated and also challenged? In what ways can you negotiate your identities through bodily expressions and performance?

Declaration: The attached essay represents my own work. I have read and understood the University's policies on academic honesty and I confirm that the attached work conforms to these policies.

Please type your name:

Response to feedback: note here the comments from your instructor you have responded to (you can copy these from your feedback sheet).

<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Use course materials to support your arguments →I have tried to include concepts learnt from the course to support my arguments (“paralanguage”, “emblem”, “kinesics”, “appearance”✓ you are not writing an expository essay; please write arguments →I have tried to include support to each argument by giving reasons in each topic sentence.✓ your paragraphs are distinct, but are not supported by distinct points from the course materials →in the counter argument, I include a new concept for the refutation (“ paralanguage”)

✓ your conclusion seems a bit short

→ I extend the conclusion by including more elaboration and support.

“This is a good method to ... because individuals can have their own choices to display a particular image.”

“In the process of identity development, our bodily performances and expressions ... since such behaviors can show individuals’ uniqueness effectively.”

Identities are dynamically negotiated because they can be changed in terms of dimensions and aspects over time. Identities can be either constructed or challenged. They are constructed when one feels connected and evokes a sense of belonging from the context whereas they are challenged when an individual suffers from a low identity intensity (Jackson, J., 2014). Our various parts of the body can be used to display for expressing and acquiring identities, depending on the messages which individuals would like to convey. Through interacting with other people, we can acquire identity of various dimensions by representing ourselves through our bodies with different appearances and kinesics because such expressions can represent self with respect to different social and cultural contexts in a unique way.

External appearance, as a bodily expression, can negotiate one’s identity because the distinct external features can influence how others categorize self and differentiate people (Jackson, 2014). Identity, as the sense of self, can be derived from different socialization processes. To express identities during the process, features like skin color and clothing can be some ways. For example, people who follow certain religious beliefs are restricted to wear particular clothing and are punished if they do not follow. In Islam, women are required to wear Muslim hair scarves, Hijab, following their Islam religion (Soni, 2013). Thus, if women do not wear the scarf which is their religious marker, they are considered to be violating the rules and challenging the religion identity. In addition, the native clothing can be used to construct one’s cultural identity. In Japan, kimono is an emblem of Japanese wearing tradition, which can directly replace words for introducing identities (“Nonverbal codes”, 2017). Kimono was worn on special occasions, like weddings and funerals. (Kincaid, 2014) The traditional clothing can be Japanese’s cultural marker and by sharing the same wearing tradition among Japanese, cultural identity would be constructed. Despite of

the clothing, external biological features like skin color can construct identity. When people of the same skin color as their racial phenotype gather together, racial identity can be constructed since they feel connected and evoke a sense of belonging (Jackson, 2014). For example, people with yellow skin color are categorized as Chinese while the term “black people” are used to racially described people who perceive a dark skin color. Through appearance, one can either present their wished image to others or build up connection by communicating with others who share common features. Thus, different aspects of appearance can be a useful display for building up various identities.

Kinesics, as body performance, can also negotiate identities because individuals can make use of different behaviors as their identity markers. Kinesics are the communication by bodily behaviors like gesture and body movement (Moore et al, 2014). Kinesics can be different among culture and thus, people can adopt various gestures to present their identities. Gestures for greeting and counting are some kinesics which can distinguish different cultures. In countries like Japan and Indian, people are used to greet each other through gestures. Japanese are used to bow for greeting whereas Indians follow their tradition to use the Namaste gesture. Sharing the same greeting style allows individuals to construct their identity since they would feel affiliated when greet someone who act the same way. In addition to the greeting style, different cultures can have various hand signals for counting. On the one hand, Western Europeans count numbers with the thumb represents “number 1”, the index finger is “number 2” and the little finger is “number 5”. The counting begins from the thumb and ends at the little finger. On the other hand, in the North America and UK, people starts from the index finger as number 1 and continues till the little finger (number 4) while number 5 is the fully extension of the palm. The process is repeated for counting from 6 to 10 (QAIS, n.d.). The same culture allows individuals to share the equal counting gesture, and hence develop their cultural identity by evoking a sense of belonging. As a result, the behaviors the body performs can be used to develop identities because the actions could be the identity marker for distinguishing.

Despite the fact that our body can be a site for identity negotiation, some may insist that the verbal expression is the sole way for developing identity because it directly express the identity. The verbal expression refers to the use of language to deliver a message (Hanes, 2015). Dialects and accents are some features in verbal expression. The use of familiar accents and mother tongue can directly create culture

affiliation and develop identity, especially when individuals live away from hometown. However, the verbal expression actually causes challenges on identity construction and require other ways to support the development. The sole usage of verbal expression would lead to unambiguous identity construction. For example, in a job interview, interviewees may simply express oneself as “a professional of certain field”, however the verbal message is so simple which is weak to build up the identity. Making use of paralanguage can be one of the supports in expressing the identity as a professional. Paralanguage refers to the vocal behaviors that indicates how something is said (“Nonverbal codes”, 2017). In order to represent self, one may need to have a good voice quality, which is the tone of voice, by having correct articulation and suitable pitch. This can display a confidence professional image whenever you are talking to the public. This shows that voice is also necessary to substantiate the identity development. Therefore, verbal language should not be the only way involving in identity construction.

To summary, our body can make use of different appearance expressions and gesture performance to negotiate our unique identity. The bodily expression can distinguish people with distinctive features while the gesture can be the marker for a certain identity affiliation. Identity negotiation is not a simple process, it requires a long period of constructions and challenges so as to build up a strong identity recognition. This is a good method to convey our wished identities through our bodies because individuals can have their own choices to display a particular image. In the process of identity development, our bodily performances and expressions become essential ways for individuals to present themselves since such behaviors can show individuals’ uniqueness effectively.

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