

Body talk

Are you going on holiday abroad this year? Are you thinking about learning a few phrases to get by? Well, you should learn a little about gestures, too, because what you say with your head and hands at home can mean something completely different in another country. Imagine this:

You are hugging your friend in the street in Tokyo when you see a Japanese person smiling and you smile back. Did you know that the Japanese may smile when they are angry or confused and that kissing or hugging in public is unacceptable in Japan?

You are in China and your friend is introducing you to her father. He stands opposite you, holding his right hand in a fist against his left palm and nodding slightly. You feel nervous. Have you done something wrong? A clenched fist almost always suggests anger. Well, in China this gesture is a polite way to greet someone.

You are in Thailand. You're sitting on a bus with the soles of your shoes showing. Whoops! Be careful. This is insulting.

You're invited to a family meal in Greece. You're deep in conversation with your friend and you nod your head to show you agree, as all English people do. However, he looks confused and a little surprised. That's because in Greece people nod their head to say 'no' while the English shake their head to say exactly the same thing!

The world of gestures can be very confusing. A harmless gesture in one country can be a terrible insult in another. So when you are abroad, be very aware of what you are saying with your body!

Questions:

1. Mention some gestures in your country. Explain what they mean.