



THE EYES HAVE IT

When it comes to facial expressions, East Asians and Europeans do not always see eye to eye. A new study by researchers at the University of Glasgow in Scotland finds that East Asians frequently interpret the European expression for "fear" as "surprise" and the look for "disgust" as "anger". The reason: the cultural groups focus on different parts of the face.

"Westerners look at the eyes and mouth in equal measure whereas Easterners favour the eyes and neglect the mouth," says study co-author Rachael Jack.

The eye movements of subjects were tracked while they looked at faces showing a variety of expressions. Jack suggests that East Asians may try to suppress displays of emotion, which leads to expression via the eyes rather than mouth. "The muscles around the eye region are less easily controlled than the mouth," she says. "It's possible East Asians focus on the eye region because it might leak tell-tale signs of how someone is feeling."