



THE IMPORTANCE OF NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION IN A CONTEXT

G. Patullaeva

Karakalpak State University

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ABSTRACT

Communication is a process of passing information and understanding the same from one person to another through verbal and nonverbal means. For communication to be effective attention has to be given to which is that communicated non-verbally, gestures and body language. This article shows the importance of non-verbal communication and using body language in conversation.

Communication is necessary to people's daily life. It can be divided into two types: verbal communication and nonverbal communication. Many people pay great attention to the accuracy and fluency of the verbal communication and overlook the importance of nonverbal communication, which plays an essential role in people's daily communication. The famous anthropologist E. T. Hall pointed out "silent language expresses more information than verbal language because it contains much information". We shouldn't ignore the significance of nonverbal communication.

Guan defines nonverbal communication as, "a process in which communicators use the natural features of their bodies to deliver information and express specific meaning instinctively to the other communicator" [1:78]. Nonverbal communication can help people express their emotions and deliver information. Stamatis offered further information about nonverbal communication sharing that it includes facial expressions, eye contact, tone of voice, body posture and gestures, and positioning within groups. It may also include the way we wear our clothes or the silence we keep. Brown and Eisterhol. systematically divided nonverbal communication into three parts: paralanguage, proxemics, and kinesics. Paralanguage is concerned with the use of the voice during speech, such as pitch, loudness, and rate of speech. It can signal our emotions. Proxemics is the study of how to use space properly when communicating with others. Kinesics is the study of body motion. It includes gestures, postures, facial expressions, and eye contact. Nonverbal communication is different from verbal communication. According to Hu, the characteristics of nonverbal communication are universality, uncertainty, vividness, generality, and integrity. First, nonverbal behaviors universally exist in our lives. A blinking of eye, holding up a finger, a sigh, and even silence are



examples of nonverbal behaviors. Second, nonverbal behaviors do not necessarily have the same meanings as verbal ones.

According to Brown and Eisterhold, "Emblems are the sort of gestures that we usually mean when we use the word gesture. They have conventional meanings within the culture and are not accompanied by speech" [2:37]. They often substitute for speech. For example, a teacher may use an emblem of a thumbs-up to communicate to a student that she did a nice job on a task. Different cultures have different usages of emblems. If we ignore these differences in using emblems, misunderstandings may occur in cross-cultural communication. Handshakes and eye contact are very commonly used when people greet others around the world, but the usages of both of the two kinds of emblems are quite diverse in different cultures. For example, in North America, people often shake hands when they meet others. The handshake is firm and quick and is often accompanied by looking into the eyes of the people they are meeting. However, the handshakes and eye contact are quite different in other parts of the world. The handshakes in the Arab world should not be so firm because Arabians consider a firm grip to be aggressive rather than polite. In Islamic countries, men and women are generally not allowed to shake hands. In Korea and Japan, if you looking directly into the eyes of the people you are greeting, you would be considered as a rude person. In South America, a handshake is often accompanied by a hug and a pat on the back [3]. Farewell gestures are also quite diverse in different countries. The American "good-bye" gesture is quite similar to the European and Latin American "no" gesture. In large parts of Europe, the gesture of the good-bye wave is different from the American good-bye wave. The arm is extended with the palm down, not out, and the hand moves at the wrist. This gesture is similar to the "come here" gesture of Japanese. The Greeks and Italians' "good-bye" gesture is similar to Americans' "come here" gesture. The arm is out. The palm is up and the fingers are curled back and forth [4:45]. In Karakalpak, shaking heads means letting or admitting, but nodding means rejecting or disagreeing. Crossing hands means forbidden in doing something.

The examples above clearly show that although nonverbal communications from different countries have similarities, they also have the distinctive characters. Therefore, it's necessary for people to understand the cultural differences of nonverbal communications to communicate effectively. As for EFL teachers under cross-cultural circumstances, understanding their students' cultural differences of nonverbal communications is very important; otherwise, misunderstandings may occur in cross-cultural classrooms.

During the past decade, the area of nonverbal communication has undergone considerable reorientation, accompanied by increasing interest within social psychology.

The concepts and terminology of telecommunications can be usefully applied where the emphasis is placed on the exchange of messages, e.g. communication channel, sender, receiver, signal, etc. Communicative disorders can thus be referred to in terms of encoding and decoding errors. The phylogenetic development of communicative behavior is understood by v. Cranach to be exhibited in structural and functional changes in behavior. However, he views the functions of nonverbal communicative behavior in closer relationship to language. Accordingly, he distinguishes the function of messages about the disposition of the sender, the "speech-supporting" function and the "speech-equivalent" function. The



speech-equivalent function refers to the vicarious occurrence of nonverbal behavior instead of speech itself. These include, for example, emblematic gestures which have unequivocal meaning. Most of the possible functions of nonverbal behavior during conversation have been categorized by Scherer [5:3].

The "nonverbal messages of verbal communication" can be recorded from the acoustic (vocal) communication channel as on-off patterns of speech and measured in terms of fundamental frequency, intonation amplitude. The expression of emotions in speech-pause behavior during psychotherapeutic situations is discussed by Zenz, Braehler, and Braun. It is suggested that this behavior is a function of personality, emotion, and their interplay. In their experiment, 18 students were required to report their associations to the Holtzmann Inkblot Test. Significant interindividual differences were found in various measures of speech behavior, e.g. mean duration of utterance and pause. The authors conclude that the on-off patterns can be used as indicators for the therapeutic process.

Nonverbal communication term papers show that nonverbal communication involves multiple channels, is continuous and more ambiguous in nature, and often contradicts the spoken word. When nonverbal and verbal communication conflict, individuals are much more likely to rely on nonverbal clues as a means to interpret the sender's true meaning. Nonverbal communication is communication conveyed by expressions of the face and eyes, movement and body posture, vocal characteristics, clothing, physical environment and distance among other methods. Nonverbal communalization plays a role in all communication: it is impossible to communicate without sending out nonverbal clues. These clues help others determine the truth behind one's words and their true feelings. Nonverbal communication is a powerful form of communication in that it expresses and reveals attitudes and attributes that may not be expressed by the words spoken.

One broad area of nonverbal communication involves body position and motion. Referred to as kinesics, this area of nonverbal communication encompasses the following [6]:

Posture

Facial Expressions

Eye Contact

Gestures

Body Orientation

Individuals use these channels to convey a variety of emotions as well as to display important clues regarding their personality.

Posture is a powerful way in which individuals send nonverbal clues. Posture clues are often very subtle in nature so that individuals have to really look in order to see them. On the other hand, some posture clues are very apparent. For instance, when an individual slump forward he or she is usually perceived as being bored or extremely interested. A person who sits with their arms crossed is sending out a nonverbal message that they are closed to information. Posture clues are the easiest to interpret when the receiver notices subtle changes the sender may not be aware of.

The term nonverbal communication is directly associated with phenomena such as facial expression, gesture, body posture, eye contact, and interpersonal distance. If one also includes



speech activity and voice quality then a fairly comprehensive coverage of nonverbal phenomena is represented. In addition to this classification, it is useful to distinguish between sender and receiver within the communication system. The wide variety of possible interpretations of facial expression is equalled by the number of approaches which have been reported. These range from quantitative microanalysis of single features to the ethological description of complex behavioral patterns involving facial expression. The social-signal function of facial expression was recognized by Darwin and has been taken up recently in the American literature by Ekman. Darwin's concepts have, by contrast, been given repeated mention in German literature. Buehler dealt with this approach in his standard work on *Ausdruckstheorie*, and Lersch [6]. referred at length to Darwin's work. The fact that differentiated facial reactions are to be found in other species has stimulated many comparative studies [3]. According to ethological theory the expression prompts an impression in the social partner via stimulation of innate releasing mechanisms.

Nonverbal communication has gained in considerable importance in clinical psychology and behavior-oriented psychiatry where it can be assumed that psychological disorders are accompanied - or manifested - by altered communicative behavior. In a series of theoretical and empirical studies, Krause has emphasized the major significance of nonverbal communicative behavior in relation to the widespread problem of stuttering.

In conclusion, nonverbal communication or body language is tremendously important for catching the main message of the communication between two people, even they might be a tool to explain the context when two speakers' languages are different as we identified as in the examples

Summary. The article deals with the significant roles of nonverbal communication or using body language in communication when two people have conversation. In the paper, a bunch of theories and definitions by diverse scholars and researchers were discussed. Most importantly, examples in a context were given.

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