

Survey of Communication Study/Chapter 3 - Nonverbal Communication

Chapter 3

Nonverbal Communication

Chapter Objectives:

After reading this chapter you should be able to:

- Define nonverbal communication and explain its main characteristics.
- Explain the differences between verbal and nonverbal communication.
- Describe the eight types of nonverbal communication.
- Describe the functions of nonverbal communication.

Y

our brother comes home from school and walks through the door. Without saying a word, he walks to the fridge, gets a drink, and turns to head for the couch in the family room. Once there, he plops down, stares straight ahead, and sighs. You notice that he sits there in silence for the next few minutes. In this time, he never spoke a word. Is he communicating? If your answer is yes, what meanings would you take from these actions? What are the possible interpretations for how he is feeling? What types of nonverbal communication was your brother using?

Like verbal communication, nonverbal communication is essential in our every day communication. Remember that verbal and nonverbal communication are the two primary channels we study in the field of Communication. While nonverbal and verbal communication have many similar functions, nonverbal communication has its own set of functions for helping us communicate with each other. Before we get into the types and functions of nonverbal communication, let's define nonverbal communication to better understand how it is used in this text.

Defining Nonverbal Communication

L

ike verbal communication, we use nonverbal communication to share meaning with others. Just as there are many definitions for communication and verbal communication, there are also many ways to define nonverbal communication.

Burgoon, Buller, and Woodall (1996) define nonverbal communication similar to how we defined verbal communication in Chapter 2. They state that nonverbal behaviors are "typically sent with intent, are used with regularity among members of a social community, are typically interpreted as intentional, and have consensually recognized interpretations" (p. 113). We disagree with this definition because to us it sounds too much like verbal communication, and might best be described as symbolic and systematic nonverbal communication.

Mead (1934) differentiated between what he termed as "gesture" versus "significant symbol," while Buck and VanLear (2002) took Mead's idea and argued that "gestures are not symbolic in that their relationship to their referents is not arbitrary," a fundamental distinction between verbal and nonverbal communication (p. 524). Think of all the ways you unconsciously move your body throughout the day. For example, you probably do not sit in your

classes and think constantly about your nonverbal behaviors. Instead, much of the way you present yourself nonverbally in your classes is done so unconsciously. Even so, others can derive meaning from your nonverbal behaviors whether they are intentional or not. For example, as professors we watch our students' nonverbal communication in class (such as slouching, leaning back in the chair, or looking at their watch) and make assumptions about them (such as they are bored, tired, or worrying about a test in another class). These assumptions are often based on acts that are typically done unintentionally.

While we certainly use nonverbal communication consciously at times to generate and share particular meanings, when examined closely, it should be apparent that this channel of communication is not an agreed-upon rule-governed system of symbols. Rather, nonverbal communication is most often spontaneous, unintentional, and may not follow formalized symbolic rule systems.

With this in mind, we define **nonverbal communication** as *any meaning conveyed through sounds, behaviors, and artifacts other than words*. To help explain this idea, it is useful to consider some of the differences between verbal and nonverbal communication.

Differences Between Verbal and Nonverbal Communication

T

he first difference between verbal and nonverbal communication is that we use a **single channel** (words) when we communicate verbally versus **multiple channels** when we communicate nonverbally. Try this exercise! Say your first and last name at the same time. You quickly find that this is an impossible task. Now, pat the top of your head with your right hand, wave with your left hand, smile, shrug your shoulders, and chew gum at the same time. While goofy and awkward, our ability to do this demonstrates how we use multiple nonverbal channels simultaneously to communicate.

In Chapter 2 we learned how difficult it can be to decode a sender's single verbal message due to the arbitrary, abstract, and ambiguous nature of language. But, think how much more difficult it is to decode the even more ambiguous and multiple nonverbal signals we take in like eye contact, facial expressions, body movements, clothing, personal artifacts, and tone of voice at the same time. Despite this difficulty, Motley (1993) found that we learn to decode nonverbal communication as babies. Hall (1984) found that women are much better than men at accurately interpreting the many nonverbal cues we consider.

A second difference between verbal and nonverbal communication is that verbal communication is **distinct** (linear) while nonverbal communication is **continuous** (in constant motion and relative to context). Distinct means that messages have a clear beginning and end, and are expressed in a linear fashion. We begin and end words and sentences in a linear way to make it easier for others to follow and understand. If you pronounce the word "cat" you begin with the letter "C" and proceed to finish with "T." Continuous means that messages are ongoing and work in relation to other nonverbal and verbal cues.

Case In Point

The digital clock is read in a linear fashion. Likewise, when the time changes, the read-out changes because one number is replaced with another. When we speak, we do so in a linear fashion, replacing one letter/word with another as we move along.

In contrast, the analog clock is constantly in motion. It never stops. We understand the time by understanding the moving relationship between the three hands of the clock and the position they are in on the clock. When we use nonverbal communication, it is an ongoing movement of multiple channels in relationship to one another and context.

Think about the difference between analog and digital clocks. The analog clock represents nonverbal communication in that we generate meaning by considering the relationship of the different arms to each other (context). Also, the clock's arms are in continuous motion. We notice the speed of their movement, their position in the circle and to

each other, and their relationship with the environment (is it day or night?).

Nonverbal communication is similar in that we evaluate nonverbal cues in relation to one another and consider the context of the situation. Suppose you see your friend in the distance. She approaches, waves, smiles, and says “hello.” To interpret the meaning of this, you focus on the wave, smile, tone of voice, her approaching movement, and the verbal message. You might also consider the time of day, if there is a pressing need to get to class, etc.

Now contrast this to a digital clock, which functions like verbal communication. Unlike an analog clock, a digital clock is not in constant motion. Instead, it replaces one number with another to display time (its message). A digital clock uses one distinct channel (numbers) in a linear fashion. When we use verbal communication, we do so like the digital clock. We say one word at a time, in a linear fashion, to express meaning.

A third difference between verbal and nonverbal communication is that we use verbal communication **consciously** while we generally use nonverbal communication **unconsciously**. Conscious communication means that we think about our verbal communication before we communicate. Unconscious communication means that we do not think about every nonverbal message we communicate. If you ever heard the statement as a child, “Think before you speak” you were being told a fundamental principle of verbal communication. Realistically, it’s nearly impossible not to think before we speak. When we speak, we do so consciously and intentionally. In contrast, when something funny happens, you probably do not think, “Okay, I’m going to smile and laugh right now.” Instead, you react unconsciously, displaying your emotions through these nonverbal behaviors. Nonverbal communication can occur as unconscious reactions to situations. We are not claiming that all nonverbal communication is unconscious. At times we certainly make conscious choices to use or withhold nonverbal communication to share meaning. Angry drivers use many conscious nonverbal expressions to communicate to other drivers! In a job interview you are making conscious decisions about your wardrobe, posture, and eye contact.

A fourth difference between verbal and nonverbal communication is that some nonverbal communication is **universal** (Hall, Chia, and Wang, 1996). Verbal communication is **exclusive** to the users of a particular language, whereas some nonverbal communication is recognized across cultures. Although cultures most certainly have particular meanings and uses for nonverbal communication, there are universal nonverbal behaviors that almost everyone recognizes. For instance, people around the world recognize and use expressions such as smiles, frowns, and the pointing of a finger at an object.

Now that you have a definition of nonverbal communication, and can identify the primary differences between verbal and nonverbal communication, let’s examine what counts as nonverbal communication. In this next section, we show you eight types of nonverbal communication we use regularly: kinesics, haptics, appearance, proxemics, environment, chronemics, paralanguage, and silence.

Types of Nonverbal Communication

K

kinesics is *the study of how we use body movement and facial expressions*. We interpret a great deal of meaning through body movement, facial expressions, and eye contact. Many people believe they can easily interpret the meanings of body movements and facial expressions in others. But the reality is, it is almost impossible to determine an exact meaning for gestures, facial expressions, and eye contact. Even so, we rely a great deal on kinesics to interpret and express meaning. We know that kinesics can communicate liking, social status, and even relational responsiveness (Mehrabian, 1981). Facial expressions are a primary method of sharing emotions and feelings (Ekman & Friesen, 1967). For example, imagine yourself at a party and you see someone across the room you are attracted to. What sort of nonverbal behaviors do you engage in to let that person know? Likewise, what nonverbal behaviors are you looking for from them to indicate that it’s safe to come over and introduce yourself? We are able to go through exchanges like this using only our nonverbal communication. As you probably know, some exchanges

are more successful than others!

Haptics is *the study of touch*. Touch is the first type of nonverbal communication we experience as humans and is vital to our development and health (Dolin & Booth-Butterfield, 1993). Those who don't have positive touch in their lives are less healthy both mentally and physically than those who experience positive touch. We use touch to share feelings and relational meanings. Hugs, kisses, handshakes, or even playful roughhousing demonstrate relational meanings and indicate relational closeness. In western society, touch is largely reserved for family and romantic relationships. Generally girls and women in same-sex friendships have more liberty to express touch as part of the relationship than men in same-sex friendships. However, despite these unfortunate social taboos, the need for touch is so strong that men are quite sophisticated at finding ways to incorporate this into their friendships in socially acceptable ways. One such example is wrestling among adolescent and young-adult males. Do you ever wonder why you don't see as many women doing this? Perhaps it's because wrestling is socially acceptable for men whereas women are more likely to hug, hold hands, and sit touching one another. Perhaps one day we will progress beyond these arbitrary gender constructs, and everyone can engage in needed touching behaviors in ways that are comfortable to them.

Personal Appearance, Objects, and Artifacts are also types of nonverbal communication we use to communicate meaning to others. Consider your preferences for hair-style, clothing, jewelry, and automobiles, as well the way you maintain your body. Your choices express meanings to those around you about what you value and the image you wish to put forth. As with most communication, our choices for personal appearance, objects, and artifacts occur within cultural contexts, and are interpreted in light of these contexts.

Proxemics is *the study of how our use of space influences the ways we relate with others*. It also demonstrates our relational standing with those around us. Edward Hall (1959, 1966) developed four categories of space we use in the U.S. to form and maintain relationships. *Intimate space* consists of space that ranges from touch to eighteen inches. We use intimate space with those whom we are close (family members, close friends, and intimate partners). *Personal space* ranges from eighteen inches to four feet and is reserved for most conversations with non-intimate others (friends and acquaintances). *Social space* extends from four to twelve feet and is used for small group interactions such as sitting around a dinner table with others or a group meeting. *Public space* extends beyond twelve feet and is most often used in public speaking situations. We use space to regulate our verbal communication and communicate relational and social meanings. A fun exercise to do is to go to a public space and observe people. Based on their use of the above categories of space, try to determine what type of relationship the people are in: Romantic, Family, or Friends.

Case In Point

Feng Shui

Feng Shui, which means wind and water, is the ancient Chinese art of living in harmony with our environment. Feng Shui can be traced as far back as the Banpo dwellings in 4000 BCE. The ideas behind Feng Shui state that how we use our environment and organize our belongings affects the energy flow (chi) of people in that space, and the person/people who created the environment. The inclusion or exclusion, and placement, of various objects in our environments are used to create a positive impact on others. The theory is to use the five elements of metal, wood, water, fire and earth to design a space. Feng Shui is applicable to cities, villages, homes, and public spaces. The Temple of Heaven in Beijing, China is an example of Feng Shui architecture. To keep harmony with the natural world, the Temple houses the Hall of Annual Prayer which is comprised of four inner, 12 middle, and 12 outer pillars representing the four seasons, 12 months, and 12 traditional Chinese hours.

Our **environment** acts as another type of nonverbal communication we use. Think of your home, room, automobile, or office space. What meanings can others perceive about you from these spaces? What meanings are you trying to send by how you keep them? Think about spaces you use frequently and the nonverbal meanings they have for you. Most educational institutions intentionally paint classrooms in dull colors. Why? Dull colors on walls have a calming effect, theoretically keeping students from being distracted by bright colors and excessive stimuli. Contrast the environment of a classroom to that of a fast food restaurant. These establishments have bright colors and hard plastic seats and tables. The bright colors generate an upbeat environment, while the hard plastic seats are just

uncomfortable enough to keep patrons from staying too long (remember, it's FAST food). People and cultures place different emphasis on the use of space as a way to communicate nonverbally.

Chronemics is *the study of how people use time*. Are you someone who is always early or on-time? Or, are you someone who arrives late to most events? Levine (1997) believes our use of time communicates a variety of meanings to those around us. Think about the person you know who is most frequently late. How do you describe that person based on their use of time? Now, think about someone else who is always on time. How do you describe that person? Is there a difference? If so, these differences are probably based on their use of time. In the U.S., we place high value on being on time, and respond more positively to people who are punctual. But, in many Arab and Latin American countries, time is used more loosely, and punctuality is not necessarily a goal to achieve. You may have heard the expression, "Indian time" to refer to "the perception of time [that] is circular and flexible" (Shutiva, 2004, p.134). Here the belief is that activities will commence when everyone is present and ready; not according to an arbitrary schedule based on a clock or calendar. Neither approach is better than the other, but the dissimilar uses of time can create misunderstandings among those from different cultural groups.

Paralanguage is the term we use to describe *vocal qualities such as pitch, volume, inflection, rate of speech, and rhythm*. While the types of nonverbal communication we've discussed so far are non-vocal, some nonverbal communication is actually vocal. How we say words often expresses greater meaning than the actual words themselves. Sarcasm and incongruity are two examples of this. The comedian Stephen Wright bases much of his comedy on his use of paralanguage. He talks in a completely monotone voice throughout his act and frequently makes statements such as, "I'm getting really excited" while using a monotone voice, accompanied by a blank facial expression. The humor lies in the incongruity—his paralanguage and facial expression contradict his verbal message. Whenever you use sarcasm, your paralanguage is intended to contradict the verbal message you say. Your authors have found that using sarcasm in the classroom can backfire when students do not pick up our paralinguistic cues and focus primarily on the verbal message. We have learned to use sarcasm sparingly so as not to hurt anyone's feelings.

Nonverbal Communication Now

Women In Black

An organization of women called Women in Black uses silence as a form of protest and hope for peace; particularly, peace from war and the unfair treatment of women. Women in Black began in Israel in 1988 by women protesting Israel's Occupation of the West Bank and Gaza. Women in Black continues to expand and now functions in the United States, England, Italy, Spain, Azerbaijan and Yugoslavia. Women gather in public spaces, dressed in black, and stand in silence for one hour, once a week. Their mission states, "We are silent because mere words cannot express the tragedy that wars and hatred bring. We refuse to add to the cacophony of empty statements that are spoken with the best intentions yet have failed to bring lasting change and understanding, or to the euphemistic jargon of the politicians which has perpetuated misunderstanding and fear that leads to war...our silence is visible."

Finally, **silence** serves as a type of nonverbal communication. Have you ever experienced the "silent treatment" from someone? What meanings did you take from that person's silence? Silence is powerful because the person using silence may be refusing to engage in communication with you. Likewise, we can use silence to regulate the flow of our conversations. Silence has a variety of meanings and, as with other types of nonverbal communication, context plays an important role for interpreting the meaning of silence.

You should now recognize the infinite combination of verbal and nonverbal messages we can share. When you think about it, it really is astonishing that we can communicate effectively at all. We engage in a continuous dance of communication where we try to stay in step with one another. With an understanding of the definition of nonverbal communication and the types of nonverbal communication, let's consider the various functions nonverbal communication serves in helping us communicate. (Ekman, 1965; Knapp, 1980; Malandro & Barker, 1983).

Functions of Nonverbal Communication

I

In the last chapter you learned that we use verbal communication to express ideas, emotions, experiences, thoughts, objects, and people. But what functions does nonverbal communication serve as we communicate (Blumer, 1969)? Even though it's not through words, nonverbal communication serves many functions to help us communicate meanings with one another more effectively.

- ***We use nonverbal communication to duplicate verbal communication.*** When we use nonverbal communication to duplicate, we use nonverbal communication that is recognizable to most people within a particular cultural group. Obvious examples include a head-nod or a head-shake to duplicate the verbal messages of “yes” or “no.” If someone asks if you want to go to a movie, you might verbally answer “yes” and at the same time nod your head. This accomplishes the goal of duplicating the verbal message with a nonverbal message. Interestingly, the head nod is considered a “nearly universal indication of accord, agreement, and understanding” because the same muscle in the head nod is the same one a baby uses to lower its head to accept milk from its mother’s breast (Givens, 2000). When the daughter of one of your authors was two years old, she was learning the duplication function of nonverbal communication, and didn’t always get it right. When asked if she wanted something, her “yes” was shaking her head. However, her “no” was the same head-shake, accompanied with the verbal response “no.” So, when she was two, she thought that the duplication was what made her answer “no.”
- ***We use nonverbal communication to replace verbal communication.*** If someone asks you a question, instead of a verbal reply “yes” and a head-nod, you may choose to simply nod your head without the accompanying verbal message. When we replace verbal communication with nonverbal communication, we use nonverbal behaviors that are easily recognized by others such as a wave, head-nod, or head-shake. This is why it was so confusing at first for your author to understand his daughter when she simply shook her head in response to a question. This was cleared up when he asked her if she wanted something to eat and she shook her head. When your author didn’t get her anything, she began to cry. This was the first clue that the replacing function of communication still needed to be learned. Consider the following examples of the universality of the head shake as an indicator of disbelief, disapproval, and negation: used by human babies to refuse food or drink; rhesus monkeys, baboons, bonnet macaques and gorillas turn their faces sideways in aversion; and children born deaf/blind head shake to refuse objects or disapprove of touch (Givens, 2000b).
- ***We use nonverbal cues to complement verbal communication.*** If a friend tells you that she recently received a promotion and a pay raise, you can show your enthusiasm in a number of verbal and nonverbal ways. If you exclaim, “Wow, that’s great! I’m so happy for you!” while at the same time smiling and hugging your friend, you are using nonverbal communication to complement what you are saying. Unlike duplicating or replacing, nonverbal communication that complements cannot be used alone without the verbal message. If you simply smiled and hugged your friend without saying anything, the interpretation of that nonverbal communication would be more ambiguous than using it to complement your verbal message.
- ***We use nonverbal communication to accent verbal communication.*** While nonverbal communication complements verbal communication, we also use it to accent verbal communication by emphasizing certain parts of the verbal message. For instance, you may be upset with a family member and state, “I’m very angry with you.” To accent this statement nonverbally you might say it, “I’m VERY angry with you,” placing your emphasis on the word “very” to demonstrate the magnitude of your anger. In this example, it is your tone of voice (paralanguage) that serves as the nonverbal communication that accents the message. Parents might tell their children to “come here.” If they point to the spot in front of them dramatically, they are accenting the “here” part of the verbal message.

Nonverbal Communication and You

Nonverbal Communication and Romance

If you don't think the things that Communication scholars study (like nonverbal communication) applies to you, think again! A quick search of nonverbal communication on google will yield a great many sites devoted to translating nonverbal research into practical guides for your personal life. One example on iVillage.com is the article "Top 10 Signs He's Interested in You" written by Text in the City creator Matt Titus. In the article, Titus outlines 10 nonverbal cues to read to see if someone is interested in you romantically. While we won't vouch for the reliability of these types of pieces, they do show the relevance of studying areas like nonverbal communication has in our personal lives.

- ***We use nonverbal communication to regulate verbal communication.*** Generally, it is pretty easy for us to enter, maintain, and exit our interactions with others nonverbally. Rarely, if ever, would we approach a person and say, "I'm going to start a conversation with you now. Okay, let's begin." Instead, we might make eye contact, move closer to the person, or face the person directly -- all nonverbal behaviors that indicate our desire to interact. Likewise, we do not generally end conversations by stating, "I'm done talking to you now" unless there is a breakdown in the communication process. We are generally proficient enacting nonverbal communication such as looking at our watch, looking in the direction we wish to go, or being silent to indicate an impending end in the conversation. When there is a breakdown in the nonverbal regulation of conversation, we may say something to the effect, "I really need to get going now." In fact, one of your authors has a friend who does not seem to pick up on the nonverbal cues that your author needs to end a phone conversation. Your author has literally had to resort to saying, "Okay, I'm hanging up the phone right now" followed by actually hanging up the phone. In this instance, there was a breakdown in the use of nonverbal communication to regulate conversation.
- ***We use nonverbal communication to contradict verbal communication.*** Imagine that you visit your boss's office and she asks you how you're enjoying a new work assignment. You may feel obligated to respond positively because it is your boss asking the question, even though you may not truly feel this way. However, your nonverbal communication may contradict your verbal message, indicating to your boss that you really do not enjoy the new work assignment. In this example, your nonverbal communication contradicts your verbal message and sends a mixed message to your boss. Research suggests that when verbal and nonverbal messages contradict one another, receivers often place greater value on the nonverbal communication as the more accurate message (Argyle, Alkema & Gilmour, 1971). One place this occurs frequently is in greeting sequences. You might say to your friend in passing, "How are you?" She might say, "Fine" but have a sad tone to her voice. In this case, her nonverbal behaviors go against her verbal response. We are more likely to interpret the nonverbal communication in this situation than the verbal response.
- ***We use nonverbal communication to mislead others.*** We can use nonverbal communication to hide deception. We also focus on a person's nonverbal communication when trying to detect deception. Recall a time when someone asked your opinion of a new haircut. If you did not like it, you may have stated verbally that you liked the haircut and provided nonverbal communication to further mislead the person about how you really felt. Conversely, when we try to determine if someone is misleading us, we generally focus on the nonverbal communication of the other person. One study suggests that when we only use nonverbal communication to detect deception in others, 78% of lies and truths can be detected (Vrij, Edward, Roberts, & Bull, 2000). However, other studies indicate that we are really not very effective at determining deceit in other people (Levine, Feeley, McCornack, Hughes, & Harms, 2005), and that we are only accurate 45 to 70 percent of the time when trying to determine if someone is misleading us (Kalbfleisch, 1992). When trying to detect deception, it is more effective to examine both verbal and nonverbal communication to see if they are consistent (Vrij, Akehurst, Soukara, & Bull, 2000; Neiva & Hickson III, 2003). Even further than this, Park, Levine, McCornack, Morrison, & Ferrara (2002) argue that people usually go beyond verbal and nonverbal communication and consider what outsiders say, physical evidence, and the relationship over a longer period of time.

Nonverbal Communication and You

Nonverbal Communication and Getting a Job

You may be thinking that getting the right degree at the right college is the way to get a job. Think again! It may be a good way to get an interview, but once at the interview, what matters? College Journal reports that, "Body language comprises 55% of the force of any response, whereas the verbal content only provides 7%, and paralanguage, or the intonation -- pauses and sighs given when answering -- represents 38% of the emphasis." If you show up to an interview smelling of cigarette smoke, chewing gum, dressed inappropriately, and listening to your iPod, you're probably in trouble.

About.Com states that these are some effective nonverbal practices during interviews:

- Make eye contact with the interviewer for a few seconds at a time.
 - Smile and nod (at appropriate times) when the interviewer is talking, but, don't overdo it. Don't laugh unless the interviewer does first.
 - Be polite and keep an even tone to your speech. Don't be too loud or too quiet.
 - Don't slouch.
 - Do relax and lean forward a little towards the interviewer so you appear interested and engaged.
 - Don't lean back. You will look too casual and relaxed.
 - Keep your feet on the floor and your back against the lower back of the chair.
 - Pay attention, be attentive and interested.
 - Listen.
 - Don't interrupt.
 - Stay calm. Even if you had a bad experience at a previous position or were fired, keep your emotions to yourself and do not show anger or frown.
 - Not sure what to do with your hands? Hold a pen and your notepad or rest an arm on the chair or on your lap, so you look comfortable. Don't let your arms fly around the room when you're making a point.
- ***We use nonverbal communication to indicate relational standing*** (Mehrabian, 1981; Burgoon, Buller, Hale, & deTurck, 1984; Sallinen-Kuparinen, 1992). Take a few moments today to observe the nonverbal communication of people you see in public areas. What can you determine about their relational standing from their nonverbal communication? For example, romantic partners tend to stand close to one another and touch one another frequently. On the other hand, acquaintances generally maintain greater distances and touch less than romantic partners. Those who hold higher social status often use more space when they interact with others. In the U.S., it is generally acceptable for women in platonic relationships to embrace and be physically close while males are often discouraged from doing so. Contrast this to many other nations where it is custom for males to greet each other with a kiss or a hug, and hold hands as a symbol of their friendship. We make many inferences about relational standing based on the nonverbal communication of those with whom we interact and observe. Your authors were walking in Manhattan and saw a couple talking to each other across a small table. They both had faces that looked upset, had red eyes from crying, had closed body positions, were leaned into each other, and they were whispering emphatically. Upon seeing this, we both looked at each other and simultaneously said, "Breakup conversation!" We didn't know if that was the case, but we used nonverbal cues to come to that conclusion almost instantly.
 - ***We use nonverbal communication to demonstrate and maintain cultural norms.*** We've already shown that some nonverbal communication is universal, but the majority of nonverbal communication is culturally specific. For example, in the predominant U.S. culture, people place high value on their personal space. In the U.S. people maintain far greater personal space than those in many other cultures. On a recent trip to New York City, one of your authors observed that any time someone accidentally touched her on the subway he/she made a special point to apologize profusely for the violation of personal space. Cultural norms of anxiety and fear surrounding issues of crime and terrorism appear to cause people to be more sensitive to others in public spaces; thus, this example highlights the importance of culture and context. Contrast this example to norms in many Asian cultures where frequent touch in crowded public spaces goes unnoticed because space is not used in the same ways. While teaching in China, one of your authors went grocery shopping in Beijing. As a westerner, she was shocked that shoppers would ram their shopping carts into others' carts when they wanted to move around them in the aisle. She learned that this was not an indication of rudeness, but a cultural difference in the negotiation of space. She quickly learned to adapt to using this new approach to personal space, even though it carries a much different

meaning in the U.S. Nonverbal cues such as touch, eye contact, facial expressions, and gestures are culture specific and reflect and maintain the values and norms of the cultures in which they are used.

- ***We use nonverbal communication to communicate emotions.*** While we can certainly tell people how we feel, we more frequently use nonverbal communication to express our emotions. Conversely, we tend to interpret emotions by examining nonverbal communication. One study suggests that it is important to use and interpret nonverbal communication for emotional expression, and ultimately relational attachment and satisfaction (Schachner, Shaver, & Mikulincer, 2005). Research also underscores the fact that people in close relationships have an easier time reading the nonverbal communication of emotion of their relational partners than those who aren't close. Likewise, those in close relationships can more often detect concealed emotions (Sternglanz & Depaulo, 2004).

Summary

I

n this chapter, you have learned that we define nonverbal communication as any meaning shared through sounds, behaviors, and artifacts other than words. Some of the differences between verbal and nonverbal include the fact that verbal communication uses one channel while nonverbal communication occurs through multiple channels simultaneously. As a result, verbal communication is distinct while nonverbal communication is continuous. For the most part, nonverbal communication is enacted at an unconscious level while we are almost always conscious of our verbal communication. Finally, some nonverbal communication is considered universal and recognizable by people all over the world, while verbal communication is exclusive to particular languages.

There are many types of nonverbal communication including kinesics, haptics, appearance, objects, artifacts, proxemics, our environment, chronemics, paralanguage, and silence. Finally, we concluded by discussing how nonverbal communication serves many functions to help us share meanings in our interactions. Now that you have a basic understanding of verbal and nonverbal communication as a primary focus of study in our field, let's look at how theory helps us understand our world.

Discussion Questions

1. Think of a time you made a conscious decision to use nonverbal communication. What prompted you to use nonverbal communication consciously instead of unconsciously?
2. How good do you think you are at detecting deception through others' use of nonverbal communication? What things do you look for?
3. Have you ever used nonverbal communication to deceive? If so, what nonverbal activities did you focus on to do this?
4. Which do you consider has greater weight when interpreting a message from someone else, verbal or nonverbal communication? Why?

Key Terms

- chronemics
- conscious
- context
- continuous
- distinct
- environment
- haptics
- kinesics
- nonverbal communication
- paralanguage
- personal appearance
- proxemics
- silence
- unconscious

References

- Argyle, M. F., Alkema, F., & Gilmour, R. (1971). The communication of friendly and hostile attitudes: Verbal and nonverbal signals. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 1, 385-402.
- Blumer, H. (1969). *Symbolic interaction: Perspective and method*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Buck, R., & VanLear, A. (2002). Verbal and nonverbal communication: Distinguishing symbolic, spontaneous, and pseudo-spontaneous nonverbal behavior. *Journal of Communication*, 52(3), 522-539.
- Burgoon, J. K., Buller, D. B., Hale, J. L., & deTurck, M. A. (1984). Relational messages associated with nonverbal behaviors. *Human Communication Research*, 10, 351-378.
- Burgoon, J. K., Buller, D. B., & Woodall, W. G. (1996). *Nonverbal communication: The unspoken dialogue*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Dolin, D. J., & Booth-Butterfield, M. (1993). Reach out and touch someone: Analysis of nonverbal comforting responses. *Communication Quarterly*, 41(4), 383-393.
- Ekman, P. (1965). Communication through nonverbal behavior: A source of information about an interpersonal relationship. In S. S. Tompkins & C. E. Izard (Eds.), *Affect, Cognition, and Personality*. New York: Springer.
- Ekman, P., & Friesen, W. V. (1967). Head and body cues in the judgment of emotion: A reformulation. *Perceptual and Motor Skills*, 24, 711-724.
- Givens, D. B. (2000). Head-nod, [Webpage]. Center for Nonverbal Studies. Available: <http://members.aol.com/nonverbal3/headnod.htm> [2006, April 20th].
- Givens, D. B. (2000). Head-shake, [Webpage]. Center for Nonverbal Studies. Available: <http://members.aol.com/nonverbal3/headnod.htm> [2006, April 20th].
- Hall, E. T. (1959). *Beyond culture*. New York: Doubleday.
- Hall, E. T. (1966). *The hidden dimension*. New York: Doubleday.
- Hall, J. A. (1984). *Nonverbal sex differences: Communication accuracy and expressive style*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Hall, C. W., Chia, R., & Wang, D. F. (1996). Nonverbal communication among American and Chinese students. *Psychological Reports*, 79, 419-428.
-

- Kalbfleisch, P. (1992). Deceit, distrust, and social milieu: Applications of deception research in a troubled world. *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, 308-334.
- Knapp, M. (1980). *Essentials of nonverbal communication*. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.
- Levine, R. (1997). *A geography of time: The temporal misadventures of a social psychologist*. New York: Basic Books.
- Levine, T. R., Feeley, T. H., McCornack, S. A., Hughes, M., & Harms, C. M. (2005). Testing the effects of nonverbal behavior training on accuracy in deception detection with the inclusion of a bogus training control group. *Western Journal of Communication*, 69(3), 203-217.
- Malandro, L. A., & Barker, L. L. (1983). *Nonverbal communication*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.
- Mead, G. H. (1934). *Mind, self, and society*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Mehrabian, A. (1981). *Silent messages: Implicit communication of emotion and attitudes* (2nd ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.
- Motley, M. T. (1993). Facial affect and verbal context in conversation: Facial expression as interjection. *Human Communication Research*, 20 (1), 3-40
- Neiva, E., & Hickson III, M. (2003). Deception and honesty in animal and human communication: A new look at communicative interaction. *Journal of Intercultural Research*, 32(1), 23-45.
- Park, H. S., Levine, T. R., McCornack, S. A., Morrison, K., & Ferrara, M. (2002). How people really detect lies. *Communication Monographs*, 69(2), 144-157.
- Sallinen-Kuparinen, A. (1992). Teacher communicator style. *Communication Education*, 41, 153-166.
- Schachner, D., Shaver, P., & Mikulincer, M. (2005). Patterns of nonverbal behavior and sensitivity in the context of attachment relationships. *Journal of Nonverbal Behavior*, 29(3), 141-169.
- Shutiva, C. (2004). Native American culture and communication through humor. *Our Voices: Essays in Culture, Ethnicity, and Communication* 4th ed. Eds. González, A., Houston, M., and Chen, V. Los Angeles: Roxbury.
- Sternglanz, R. W., & Depaulo, B. M. (2004). Reading nonverbal cues to emotion: The advantages and reliabilities of relationship closeness. *Journal of Nonverbal Behavior*, 28(4), 245-266.
- Vrij, A., Akehurst, L., Soukara, S., & Bull, R. (2004). Detecting deceit via analyses of verbal and nonverbal behavior in children and adults. *Human Communication Research*, 30(1), 8-41.
- Vrij, A., Edward, K., Roberts, K., & Bull, R. (2000). Detecting deceit via analysis of verbal and nonverbal behavior. *Journal of Nonverbal Behavior*, 24(4), 239-263.
-

Article Sources and Contributors

Survey of Communication Study/Chapter 3 - Nonverbal Communication *Source:* <http://en.wikibooks.org/w/index.php?oldid=1886418> *Contributors:* Adrignola, Spaynton, 1 anonymous edits

License

Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Unported
[//creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/](http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/)
