

Non-verbal communication research paper examples

[Sociology](#), [Communication](#)



How often we have heard that it is the first impressions that tend to last?

Regardless of whether the statement holds true or not, it makes one wonder - what constitutes the first impression? It is not only the dress we wear or the words we say, but also the hidden messages sent by our body unconsciously and this is by far the most important of all impressions. The moment we meet someone, we subconsciously judge him or her on the basis of these overlooked movements of the body and this impression sticks even though the entire process takes less than ten seconds. The messages sent by our body unconsciously constitute a subject known as body language and understanding it can help a lot when it comes to relations including client relations in business.

There are many reasons why a businessman should take up the study of non-verbal communication. It proves to be of great help when one is trying to conclude a business deal but does not have any idea as to the area where the problem with the client lies. By correctly analyzing the clues put forward by the client's body language, one can grasp the necessary things one needs to do or change to successfully promote the deal. An expert in this field can accurately understand the status and condition of the client even before the meeting starts in earnest. One can then change or modify the presentation to something that might be more appealing to the client.

Whenever our mind adapts to a certain situation, it tends to develop emotions like joy or anger. Our body then responds to these emotions unconsciously and expresses them through various and highly specific actions. This is the language of the body. Various parts of the body express different emotions in a number of ways. Posture, eyes, smiles, head, hands

and shoulders - all send out signals which can be interpreted accurately to get a glimpse of the mind. It is quite difficult to make the body tell a lie.

According to research conducted in this area, it has been found that 7% of the message we are trying to convey is transmitted through our body and around 60-80% of all face-to-face communications are actually done using body language.

Posture and Body Position

It was William James, a psychologist, who first enumerated the types of postures used in non-verbal communication. Body posture is the first thing that people tend to notice and is therefore an important factor when it comes to developing an impression. A message of balance and self-confidence is put forward by a person if he walks straight with his head up and shoulders back. Respect is automatically commanded by such people unlike those with a slouching posture and drooping shoulders. No amount of verbal persuasion can counter this fact. Body posture is generally categorized into: a) open and closed, and b) forward and back. Unfolded arms and open palms along with uncrossed legs in a listener are a sign of being open-minded and receptive to the other person's ideas. This is the open posture with its polar opposite being the closed posture signified by folded arms, crossed legs and turning away of the body. These two postures can be and are used along with the leaning back or front postures. If the listener leans back and displays the closed posture, it shows that he lacks an interest in the matter at hand but if he displays the open posture then he is interested and is contemplating the issue. Leaning forward with an open posture shows that the person is in agreement with the speaker and is actively interested but a closed posture

suggests potentially aggressive behavior .

Another very important facet of understanding body postures is “ mirroring”. This is a very effective method in business to find out whether the client is ready to take the deal offered. People often tend to mirror or copy another person’s actions if he is in agreement with the words of the speaker. A movement of the hand or a shifting of position can be mirrored by people in a group who are in complete accord over the subject being discussed. If the discussion’s track changes to something the listener is uncomfortable with or is not in agreement with then this mirroring stops suddenly and the person performs some different actions which subtly show his disagreement. A hand’s position might change or a leg may be thrust out .

Eyes

Eyes are said to be the most truthful part of a human’s body and this is a point that can be utilized while trying to conclude a business deal or in other areas of life as well. Eyes tend to reveal a lot about the intentions of a person. Our eyes are capable of sending a variety of non-verbal messages. From simple hellos to disapproval, our eyes can convey this and so much more. Eyes can be used to signify the end of the conversation or may allow another person to take over the discussion or even ask a person to reply. All these are done non-verbally and through eyes only. Sustained eye-contact is important during business conversations. Flighty and shifty eyes denote that the speaker is quite possibly lying or else is hiding something. It can also be construed as lack of confidence on the part of the speaker and nervousness. Steady eye contact on the part of the speaker is as important as that of the

listener. A listener with steady eyes shows that he is attentive to the speaker. If the gaze is held too long at a listener then it may come off as a threatening gesture and cause the other person to feel uncomfortable .

Smiles

Smiles along with eyes can be considered to be a part of the wider facial expressions category. Smiles are very powerful tools and used in the right way can pave the way to a glorious business deal. They are especially useful in creating a positive work environment. With the help of the right smile one can convey a variety of messages like concern, solidarity, excitement, empathy or interest. Smiling tends to make the people involved happier and puts them in a good mood; thereby the business goes on in a smoother fashion. One must keep in mind however that overuse, misuse and low use of smiles may make people unable comprehend your intentions and create a negative impression in their minds. It is better to start off businesslike and only resort to smiles when needed. This allows people to better understand your points .

Hands

Hands are possibly the most expressive of all body parts. Used alone or in conjunction with others parts, hands have the ability to convey a wide variety and kinds of messages. Open palms signify honesty and putting the hand over one's chest is a stronger version of the open palm. One of the effective ways to help emphasize your points, while speaking, is by using suitable hand gestures. However, the most important function of the hand in business is the handshake. A handshake conveys a lot about the two persons

involved. There are many kinds of handshakes which are categorized broadly into these categories. The 'pumper' who makes a seemingly endless handshake, the 'crusher' is one which ends in pain and the 'limper' which is nothing but a limp hand placed into yours and last but not the least, the person who more or less 'takes' your hand instead of shaking it. All these handshakes happen to send negative impressions to people on the receiving end. Since handshakes are often the first thing one does in a business meeting it is important to get this seemingly innocuous gesture absolutely perfect. If the person you are going to shake hands with offers his hand with palms facing downward, it is a subconscious gesture to dominate you. A person may take your hand and rotate the wrist aggressively. If so, that person is one to be kept some distance from. The best form of handshake is one that is firm and simple. This signifies confidence and touching the other person's elbow with the other hand can help in making him feel more comfortable .

Heads and Shoulders

Heads along with shoulders are also quite adept at sending out non-verbal signals though they are not as versatile as the hands or the eyes are.

Shoulders being raised are a sign that the person is tensed and lowering of them shows relaxation. A head which is tilted can signify interest. Lowering of the head shows a negative attitude towards the proceedings or even fear and dissatisfaction. Raised heads are a sign of interest and openness and can also be a sign that the person is in control. On a side but related note,

one should remember that women have a greater tendency to tilt their head than men.

Territory

The territory or the surroundings in which a business meeting takes place has a tremendous effect on its participants. There is a thing known as 'home advantage' in sports. Teams playing in their home field often play better than in other fields. This is called home advantage and it can be applied in the scenario of business as well. A person feels most comfortable in his own territory, for example-his office or his house. Acute discomfort can be produced if one has to enter an unfamiliar place or, in other words, if he is forced to exit his territory. A boss wishing to exercise his authority over his subordinate would fare better in his office rather than the subordinate's because of the above mentioned reason. In the same way, if he wishes to consult his subordinate then the latter's office is a better place as the subordinate feels more comfortable and open to discussion .

Another thing that comes within the purview of territory is the personal space. According to psychologists, every person is cocooned by an invisible zone which provides psychological comfort that functions as a sort of buffer area against invasions from other people. Encroaching on this place tends to make the person very uncomfortable and insecure. Proxemics, or the study of personal space, has determined that more a person trusts someone, more is he or she allowed into that's personal space. If one decides to stand too close to a person without establishing a degree of trust, the person perceives this as an attack on his personal space and will instinctively drawback to

regain the space lost. Other ways by which a person shows his discomfort are by tapping his foot impatiently, looking away or defensive gestures including crossing of arms etc.

Proxemics also show that the seating arrangement play a pivotal role in interactions. People prefer to sit with the wall behind their back. Sitting with open space or especially windows behind one's back tends to make people very nervous. This is an instinct carried over from the earliest days of human history when people used to live in caves and the only entry point danger was the opening of the cave. Sitting on opposite sides tends to increase the competition and bad feelings between the two persons involved. Studies have concluded that the best table for holding a meeting for co-operative exchange of ideas happens to be a round table. Sitting side-by-side also tends to help foster co-operation .

The Lie

People have a bad habit of lying. Sometimes the lie is intentional and hurtful and sometimes it is not. In business, corrupt and unscrupulous people often resort to lying to get ahead or to earn more money. For a businessman on the verge of completing a deal, a lie can destroy the company-client relations completely. Therefore, it is necessary for one to know how to figure out whether a potential business partner is lying or not. Excessive blinking of the eyes are a sign that person is lying. The movements of the body tend to become stiff and unnatural when a lie being told. The action can seem forced in some cases. Lying can be accompanied by constant throat clearing and the eye contact is lessened. Often the liar will try to look away and avoid eye

contact as much as possible. Hands may be put inside the pocket or clasped together tightly in the majority of the cases. Seemingly innocent actions like touching the earlobe and covering the mouth while speaking are good indicators as the fact that the speaker is lying. Touching the face, especially the nose is also one of the things to watch out for in these cases. Even the words being spoken tend to become forced and monosyllabic when lying and there is an increased chance of stuttering.

Dress

The way we dress is also the way through which people tend to form impressions the most. A well-dressed man is always considered to be more respectable than others. Dressing appropriately for the right event and occasion is something that everyone should learn as the choice of dress plays a very important role in determining the way people view other people. An interesting fact to keep in mind while dressing is that people are automatically drawn to those who follow the same dress code as they themselves. They tend to trust those people more, who have the similar look and dress as themselves. The proverb- ' Birds of a feather flock together'-is quite true when it comes to interactions between people. Apart from the dress, color is another to keep in mind. Green, as a color, is seen as more soothing and calming. Red should be avoided as it brings to mind aggression and threats. Possibly the best the color one can go for is purple. Purple imparts and bestows a strong yet personable image on its wearers. Above all, cleanliness and tidiness are two qualities that everyone likes. They should be an inseparable part of any businessman's wardrobe.

Comprehending the body language

One must remember that the world is a large place. There are a wide variety of customs and cultures in this world. What may seem appropriate in one place may not be polite in other areas. The behavior of people differs as well in different regions, religions and cultures. One can ever never make an accurate conclusion as to the personality of a person by just concentrating on one detail. All the information given here must necessarily be compared to one another before arriving at a decision. A person can touch his nose for various reasons. Just because he was touching his nose does not necessarily mean that he is lying for maybe he was suffering from a cold or it was itching. In the African-American culture, it is considered rude to look into the eyes of the other person while being scolded. That person looks down during the rebuke and therefore one should not take it for granted that he is guilty of the offence.

Non-verbal communication is an effective way of understanding the person in front of you. However, one should always keep in mind that this is not an exact sign. The gestures are always open to interrogation, differing interpretations and discussions. Arms folded can mean that the person is uninterested. It can also be interpreted as a sign that the person is feeling cold. However if the person has is arms folded, legs crossed and raised shoulders or a frown, then it can be safely assumed that the person is quite unhappy and uninterested in the proceedings.

Conclusion

Understanding body language and its associated subjects like proxemics and paralanguage takes time. One requires extensive practice before one can hope to become fluent. There are of course some things that one must keep in mind before one considers oneself to be an expert. Firstly, as mentioned before, one should never take a gesture in isolation. Body language is always expressed in groups of actions and never alone. Remembering this can save one from a number of embarrassing situations. Before embarking on a journey to understand a person through their gestures and body language only, one must develop a keen sense of observation. A person can also get and form an idea as to the things that need to be changed in his behavior if he wished to put forward a certain kind of impression on other people. It will take practice but one should recall the old adage that practice makes perfect.

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