

Nonverbal communication in social psychology psychology essay



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The most important thing in communication is hearing what isn't said.- Peter F. Drucker cited in Goman, 2008 page 1. This states that spoken language and non verbal signals need to simultaneously exist and interact with each other in order to give the receiver a fully understanding of what is been said.

Non-verbal communication is the ability to transfer, receive and decode messages to one another without using spoken or written language instead we take a specific body posture or facial expression to denote a particular feeling or intention. Non-verbal behaviour can be both consciously and unconsciously (M . Argyle, 1988, page 4). Non-verbal behaviour became acknowledged in the social psychological field in 1872 by Charles Darwin's work, where he suggested that high intelligence animals shared the same facial expressions with humans C. Darwin (1872 cited in P. Ekman, 1973, pages 12, 13).

This essay will discuss the importance of non verbal communication in the social psychological field.

There are different types of kinesics such as eye contact, facial expressions, gestures, and body postures. It is said that the eyes are the most powerful means of communication we possess after words (G. R. Wainwright, 1985, page 5) that is because our eyes help us seek information, display attention and interest, show respect and provide feedback during speech Argyle (1965, cited in Wainwright, 1988 page 9). For example when people avoid looking others in the eyes, it seems that they are trying to hide something or that they are lying. Neuro-Linguistic Programming researchers, for several decades, believed that when a person looks up to their right corner of their

eye they are more likely to be lying, whilst a glance up to their left it indicates that they are telling the truth. However, a later on study of two professors; R. Wiseman from Edinburgh University and C. Watt from Hertfordshire University has shown that that theory was wrong; there was no evidence of a correlation between lying and eye movements. (R. Wiseman, C. Watt et al. PLoS ONE, 2012; 7). Instead avoiding eye contact could clearly indicate nervousness or shyness. Moreover, in some countries eye contact signifies respect and straightforwardness whereas in others it is seen as rude and disrespectful; for instance in European cultures, a certain amount of eye contact is required, but too much makes many people uncomfortable. When greeting a Chinese, it is best to avoid prolonged eye contact as a sign of respect and deference (E. T. Hall, M. R. Hall, 1990, page 14). Furthermore, effectual eye contact is also a significant feedback machine that makes the speaking situation a double dissociation since it certifies that others are listening and that the listeners are appreciated for their attentiveness. (G. R. Wainwright, 1985 , page 11) However, when people feel bored they usually do not make eye contact with the person they are talking to and may start searching for anything nearby to fidget with -their cell phone or objects around the room, for example. These actions are perceived as signs of boredom and lack of interest.

(G. R. Wainwright, 1985, page 7)

Closely relevant to eye contact are facial expressions which posses the most dominant and primary form of body language. Facial expressions must have obtained evolutionary importance; since it would have been evolutionary growth for our antecedents to have been chosen for biological reproduction <https://assignbuster.com/nonverbal-communication-in-social-psychology-psychology-essay/>

and natural survival on account of their ability to make facial expressions C . Darwin (1872 cited in P . Ekman page 13). Additionally, it has been said that people can produce around 20000 different facial expressions Birdwhistell (1970 cited in Argyle, 1988 page122). This mosaic of facial expressions is universal and sums up to six basic principles; happiness, sadness, fear, anger, disgust and surprise and when these fundamental emotions are mixed together they produce an array of expressions Ekman (1982 cited M. Argyle, 1988 pages 121, 122). Furthermore, the importance of facial expressions is also shown by the ability that people have on making almost infallible critics about someone's personality, intelligence, character in the first few minutes of meeting them (G. R. Wainwright, 1985, page 23).

However, a psychologist had run an experiment, in which the subjects had to chose if that person in the picture was innocent or not, and found out that a significant number of people were biased to judge someone as a criminal by their facial features (G. R. Wainwright, 1985, page 27). In sequence of these findings it suggests that people sometimes misinterpret what they are seeing without having any specific evidence. Also, considering that facial expressions are tight together with emotions, sometimes they can be very similar with the attitudes that we give towards other people; voluntary and involuntary, paradigm “ being angry is an emotion, being angry towards someone is an interpersonal attitude”(M. Argyle, 1988, page 85) .

Intermittently, people have to look back in order not to disobey that fine line between acceptable and unacceptable attitudes; for example liking and disliking someone are emotions although the expression of disliking someone is often restricted by social rules (M. Argyle, 1988, page 85).

Furthermore, facial expressions are inevitable to occur thus at intervals they <https://assignbuster.com/nonverbal-communication-in-social-psychology-psychology-essay/>

come in contrast of what is been felt and what their expressions demonstrate

(M. Argyle, 1988, page 78, 127 and G . R . Wainwright, 1985, page 26) .

Researches has shown that micromomentary expressions might be captured through cameras but are too ephemeral and momentary for most people to realize them; For example a person might say that they are happy to see someone and may even smile at them, but this false attitude may be showed by a micromomentary expression like disgust. (G . R . Wainwright, 1985, page 26)

Another huge subdivision of Non-verbal Communication is gestures. Gestures include body movements that chaperon spoken language, especially with the use of hands; some of them are waving, pointing, using the fingers to indicate numerical amounts and are enormously substantial in the social psychological field since they give emphasis and interpret what is been said. A study has shown that most vocal conversations are accompanied, regulated and modulated by kinesics; like motion of the head, hands etc Bull and Conelli (1985, cited in M. Argyle , 1988 page 107) . Moreover, some gestures are known as ' illustrators' of the verbal context because they imitate shapes, physical objects or movements. Dittman (1972) argued that ' illustrators' appear at the establishment of a verbal conversation in order to manifest what will be contained in the verbal aspect. It was also verified by Butterworth and Beattie (1978) who their findings showed that gestures prefaced the phrase which was associated with them by an average of 800 milliseconds. Although, McNeil and Levy (1982) corralled otherwise, saying that illustrative gestures had the same possibility to happen prior of a phrase

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or later on (M . Argyle, 1988, page 107). Furthermore, another research has demonstrated that emphasis can be denoted not only by the changes of pitch or loudness of someone's voice but also by hand or head movements; Mehrabian (1972) had found that speakers who wanted to convince and allure the hearers used gestures and head-nods more frequently . However, Argyle (1983) disagreed with the above statement saying that the capital reason that the transmitter looks at the receiver is to collect information and reactions about what has just been said, in the form of head-nods, facial expressions , gestures and so on (M. Argyle, 1988, page 109). In addition, gestures are not universal, they are culture specific, and can have an entirely different meaning from one culture to another ; so giving a thumbs-up or a peace sign might mean a greeting for some countries and some others might take it as highly offensive signs Morris (1979 cited in Wainwright, 1985 page 45). Last but not least, another research has shown that people are perceived as more active, warm and acceptable when they tend to use more nonverbal movements than the ones that use less; those are seen as more logical, cold and analytic (G. R. Wainwright, 1985 page 48, 49)

In conclusion, non verbal communication in some purposes is more powerful and consequential than verbal language itself mostly because it can take different forms; such as gestures, eye contact, facial expressions. That illustrates emotions and attitudes to other people without using any verbal communication. (M. Argyle, 1988 page 308). It is evident that most communication happens without speech and that the spoken part of conversation is actually much less than we think (M. Argyle, 1988, page 1).

When verbal and non-verbal communication blend together, the second one might either strengthen or curve the prior one (M. Argyle, 1988, page 106).