

COMMUNICATIONAL CONTEXTS: PARAVERBAL AND NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION

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Abstract: Inter-human communication is carried out in accordance to a series of types of communication that basically involve verbal or logical communication, paraverbal communication and nonverbal communication. The analysis of these types of communication appears to be able to determine the understanding of messages from the point of view of their complexity. While verbal communication appeals to verbalized words or written words, the other two types of communication – paraverbal and nonverbal – accompany, as a rule, verbal communication and exert their influence on the true meaning of verbal communication.

Keywords: communication, nonverbal communication, paraverbal communication, influence, impact.

At a common level, communication, which is basically a message exchange between individuals, is understood as being the process of transmitting written or oral data. Nonetheless, inter-human communication appears to be more than verbal communication. It has been shown that the verbal or logical level of communication accounts for only 7% of an act of communication, while 38% of it involves the paraverbal level of communication (tone, volume, pronunciation speed, frequency, etc.) and 55% involves the non-verbal level (gestures, mimics, dynamics of mimics, movements of the body, etc.).

Verbal communication – employing verbalized words and written words – represents what individuals communicate owing to the transmission and decoding of the symbolical meanings of words. The content of an oral message may be interfered by paraverbal messages, which are able to determine the intensifying, weakening, distortion or annihilation of the significance of words. Despite all these, when adequately used, paraverbal messages become efficient devices that might influence and control the receiver of a message. Paraverbal messages are assumed to influence the getting or losing authority and control and to determine the approval or refuse of the issues transmitted by a message.

It has been asserted that non-verbal language together with paraverbal one might support, contradict or decrease the impact of a verbal message once it reaches the receiver. Non-verbal messages should be given most attention by receivers as they are closer to emitters' reality. Non-verbal messages, irrespective of circumstances, always impact the sub-conscious of receivers. Most of the gestures and mimics usually come out involuntarily, allowing the actors implied in communication to also decode what lies beneath the verbal message and what is not intended to be transmitted. It is said that there is a sixth sense that receives the information of a message, which is not verbally expressed by emitters.

The preference for employing verbal messages relies upon the easiness if direct, oral communication, although such a preference usually appears only after having been properly acquired by individuals, namely after having attended various educational stages (elementary school, high school, higher education). Most often, in the case when important issues are to be analysed, individuals consider that "face to face" communication is more appropriate, while rejecting telephone communication. The fact resides in the obstructive character of the device

(telephone), which appears to make impossible non-verbal communication and to distort paraverbal communication to such an extent that communication becomes incomplete and uncertain. The language of the body influences the impact of communication through the expression of the face, the movement of the body, the amplitude of the gestures, the form and position of the body, the general appearance, etc.

The impact is also wider owing to tactile communication, which might include the texture of a cloth, the density of a cloth, its colour, etc., as well as owing to sound communication – the rustle of a cloth, the noise made by shoes, a briefcase opening or closing, etc.

Non-verbal communication transmitted through a visual channel has in view the expression of the face, the posture, the attitude, etc. The expression of the face includes the mimics (knitting the brows, pursing up the lips, etc.), the smile and the eyes (the energetic contact of the eyes or its lack, the intensity of the sight, its expression and direction that might exert a decisive influence). Depending on individuals' real inner feelings one notices that people often smile or frown involuntarily, fix the interlocutor's eyes or have their face grow red. The face is the most expressive part of the human body and its expression is an amazing means of communication.

Mimics represent the particular expression of the face able to communicate universal or different messages, from one culture to another. Experimental decoding of the various messages transmitted by the expression of the face has shown that, although one can identify certain standard expressions, nonetheless, such expressions differ from one individual to the other.

In accordance, the forehead getting lined can express anger, anxiety, frustration or warning; the eyebrows lifted while having the eyes widely open usually express surprise, or wonder; a wrinkled nose might show displeasure; enlarged nostrils often express anger; tightened lips show incertitude, hesitation, hiding something, preparing for a negative answer or scarcely dissimulated anger. Through the conscious control of non-verbal communication, good communicators may also become good manipulators.

Smile is a complex gesture that requires certain interpretation abilities under specific circumstances. A smile is capable of transmitting a large amount of data about the interlocutor's mood, from pleasure, joy, and satisfaction to promise, cynicism or embarrassment. The interpretation of the meaning of a smile varies from one culture to another and it appears to be strictly connected with specific assumptions that are made with regard to the inter-human relations within a particular environment.

Sight represents a complex process displaying strong emotional connotations. The manner individuals look at each other and are looked at is linked with individuals' need for approval, acceptance, trust and friendship as well as with their desires and expectations. One may generally consider that looking to a person means that the presence of that person has been acknowledged, while intercepting somebody's eyes may be an invitation to communication or even a demand for help. A direct look might mean honesty and intimacy, although, under certain circumstances, it may express threat.

As a rule, a continual and insistent look (for several seconds, even for tens of seconds) is disturbing and determines a tensed mood in the person being watched. An intermittent and short eye contact may show lack of friendship, anxiousness or wish to communicate. The upward movement of the eyes usually expresses the attempt to remind something, while a downward movement show sadness, modesty, shyness or trying to hide certain emotions or lies. Not looking to an individual might show lack of interest or coldness. The avoidance of the eyes, at a horizontal level might express the intent of hiding feelings, of lack of comfort, of guilt and even lies. Individuals who are not at ease with themselves usually try to avoid the

interlocutor's eyes in the case they feel threatened; on the contrary, under favourable circumstances, such individuals look for the interlocutor's eyes. Sight represents a non-tactile manner of touching somebody, of communicating what words cannot express.

Dilated eyeballs when light intensity does not decrease might show powerful emotions; eyeballs generally widen when something is pleasant watched and usually narrow in case of unpleasantness, anger or envy. Frequent blinking most often express anxiety, fear or even the risk of losing control.

A posture is considered to express mainly the social status individuals think they own or would like to display, that is their desire for reaching a certain social status. The posture of a body may also provide data about the individuals' attitude, emotions, kindness or power of negotiation, including the openness for sincere communication. Let's notice that, in the case when a message exchange occurs between two individuals who are sitting, the one who manifests a tendency to dominate is going to raise the head upwards and lean the body backwards, while the other one, subconsciously impressed, will adopt a submissive attitude with the head slightly bowed frontward. As a rule, the bowing of the body frontward expresses interest in the interlocutor; nonetheless, it may also show anxiety and preoccupation. A relaxed position, leaning backwards, may show detachment, boredom or excessive self-confidence, power of negotiation, but also self-defence when dealing with individuals of higher social status.

Non-verbal communication transmitted via the tactile channel manifests itself through the frequency, intensity and duration of touch, through the manner individuals shake hands, clasp the arms or slap the shoulder, etc. Touches have various significations depending on the different existing cultures. Although there are individuals who avoid all kind of touch, the intensity and type of a touch may depend on age, status, and the relations among the individuals.

A person's presence can be perceived owing to the shape of the body, clothes, smell (perfume or specific odour of the body), jewels or other accessories, which all might give supplemental information about the individual's preference, attitude, degree of education, etc. There have been asserted a connection among the shape of a body, exterior appearance and personality, outlining three physical types (the ectomorph type - fragile, thin and tall, the endomorph type - fat, round and short, and the mezzo-morph type - muscled, athletic and tall), which people usually tend to associate with certain behavioural traits. In accordance, people frequently perceive ectomorphs as young, ambitious, suspicious, strained, nervous, and less masculine; endomorphs are seen as old-fashioned, less physically resistant, talkative, trustful, friendly, and pleasant, while mezzo-morphs are perceived as stubborn, powerful, adventurous, self-confident and always victorious.

Clothes, to the extent to which they are the result of a personal choice, emphasize the individual's personality; they are an extension of the human ego and, consequently, transmit data about the individual. Quite often, clothes give the individual a shape that does not match the individual's inner character and attempt at hiding a series of shortcomings. Clothes and accessories may also reveal the real or claimed social status. Non-conformist clothes generally communicate the fact that their bearer is an original person, a social rebel, an artist or journalist. Negligent clothes are mainly associated with the inner value of the individual.

Odour generally transmits messages the individuals are or are not aware of. Strong perfume, for instance, though of high quality, might inadequately draw attention upon an individual and rather suggests poor taste or provoking intentions.

The study of paraverbal and nonverbal communication, besides that of verbal communication, appears to determine the understanding of messages from the point of view of their complexity. The importance of acknowledging these types of communication is going

to further provide individuals with the techniques, procedures and algorithms of encoding and decoding complex messages transmitted through various channels that enable them to master communicational contexts.

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