

THIRD EDITION

Language

INTRODUCTORY READINGS

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1/A Structure for the Analysis of Nonverbal Communication

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Most of the popular books and articles about nonverbal communication (which they usually refer to as "body language") have drastically oversimplified the subject, suggesting that one can easily learn to "read" the nonverbal signals unconsciously "sent" by other people. In fact, however, the study of nonverbal communication is complex and subtle, far more than a kind of game which anyone can play. In the following selection, excerpted from the opening chapter of Nonverbal Communication in Human Interaction, Professor Mark L. Knapp presents some basic concepts concerning nonverbal communication and a classification system which, in effect, is a definition of this aspect of human communication.

Body motion, or kinesic behavior, typically includes gestures, movements of the body, limbs, hands, head, feet and legs, facial expressions (smiles), eye behavior (blinking, direction and length of gaze, and pupil dilation) and posture. The furrow of the brow, the slump of a shoulder and the tilt of a head—all are within the purview of kinesics. Obviously, there are different types of nonverbal behavior just as there are different types of verbal behavior. Some nonverbal cues are very specific, some more general; some intended to communicate, some expressive only; some provide information about emotions, others carry information about personality traits or attitudes. In an effort to sort through the relatively unknown world of nonverbal behavior, Ekman and Friesen¹ developed a system for classifying nonverbal behavioral acts. These categories include:

¹P. Ekman and W. V. Friesen, "The Repertoire of Nonverbal Behavior: Categories, Origins, Usage, and Coding," *Semiotica* 1 (1969):49-98.

A. *Emblems*. These are nonverbal acts which have a direct verbal translation or dictionary definition—usually consisting of a word or two or a phrase. There is high agreement among members of a culture or subculture on the verbal definition. The gestures used to represent "A-OK" or "Peace" are examples of emblems for a large part of our culture. Toffler notes in his best-seller, *Future Shock*, that some emblems which were perceived as semiobscene are now becoming more respectable with changing sexual values. He uses the example of the upraised finger—designating "up yours." Emblems are frequently used when verbal channels are blocked (or fail) and are usually used to communicate. The sign language of the deaf, nonverbal gestures used by television production personnel, signals used by two underwater swimmers, or motions made by two people who are too far apart to make audible signals practical—all these are emblems. Our own awareness of emblem usage is about the same as our awareness of word choice.

B. *Illustrators*. These are nonverbal acts which are directly tied to, or accompany, speech—serving to illustrate what is being said verbally. These may be movements which accent or emphasize a word or phrase; movements which sketch a path of thought; movements pointing to present objects; movements depicting a spatial relationship; or movements which depict a bodily action. Illustrators seem to be within our awareness, but not as explicitly as emblems. They are used intentionally to help communicate, but not as deliberately as emblems. They are probably learned by watching others.

C. *Affect Displays*. These are simply facial configurations which display affective states. They can repeat, augment, contradict, or be unrelated to, verbal affective statements. Once the display has occurred, there is usually a high degree of awareness, but it can occur without any awareness. Often, affect displays are not intended to communicate, but they can be intentional.

D. *Regulators*. These are nonverbal acts which maintain and regulate the back and forth nature of speaking and listening between two or more interactants. They tell the speaker to continue, repeat, elaborate, hurry up, become more interesting, give the other a chance to talk, etc. They consist mainly of head nods and eye movements, and there seem to be class and cultural differences in usage—improper usage connoting rudeness. These acts are not tied to specific spoken behavior. They seem to be on the periphery of our awareness and are generally difficult to in-

hibit. They are like overlearned habits and are almost involuntary, but we are very much aware of these signals sent by others. Probably the most familiar regulator is the head nod—the equivalent of the verbal mm-hmm.

E. *Adaptors*. These nonverbal behaviors are perhaps the most difficult to define and involve the most speculation. They are labeled adaptors because they are thought to develop in childhood as adaptive efforts to satisfy needs, perform actions, manage emotions, develop social contacts, or perform a host of other functions. They are not really coded; they are fragments of actual aggressive, sexual or intimate behavior and often reveal personal orientations or characteristics covered by verbal messages. Leg movements can often be adaptors, showing residues of kicking aggression, sexual invitation, or flight. Many of the restless movements of the hands and feet which have typically been considered indicators of anxiety may be residues of adaptors necessary for flight from the interaction. Adaptors are possibly triggered by verbal behavior in a given situation which is associated with conditions occurring when the adaptive habit was first learned. We are typically unaware of adaptors.

PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS

Whereas the previous section was concerned with movement and motion, this category covers things which remain relatively unchanged during the period of interaction. They are influential nonverbal cues which are not movement-bound. Included are such things as: physique or body shape, general attractiveness, body or breath odors, height, weight, hair, and skin color or tone.

TOUCHING BEHAVIOR

For some, kinesic study includes touch behavior; for others, however, actual physical contact constitutes a separate class of events. Some researchers are concerned with touching behavior as an important factor in the child's early development; some are concerned with adult touching behavior. Subcategories may include: stroking, hitting, greetings and farewells, holding, guiding another's movements, and other, more specific instances.

PARALANGUAGE

Simply put, paralinguage deals with how something is said and not what is said. It deals with the range of nonverbal vocal cues sur-

rounding common speech behavior. Trager felt paralanguage had the following components:²

A. *Voice Qualities*. This includes such things as pitch range, pitch control, rhythm control, tempo, articulation control, resonance, glottis control, and vocal lip control.

B. *Vocalizations*.

1. *Vocal characterizers*. This includes such things as laughing, crying, sighing, yawning, belching, swallowing, heavily marked inhaling or exhaling, coughing, clearing of the throat, hiccupping, moaning, groaning, whining, yelling, whispering, sneezing, snoring, stretching, etc.

2. *Vocal qualifiers*. This includes intensity (overloud to oversoft), pitch height (overhigh to overflow), and extent (extreme drawl to extreme clipping).

3. *Vocal segregates*. These are such things as "uh-huh," "um," "uh," "ah," and variants thereof.

Related work on such topics as silent pauses (beyond junctures), intruding sounds, speech errors, and latency would probably be included in this category.

PROXEMICS

Proxemics is generally considered to be the study of man's use and perception of his social and personal space. Under this heading, we find a body of work called small group ecology which concerns itself with how people use and respond to spatial relationships in formal and informal group settings. Such studies deal with seating arrangements, and spatial arrangements as related to leadership, communication flow, and the task at hand. The influence of architectural features on residential living units and even on communities is also of concern to those who study man's proxemic behavior. On an even broader level, some attention has been given to spatial relationships in crowds and densely populated situations. Man's personal space orientation is sometimes studied in the context of conversational distance—and how it varies according to sex, status, roles, cultural orientation, etc. The term "territoriality" is also frequently used in the study of proxemics to denote the human tendency to stake out per-

²G. L. Trager, "Paralanguage: A First Approximation," *Studies in Linguistics* 13 (1958):1-12.

sonal territory—or untouchable space—much as wild animals and birds do.

ARTIFACTS

Artifacts include the manipulation of objects in contact with the interacting persons which may act as nonverbal stimuli. These artifacts include: perfume, clothes, lipstick, eyeglasses, wigs and other hairpieces, false eyelashes, eyeliners, and the whole repertoire of falsies and "beauty" aids.

ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS

Up to this point we have been concerned with the appearance and behavior of the persons involved in communicating. This category concerns those elements which impinge on the human relationship, but which are not directly a part of it. Environmental factors include the furniture, architectural style, interior decorating, lighting conditions, smells, colors, temperature, additional noises or music, etc. within which the interaction occurs. Variations in arrangements, materials, shapes, or surfaces of objects in the interacting environment can be extremely influential on the outcome of an interpersonal relationship. This category also includes what might be called traces of action. For instance, as you observe cigarette butts, orange peels, and waste paper left by the person you will soon interact with, you are forming an impression which will eventually influence your meeting.

Perspectives on Nonverbal Communication in the Total Communication Process

There is a danger that the reader may forget that nonverbal communication cannot be studied in isolation from the total communication process. Verbal and nonverbal communication should be treated as a total and inseparable unit. Birdwhistell makes this point when he says:

My own research has led me to the point that I am no longer willing to call either linguistic or kinesic systems *communication* systems. All of the emerging data seem to me to support the contention that linguistics and kinesics are *infra-communicational* systems. Only in their interrela-

tionship with each other and with comparable systems from other sensory modalities is the emergent communication system achieved.³

Argyle flatly states, "Some of the most important findings in the field of social interaction are about the ways that verbal interaction needs the support of nonverbal communications.⁴ What are some of the ways in which verbal and nonverbal systems interrelate? How do nonverbal behaviors support verbal behaviors?⁵

Repeating. Nonverbal communication can simply repeat what was said verbally. For instance, if you told a person he had to go north to find a newspaper stand and then pointed in the proper direction, this would be considered repetition.

Contradicting. Nonverbal behavior can contradict verbal behavior. A classic example is the parent who yells to his child in an angry voice, "Of course I love you!" Or the person who is about to make a public speech whose hands and knees tremble, beads of perspiration form around his brow and he not so confidently states, "I'm not nervous." It has been said that when we receive contradictory messages on the verbal and nonverbal level, we are more likely to trust and believe in the nonverbal message.⁶ It is assumed that nonverbal signals are more spontaneous, harder to fake, and less apt to be manipulated. It is probably more accurate to say, however, that some nonverbal behaviors are more spontaneous and harder to fake than others—and that some people are more proficient than others at nonverbal deception.⁷ With two contradictory cues—both of which are nonverbal—again we predictably place our reliance on the cues we consider harder to fake. Interestingly, young children seem to give less credence to certain nonverbal cues than do adults when confronted with conflicting verbal and nonverbal messages.⁸ Conflicting messages in

which the speaker smiled while making a critical statement were interpreted more negatively by children than adults. This was particularly true when the speaker was a woman. Shapiro's work casts a further shadow on the "reliance on nonverbal cues in contradictory situations" theory.⁹ Shapiro found student judges to be extremely consistent in their reliance on either linguistic or facial cues when asked to select the affect being communicated from a list of incongruent faces and written messages. This suggests that through experience, some people rely more heavily on the verbal message while others rely on the nonverbal. Although one source of our preferences for verbal or nonverbal cues may be learned experiences, others believe there may also be an even more basic genesis—such as right-left brain dominance.

Substituting. Nonverbal behavior can substitute for verbal messages. When the dejected and downtrodden executive (or janitor) walks into his house after work, his facial expression substitutes for the statement, "I've had a rotten day." With a little practice, wives soon learn to identify a wide range of these substitute nonverbal displays—all the way from "It's been a fantastic, great day!" to "Oh, God, am I miserable!" She does not need to ask for verbal confirmation of her perception. Sometimes, when substitute nonverbal behavior fails, the communicator resorts back to the verbal level. Consider the girl who wants her date to stop "making out" with her. She may stiffen, stare straight ahead, act unresponsive and cool. If the suitor still comes on heavy, she is apt to say something like, "Look Larry, please don't ruin a nice friendship . . . etc."

Complementing. Nonverbal behavior can modify, or elaborate on, verbal messages. A student may reflect an attitude of embarrassment when talking to his professor about his poor performance in class assignments. Further, nonverbal behavior may reflect changes in the relationship between the student and the professor. When a student's slow, quiet verbalizations and relaxed posture change—when posture stiffens and the emotional level of the verbalized statements increases—this may signal changes in the overall relationship between the interactants. Complementary functions of nonverbal communication serve to signal one's attitudes and intentions toward another person.

Accenting. Nonverbal behavior may accent parts of the verbal message much as underlining written words, or *italicizing* them, serves to emphasize them. Movements of the head and hands are

³R. L. Birdwhistell, "Some Body Motion Elements Accompanying Spoken American English," in *Communication: Concepts and Perspectives*, ed. L. Thayer (Washington, D.C.: Spartan Books, 1967):71.

⁴M. Argyle, *Social Interaction* (New York: Atherton Press, 1969):70-71.

⁵Cf. P. Ekman, "Communication through Nonverbal Behavior: A Source of Information about an Interpersonal Relationship," in *Affect, Cognition and Personality*, ed. S. S. Tomkins and C. E. Izard (New York: Springer, 1965).

⁶Some evidence to support this notion is found in: E. Tabor, "Decoding of Consistent and Inconsistent Attitudes in Communication" (Ph.D. diss., Illinois Institute of Technology, 1970).

⁷See [I, A-E] for a discussion of our level of awareness of various nonverbal behaviors.

⁸D. E. Bugental, J. W. Kaswan, L. R. Love and M. N. Fox, "Child Versus Adult Perception of Evaluative Messages in Verbal, Vocal, and Visual Channels," *Developmental Psychology* 2 (1970):367-75.

⁹J. G. Shapiro, "Responsivity to Facial and Linguistic Cues," *Journal of Communication* 18 (1968):11-17.

frequently used to accent the verbal message. When a father scolds his son about staying out too late at night, he may accent a particular phrase with a firm grip on the son's shoulder and an accompanying frown on his face. In some instances, one set of nonverbal cues can accent other nonverbal cues. Ekman, for instance, found that emotions are primarily exhibited by facial expressions, but that the body carries the most accurate indicators regarding the *level* of arousal.¹⁰

Relating and Regulating. Nonverbal communication is also used to regulate the communicative flow between the interactants. Some have labeled this a relational function. A head nod, eye movement, or shift in position—any one of these, or combination of them, may signal the other person to continue to speak or to stop speaking because you want to say something. Speakers generally rely on this feedback to determine how their utterances are being received—or whether the other person is even paying attention.

The future of research in human communication will also require an analysis of verbal and nonverbal behavior as an inseparable unit. Some efforts in this direction have already been made. Harrison¹¹ and Buehler and Richmond¹² have outlined basic frameworks for the analysis of verbal and nonverbal behavior in two person settings. Reece and Whitman,¹³ among others, are trying to isolate the verbal and nonverbal components which convey interpersonal "warmth." Exline¹⁴ is trying to relate eye behavior to various kinds of verbal material. Agulera¹⁵ found touch gestures by nurses changed the nature of their verbal interaction with patients. Goldman-Eisler¹⁶ is studying

¹⁰P. Ekman, "Body Position, Facial Expression and Verbal Behavior During Interviews," *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology* 68 (1964):295-301. Also: P. Ekman and W. V. Friesen, "Head and Body Cues in the Judgement of Emotion: A Reformulation," *Perceptual and Motor Skills* 24 (1967):711-24.

¹¹R. Harrison, "Verbal-Nonverbal Interaction Analysis: The Substructure of an Interview" (Paper presented to the Association for Education in Journalism, Berkeley, Calif., August 1969).

¹²R. E. Buehler and J. F. Richmond, "Interpersonal Communication Behavior Analysis: A Research Method," *Journal of Communication* 13 (1963):146-55.

¹³M. Reece and R. Whitman, "Expressive Movements, Warmth, and Verbal Reinforcement," *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology* 64 (1962):234-36.

¹⁴R. V. Exline, et al., "Visual Interaction in Relation to Machiavellianism and an Unethical Act," *American Psychologist* 16 (1961):396. Also, see R. V. Exline, D. Gray and D. Schuette, "Visual Behavior in a Dyad as Affected by Interview Content and Sex of Respondent," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 1 (1965):201-9.

¹⁵D. C. Agulera, "Relationship Between Physical Contact and Verbal Interaction Between Nurses and Patients," *Journal of Psychiatric Nursing and Mental Health Services* 5 (1967):5-21.

¹⁶F. Goldman-Eisler, *Psycholinguistics: Experiments in Spontaneous Speech* (New York: Academic Press, 1968).

the predictability of verbal content following pauses of various types and lengths.

Birdwhistell feels that the whole system of body motion is comparable to spoken language. He reports the existence of kinemes and various types of kinemorphs which combine to form higher level syntactic structures. These kinesic units are comparable to the phoneme, morpheme, and other syntactic units used to analyze spoken language. He even goes so far as to state that a well-trained "linguistic-kinesiologist" should be able to tell what movements a man is making simply by listening to his voice. In like manner, he claims to be able to tell what language the late New York Mayor, Fiorello LaGuardia, was speaking simply by watching his gestures. LaGuardia spoke Italian, Yiddish, and English.

Perspectives on the Prevalence and Importance of Nonverbal Communication

The importance of nonverbal communication would be undeniable if sheer quantity were the only measure. Birdwhistell, generally agreed to be a noted authority on nonverbal behavior, makes some rather astounding estimates of the amount of nonverbal communication taking place. He estimates that the average person actually speaks words for a total of only 10 to 11 minutes daily—the standard spoken sentence taking only about 2.5 seconds. He goes on to say that in a normal two person conversation, the verbal components carry less than 35% of the social meaning of the situation; more than 65% is carried on the nonverbal band.

Another way of looking at the quantity of nonverbal messages is to note the various systems man uses to communicate. Hall outlines ten separate kinds of human activity which he calls "primary message systems."¹⁷ He suggests that only one involves language. Ruesch and Kees discuss at least seven different systems—personal appearance and dress, gestures or deliberate movements, random action, traces of action, vocal sounds, spoken words, and written words. Only two of the seven involve words.¹⁸

It is not my purpose here to argue the importance of the various human message systems, but to put the nonverbal world in perspective. It is safe to say that the study of human communication has for too long ignored a significant part of the process.

Further testimony to the prevalence and importance of nonverbal

¹⁷E. T. Hall, *The Silent Language* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1959).

¹⁸Ruesch and Kees. *Nonverbal Communication*.

communication is available if we scrutinize specific facets of our society: the use of nonverbal cues in psychiatry, teaching the deaf, doctor-nurse communication during operations, disturbed nonverbal communication, audience-speaker nonverbal communication, advertising, music, our use of time, art, pictures, dance, nonverbal aspects of written and printed language, nonverbal cues in deceptive communications, communicating across cultures, communicating across ethnic groups within a culture, drum and whistle languages—the list is interminable. . . .¹⁹

Perspectives on the Origins and Universality of Nonverbal Behavior

The ontogenetic development of human speech is a well-known process; the development and origin of nonverbal behaviors is much less clear. We do know that during the first two years of a child's life, he exhibits an extensive repertoire of nonverbal signals to communicate with those around him. We also know he is learning to interpret various nonverbal signals he receives from others.

Ekman and Friesen speculate that there are three sources for our various nonverbal behaviors: (1) inherited neurological programs, (2) experiences common to all members of the species—e.g., regardless of culture the hands will be used to place food in the mouth, and (3) experience which varies with culture, class, family, or individual.²⁰ Generally, nonverbal behaviors are partly instinctive, partly taught, and partly imitative. The origins of the specific nonverbal behaviors mentioned earlier are as follows:

Emblems are learned in conjunction with a specific culture. They are specifically taught as verbal language is taught.

Illustrators are socially learned by imitation. They vary with ethnicity, and cultural and class differences will be found in type and frequency.

Regulators are learned, but it is not certain when.

Affect displays show a relationship between facial musculature, affect and some of the evokers which is neurologically pro-

grammed. Some evokers, blends, display rules, and consequences are socially learned.

Adaptors are habits first learned to deal with sensation, excretion, ingestion, grooming and affect; to maintain prototypic interpersonal relationships; or to perform instrumental tasks.

The fact that Ekman and Friesen think some affect displays may not be culture-bound raises a long-standing question in nonverbal communication theory and research.²¹ Birdwhistell, who claims his research began with a search for universal gestures, said flatly in a 1970 *New York Times* interview: "There are no universal gestures. As far as we know, there is no single facial expression, stance, or body position which conveys the same meaning in all societies." Davitz, however, presents evidence which indicates at least some expressive facial patterns are not learned—their emergence depending primarily on physical maturation.

This conclusion is further supported by studies of congenitally blind subjects, whose opportunities for learning facial expression by imitation are obviously limited.²²

Perhaps the most conclusive evidence supporting the universality of facial expressions is found in the work of Ekman and his colleagues.²³ Photos of faces expressing happiness, fear, surprise, sadness, anger, disgust, and interest were easily identified by observers in at least six different countries—some of which were very isolated and primitive. Ekman reasoned that previous studies which showed persons from different literate cultures associating the same emotion concepts with the same facial behaviors did not prove universality. The exposure of such persons to the mass media might have taught them to recognize unique aspects of faces in other cultures. However, in several studies with preliterate cultures (New Guinea) which did not have widespread contact with mass media, Ekman found results comparable to those found in literate Eastern and Western cultures. In these studies, stories were told to the subjects who were then asked to select one of three facial photos which reflected the emotion

²¹Darwin also argued that some affect states were universal to mankind, cf. C. Darwin, *The Expression of the Emotions in Men and Animals* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1896).

²²J. R. Davitz, ed., *The Communication of Emotional Meaning* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964):19-20.

²³P. Ekman and W. V. Friesen, "Constants Across Cultures in the Face and Emotion," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 17 (1971):124-29. Also: P. Ekman, "Universals and Cultural Differences in Facial Expressions of Emotion," in *Nebraska Symposium on Motivation*, ed. J. Cole (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1972).

¹⁹T. Stern, "Drum and Whistle Languages: An Analysis of Speech Surrogates," *American Anthropologist* 59 (1957):487-506.

²⁰Ekman and Friesen, "Repertoire of Nonverbal Behavior."

of the story. Thus, there does seem to be a universal association between particular facial muscular patterns and discrete emotions. It should be noted that this is only a specific element of universality and does not suggest that all aspects of facial affect displays are universal—as Ekman and Friesen testify:

... we believe that, while the facial muscles which move when a particular affect is aroused are the same across cultures, the evoking stimuli, the linked effects, the display rules and the behavioral consequences all can vary enormously from one culture to another.²⁴

In fact, Ekman and Friesen have suggested an alternative to the totally inherited theory. They propose that perhaps affective facial displays evolve in the same way for each individual during the course of his development. For instance, the disgust affect display may evolve from each person's movement of the mouth and nose involved in ejecting a bad taste or smell.

Summary

The term *nonverbal* is commonly used to describe all human communication events which transcend spoken or written words. At the same time we should realize that many of these nonverbal events and behaviors are interpreted through verbal symbols. In this sense, then, they are not truly *nonverbal*. The theoretical writings and research on nonverbal communication can be broken down into the following seven areas: (1) body motion or kinesics (emblems, illustrators, affect displays, regulators, and adaptors), (2) physical characteristics, (3) touching behavior, (4) paralanguage (vocal qualities and vocalizations), (5) proxemics, (6) artifacts, (7) environment. Nonverbal communication should not be studied as an isolated unit, but as an inseparable part of the total communication process. Nonverbal communication may serve to repeat, contradict, substitute, complement, accent, or regulate verbal communication. Nonverbal communication is important because of the role it plays in the total communication system, the tremendous quantity of informational cues it gives in any particular situation, and because of its use in fundamental areas of our daily life. Nonverbal behavior is partly taught, partly imitative, and partly instinctive. There is a growing body of evidence which suggests a pancultural (or universal) element in emotional facial behavior, but this does not suggest there are not cultural differences in

such things as the circumstances which elicit an emotion, the display rules which govern the management of facial behavior in certain settings, and the action consequences of an emotion.

FOR DISCUSSION AND REVIEW

1. Knapp suggests that kinesic behavior can be classified into emblems, illustrators, affect displays, regulators, and adaptors. Define each term, and given an example of each based on your own experience. Do you agree with Knapp's statements about how aware we are of each category?
2. Knapp describes physical characteristics as "influential nonverbal cues." Do you agree that physical characteristics are "influential"? Defend your answer with specific examples.
3. Explain the statement "Paralanguage deals with how something is said and not [with] what is said."
4. Give specific examples of the effects in particular situations of touching behavior, proxemics, artifacts, and environmental factors.
5. Knapp emphasizes that "nonverbal behavior cannot be studied in isolation from the total communication process." How does he support this assertion? (Consider, for example, the various relationships that are possible between verbal and nonverbal behavior.)
6. Discuss the relative importance in human communication of the nonverbal component. Be specific; use examples to support your opinions.
7. The origin and development of individuals' nonverbal behaviors are not clear, but Knapp discusses Ekman and Friesen's three sources. What are they? How much importance do you think should be attributed to each? Be prepared to defend your answer.

²⁴Ekman and Friesen, "Repertoire of Nonverbal Behavior," p. 73.