

NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION IN BUSINESS

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Abstract: *Nonverbal communication plays a crucial role in communication, complementing what we express verbally and providing clues to our real emotions and intentions. Gestures, facial expressions and posture contribute to building or diminishing confidence in interactions. Congruence between verbal and non-verbal messages is essential for clear and effective communication, while discrepancies can cause confusion. In addition, the meaning of nonverbal language varies according to context and culture, requiring adaptability and sensitivity. Mastering this type of communication can improve personal and professional relationships.*

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1. Introduction

Verbal or nonverbal communication is a characteristic of living beings, both living beings and animal entities cannot survive without interacting, i.e., communicating. If we look at communication from a scientific point of view, it can be defined as a process of transmitting information from one individual to another individual, or from one group to another group of individuals. Besides information, feelings, opinions, views or attitudes are also transmitted.

Communication has been a much-researched topic over the centuries, many researchers have tried to delve into its depths. The word communication has acquired over the centuries different connotations, it is present in the framework of several fields of science such as biology, sociology or cybernetics.

Synergology – from the Greek *syn*: together, *ergo*: body movement and *logos*: speech – is a recent discipline (emerged in the 1990s at the initiative of Philippe Turchet), which allows the analysis and decoding of body language. Story (2022) states that there is a coherence between body language and the message that a person transmits. Deciphering the numerous clues of non-verbal communication is useful, sometimes even essential, not only in the personal sphere, but also in professional contexts, for example in medicine (pediatrics), psychology, education, business, politics, international relations and negotiations. During a private or business meeting, after just a few seconds we are able to decide whether a person

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we are interacting with seems likeable or if we do not trust them. Numerous studies show that during an interview, the decision of recruiters comes very early, in the first part of the meeting and that initial impressions are decisive for the fate of candidates. (Barrier, 2019: 14).

We will start by presenting different definitions of communication as seen through several fields of science. A biologist defines communication as “an action of an organism or a cell that alters the likely patterns of behavior of another organism or another cell, in a manner adaptive for one or both participants” from the perspective of Dinu (2014) in the paper “Comunicarea”. Carl I. Hovland, Irving I. Janis and Harold H. Kelley (2014) are of the opinion that communication is a process by which an individual (the communicator) transmits stimuli (usually verbal) with the goal of changing the behavior of other individuals (the listener).

Other researchers who have given new meaning to the concept of communication are Charles E. Osgood, Shannon Claude and Weaver Warren. In his paper “A Vocabulary for Talking about Communication”, Charles E. Osgood (1987) states that: in the most general sense, communication is said to occur whenever one system, i.e., one source, influences another system, i.e., a receiver, by means of alternative signals that can be transmitted through the channel that connects them.

Researchers Shannon, C. and Weaver, W. (1963) agree in their paper “The Mathematical Theory of Communication”: the term communication has a very broad meaning, it encompasses all the processes by which one mind can affect another. Obviously, communication includes not only written or spoken language, but also music, the visual arts, theater, ballet, and, in fact, all human behavior. The two authors extend the definition of communication to include all processes by which one mechanism (e.g., an airplane's automatic equipment for spotting and calculating its trajectory) affects another mechanism (e.g., a guided missile in pursuit of that airplane). The two researchers add another definition communication has a very broad meaning; it encompasses all the processes by which one spirit can affect another spirit. Obviously, it includes not only written or spoken language, but also music, visual arts, theater, ballet, and, in fact, all human behavior. In conclusion they are of the opinion that communication can be reduced to the conclusion that communication is all the processes by which one mechanism affects another mechanism.

The Palo Alto school comes with another approach present in the famous axioms of communication, supporting the view that non-communication does not exist. Proponents of this school believe that our social status, temperament and habits are revealed to us through our facial expressions, dress, gait, gestures and even our silence.

According to Professor Ray Birdwhistell (1971) of the University of Louisville, nonverbal communication is the communication that conveys the most messages to the interlocutor through facial expressions, posture, gestures and body language. Only 7% of the messages we transmit are verbal, 35% are vocal and 55% are non-verbal. The same professor is also of the opinion, when analyzing the behavior of an average person, that an average person does not talk for more than 10 minutes, and that the verbal part of communication represents 35%, compared to 65% non-verbal communication. Verbal communication is mainly used to convey information to interlocutors, as opposed to non-verbal communication, which is used to convey feelings, opinions, attitudes. Speakers are not always aware of the non-verbal message they are transmitting; in many cases the verbal message contradicts the non-verbal one. The non-verbal language is largely influenced by the cultural function, the body

position, mimicry, gestures of the speaker differ depending on the environment where the speaker comes from or the environment where he/she was formed as an individual.

2. Body language

Nonverbal communication refers to several aspects, we are dealing with body language, which involves gestures, facial expression and body position.

Another element of nonverbal language is the environment in which you work, the intimate, public space.

Another aspect is time management, i.e., our subject is always on time for appointments or always late, who to devote personal time to and who not.

Another clue is related to how they dress, how much emphasis they put on clothing accessories and personal hygiene. If our subject prefers warm colors, this will stimulate communication, while cold colors will inhibit it.

Another element of nonverbal language is the relationship with the objects that surround him, i.e., the decoration of his home, the car he drives, the books he reads, the objects he likes.

The nonverbal language is defined by paraverbal communication, the voice plays an important role here through its intensity, rhythm, speed and vocal characteristics laughter, crying, whispering.

Nonverbal communication can also be mediated by certain objects such as handkerchiefs, scarves, hats used as a sign of greeting or parting or for signaling the presence of our subject. Various movements of the limbs such as mass flapping or trooping are often interpreted by professional speakers as signs of boredom but in fact, they are signs of the speaker's impatience.

According to the canons of psychoanalysis, gestures that involve bringing objects close to the lips or placing them in the mouth is the subject's attempt to revive the feeling of security that an infant experience in the mother's arms, and therefore placing the arm of a pair of glasses in the mouth is a gesture of reassurance, a gesture that is also found in smokers.

3. Communication through personal space and personal objects

Another clue to nonverbal communication is the personal space set by a manager, the distance he or she keeps from the subordinate, the place where he or she has positioned his or her desk, all of which give us clues about his or her personality and leadership style.

Several communication distances can be identified in nonverbal communication:

- *intimate distance* which is divided into two categories close zone. In this category we deal with intimate encounters with close friends and children. The second category is the distant zone, more than 0.5m, sufficient for a hand holding, but inaccessible to those with whom we are not intimate. There are also some exceptions encounters in elevators or crowded means of transport, people tend to look away to avoid proximity.
- *Personal distance* which is again divided into the near zone, which is reserved for the new close ones (it amounts to 0.5-0.8m) and the far zone at 0.7-1.3m. This distance provides a degree of privacy for personal discussions.

- *the social distance* represented by the near zone at 1.2-2m used for business discussions. This distance can be used to indicate superiority, power and dominance without uttering any words. The far zone, at a distance of 2-3.5m is used in business and social relationships. If the manager reduces this distance, it means that he wants a closer relationship with the subordinate. This distance allows work to be done without disturbing coworkers and without arguments.
- *The public distance* which is divided into the close zone at 3.5-8 m used in a corporate meeting or in a course taught by a teacher. The far zone, more than 8m, is usually reserved for politicians or public persons, for security reasons and to emphasize personal power and dominance.
- Another element that plays an important role in nonverbal communication mediated by objects is the personal telephone, ostentatiously displayed it can be interpreted as evidence of material wealth. It is advisable to turn it off or put it on silent mode during a meeting. If we are expecting an important call, the phone will be put on vibrate mode, if we are contacted, we will excuse ourselves and retire to another room.

Another cue present in nonverbal communication is the scent our subject is wearing. We are unaware of the decisions we make when we purchase a perfume, but it betrays the subject's personality.

Floral fragrances are most common, the floral notes of the perfume bring out femininity and the desire to live life to the fullest, seizing every moment.

Perfumes with fruity notes emphasize the freshness and color in our subject's life.

Spicy fragrances betray the dark nature of the subject, but femininity cannot be excluded either.

Sweet scents betray a person with a strong sense of nostalgia, the subject old shows and vintage clothing, however the subject will betray a fresh and new look, a charming person.

4. Tactile communication

Another area of non-verbal communication is tactile communication, meant to convey a message, a signal, a communication also presents in the animal world. This communication is also found in the societies evaluated, betraying an instinctual character, censored at some point by the conscious.

Researchers have identified four categories of touch. The first is touch that conveys positive emotions, has a positive effect on the interlocutor. This category includes caressing, comforting touching, encouraging touch, i.e., a silent squeeze of the hand, a pat on the shoulder, soothing, affectionate touch.

The second category is playful touch, which can be autonomous or linked to a verbal communication. This touch simulates a caress or a blow in a playful context. This kind of touching has an abusive character, but also a close connection.

The third category is that of control, here are included the tactile signs that are intended to convey behavior or attitude, such a touch can suggest discretion, an indemnity or restraint, but can also be linked to a verbal communication.

The fourth category is ritual touch, which carries magical meanings in the religious space such as the transmission of grace between a priest and a priest, between a priest and a believer, the touching of a sacred object such as an icon, but also the shaking of a hand in

greeting, the slapping of the palms of two people in a sign of good wishes, congratulations. These greetings convey involvement, but sometimes become meaningless and purely formal. The skin is a living organ, capable of receiving and transmitting signals. The skin is part of our body, not just covering it, with it we identify which race or culture we belong to. It is through the skin that we generate information about our self-esteem, health, age, the cosmetics industry and dermatology show how important a role the skin plays in modern society.

The highly socialized and long debated skin touching is the shaking hands in greeting or parting gesture implies certain rules, which are taken into account are the following: ladies extend their hand first to greet, the older one initiates the greeting in relation to the younger one, the one with a leading poise initiates the greeting in relation to subordinates, regardless of gender and age. As for the greeting when entering a room, the rules are completely different: the young person will initiate the greeting, the ladies will be greeted first, and the subordinate will greet the boss, regardless of age.

Communication professional Allan Pease (1993) talks in his book "Body Language" about the three main ways of shaking hands: glove, dead fish, vise. Each of the three ways has different meanings.

The glove way of shaking hands is specific to the political area, the person who initiates this type of greeting wants to be considered an honest, trustworthy person, a true friend.

The dead fish handshake reflects an unpleasant feeling and a lack of energy on the part of the initiator.

The vise-like greeting suggests aggressiveness and shows a lack of knowledge of social norms on the part of the greeter.

In addition to these three main types of handshaking, there are other ways of shaking hands that emphasize the way we relate to other people, our feelings, desires, and the psychological state of our interlocutor.

A greeting that only involves grasping the fingertips is a forced gesture that denotes lack of self-confidence.

If a greeting is accompanied by the squeezing of the upper arm by the interlocutor, there is a penetration into the intimate area, which betrays a physical closeness between the two interlocutors, even a strong emotional bond, if the reaction is not one of rejection. If the reaction is not reciprocal, the interlocutors will be regarded with distrust.

Another form of greeting is hand kissing, which in our culture is an outdated form of greeting, which can be considered a form of offense for both women and men, being considered a form of domination, as well as considering women as "love objects". Men kiss ladies' hands more out of excessive politeness, out of a desire to show that they are very polite and well-mannered, but end up being funny. The new greeting is the sketching of a hug by lightly touching shoulders and bringing lips close together, a gesture that nowadays betrays the joy of reunion. Kissing both cheeks has become a custom in our culture, although it is not part of the code of good manners.

5. Another body language

Body language in general plays an important role in nonverbal communication. In a business meeting a person can perceive the interlocutor's attitude only from certain movements, facial expressions. A positive attitude is betrayed by a smile, a relaxed face and lips, relaxed hands

and feet, eye contact. People with an open attitude orient their body towards the interlocutor and lean their body towards the interlocutor. In dialog the positive person approves and encourages the interlocutor with nodding, approving head movements. A positive person will never use a high volume and the tone of voice will vary.

In contrast to a positive attitude, we have a completely different dark or negative body language. People with a negative attitude avoid eye contact with the interlocutor, avoid smiling, have a frowning face, the corners of the mouth turned down, arms are folded in front of the chest and shoulders stooped. People with a negative attitude turn their body partially or completely in the opposite direction of the interlocutor, sometimes they position their arms on their hips, their tone of voice will be in most cases monotonous, betraying indifference. This person's tone of voice will be either too high or too soft. People with a closed attitude will nervously move their feet, tap their finger repetitively on the table and constantly check the time in a gesture of frustration and impatience.

Another aspect that needs a deeper dive is eye contact as part of nonverbal communication. Eye contact is strongly important in interpersonal relations because it gives us important feedback about the interlocutor's reactions. The exchange of glances between interlocutors introduces reciprocity in interpersonal relations. In terms of eye contact, several aspects can be analyzed; intensity of eye contact, direction of gaze and duration of eye contact. The intensity of gaze can be analyzed starting from the value of 0 when the interlocutor does not even look at his conversation partner and the value of 10 when the two conversation partners look into each other's eyes, so the direction of gaze will meet. The duration of gaze varies depending on the intention of the interlocutor. The intensity of the gaze is higher when the interlocutor is listening to the speech than when the interlocutor is speaking. Gaze intensity will be at its highest when the two speakers are attracted to each other.

If the interlocutor looks down at the speaker with his head bent down, then we are dealing with an obedient person, fearful of criticism and judgment, a person who seeks the approval of the interlocutor, in the situation where the interlocutor looks down, this behavior suggests recognition of power, of the domination of the other, even submission and guilt.

An incensed look, half-closed eyes indicate a state of tension and discomfort. A person who looks away during a conversation indicates a desire to escape from the conversation or to look for something else that is out of one's field of interest. Narrowing of the eyes may also indicate evaluation, the content being exposed not being perceived as true. We narrow our eyes when we want to restrict the penetration of images that do not, please us, when we are upset, when we hear voices, upsetting sounds.

Giving a short glance to the interlocutor is a sign of irritation or depreciation of a remark of the interlocutor, while looking from side to side is a sign of lying, conspiracy, with such a glance the interlocutor is looking if he is being listened to, if he has succeeded in arousing interest.

6. Hand and finger gestures

When our interlocutor, during a presentation, touches his nose, this gesture indicates that the interlocutor does not consider you a trustworthy person, he analyzes you thoroughly, to see who you really are, beyond the social mask you wear. A critical assessment is given by the gesture of the hands resting on the cheek, with the index finger raised, the lips covered by another finger and the thumb supporting the chin.

Raising the shoulders indicates that our interlocutor does not know or does not understand what is being discussed. This gesture is also accompanied by open palms, raised shoulders, raised eyebrows.

Hands clasping is a frustrating gesture, indicating that the interlocutor is repressing a negative attitude. The hands can be positioned at 3 levels: hands clasped at face level, clasped hands placed on the table or in the middle position and the last position: clasped hands placed on the lap, placed down when standing. It seems that in the framework of a negotiation, the most difficult is to communicate with a person with the hands inclined in the upper part of the body, in the face area. There seems to be a connection between the level at which the hands are raised and the degree of indisposition of the interlocutor. In a negotiation it is necessary that the fingers are spread, the front part of the body and the palms are visible, otherwise the negative attitude will be maintained.

The helmet-tower hands posture as Birdwhistell called it, is in fact the exception to the rule, because it is used by confident, superior people who gesticulate little or not at all, people who in this way convey confidence in their own strengths.

People who position themselves behind the back of the head are usually people with managerial positions executives, managers, people who have professions such as accountant, lawyer, people who feel confident, dominant, people who consider themselves superior to others.

Children, when they are small, tend to cover their mouth visibly when they tell lies, so it happens with adults, except that adult involuntarily have the tendency to cover their mouth, a sign that they have said things that should not have been said. The left pointer fixed in the mouth area betrays the interlocutor's desire to manipulate, he prepares his arguments out of a desire to be as convincing as possible.

The position of the coif, with the head tilted downwards, is used by the listener rather than the speaker, a gesture often used by women, associated with the tilting of the head backwards, betrays an air of arrogance.

Another gesture used in particular by famous men in royal houses is the clasping of hands behind the body, emphasizing the chest in an act of courage. This gesture betrays superiority, confidence and courage.

The scratching of the neck around the neck below the ear, a gesture that is repeated about five times betrays disbelief, doubt and ineptitude, especially in the business area. If the interlocutor scratches his ear is a gesture of blocking negative information, this gesture has its roots in the gesture of a child who covers his ears out of a desire not to hear evil. The pulling of the collar is a gesture associated with lying and fear of being caught by the speaker who has just told a lie, which produces a tingling in the area of the face and neck.

The stroking of the beard is another gesture present in some presentations of new ideas to groups of people, we need to observe their reaction carefully. Most listeners will raise their hand to their face and use various evaluative gestures. This gesture of stroking the chin shows that the listener is making a decision about the idea. When we ask the listeners to decide, the evaluation gestures will change into decision gestures, and their next movements will show whether the listeners have made a negative or positive decision.

Similar to males in the animal kingdom, the human male also resorts to gestures of impatience around women. The male will arrange his tie, collar, remove the dust from his jacket, arrange his cufflinks, shirt, jacket, belt, turn his body towards the woman and his paw towards her.

7. The position of the legs

The position of the legs betrays the mood of the interlocutor, if the interlocutor positions his right leg in front, it betrays a rational state, and the left leg an emotional state. Positioning the feet in the shape of a stellar emphasizes restraint, mental defense, the creation of a more comfortable personal territory than the environment that the interlocutor perceives as hostile. The position of crossed legs, usually the right one crossed over the left one, is a common position, present especially in the European area. In the British culture, it is used to express a nervous, reserved, defensive attitude. This is not an isolated gesture; it is accompanied by other negative gestures such as crossing the arms.

The folding of the chair is a gesture that betrays a defensive attitude. Centuries ago, our ancestors used shields to protect themselves from enemy spears, modern man uses objects within reach whenever he is exposed to physical or verbal attack. He retreats behind a gate, a fence, or an automobile door, or he presses an office chair. The back of the chair defends his body like a shield and the interlocutor becomes an aggressive and dominant fighter. The knee-on-knee position, also known as the American position, betrays an attitude of contention or competition, and is common in the American area.

Postures that intimidate: People who flaunt their new purchases, a new car, motorboat, or other personal item, put their feet on or hug these items, showing everyone that the item belongs to them, intimidating those around them.

Body language: If two people are having a conversation and their bodies are facing each other, it is not appropriate to disturb them. If we want to interact with a person, if that person is not interested in having a conversation with us, they will only turn their torso, but if a person is interested in interacting with us, then the tops of their legs will be turned towards us.

8. Dress language

Dress is one of the most influential means of nonverbal communication that reflects the personality of the individual, especially in the business area. There are 4 variants of dress code for professional activities.

Business attire is formal and conservative, specific to corporations, lawyers, insurance, sales and consulting. In these areas only suits of quality materials are acceptable, for both men and women.

Business-casual attire is specific to the areas of marketing, education, medical, human resources, real estate. Practical, relaxed, semi-traditional suits and dresses, soft fabrics and relaxing prints are accepted. This outfit is ideal for when you are meeting with a client or business partner and you want to look business dressed, but not formal.

Artistic innovative business outfit is specific to the advertising, public relations, fashion industry, showbiz, luxury store owners. This variant is similar to business attire in terms of materials, but allows for innovations in terms of color and cut.

Casual attire is specific to organizations with a flexible management and workplaces where employees do not have contact with customers or are rarely seen by them. This attire expresses comfort and personal touch. This outfit involves wearing a variety of clothing in

addition to T-shirts and jeans, including jewelry for men and shorts for women. It is the easiest way to express sexual interest and availability nonverbally.

The basic principles of correct dressing are as follows: a sober, formal, conservative outfit; in the workplace, for both men and women, the classic, conventional style is always the most appropriate, and is also recommended in business, especially in financial and banking activities.

Matching outfits are a must. This may seem difficult and a waste of time when you have to combine separate items of clothing (not part of the suit), but it is an essential step to project competence and credibility. Jewelry worn in business will always be simple, muted and make-up will be entirely discreet. A businessman without a tie can be compared to a "doctor who doesn't wear a white coat", says Alexandru Caucus, a Romanian creative studio owner. Very important is wearing a tie correctly. The tip of the tie should cover the belt buckle of the pants. The tie pin is worn only at special events. Buttons are worn double cuffed and complement outfits of all kinds including business or gala, a business outfit request simple black, white, gray or ivory wedding cufflinks. The shoe must match the belt, as it is a fashion element that should be chosen with great care, as it can completely spoil the image a person wants to convey.

9. Color language

The color of the clothes we wear influences how we are perceived as individuals and can influence success or failure in business. Each color has the power to convey information, which can generate certain emotions. You might not wear red in a business environment, but you can stand out in an organization if you wear a strong color that increases your powers of concentration. More unusual colors like purple and burgundy express elegance as well as material/intellectual wealth. Brown betrays assertiveness and a strong character, while green induces a state of calm and tranquility. Yellow evokes enthusiasm and should be worn in moderation in the business area. Blue is the business color that expresses sincerity, while navy blue betrays loyalty. These two colors are recommended for interviews. The color white sends to order, politeness. Black is associated with elegance and power, but the favorite business color is gray, which expresses intelligence and self-control.

10. The language of time

Punctuality is one of the most important elements of the informal time system. Interpersonal relationships depend to a large extent on the punctuality of partners. Keeping yourself waiting can be a trick to make yourself more desirable, it can indicate the lack of importance you attach to the meeting, but it can also be a sign of the person's inability to organize activities. "Being on time" depends on the concrete situational context. In some situations, being five minutes late requires apologizing, explaining what has happened or inventing a plausible reason as credible as possible. In other situations, being 15-30 minutes late for an appointment - a visit to a colleague's home, for example - is almost obligatory. "I arrived exactly on time!" never pleases the host, at least in our culture. At a business meeting, it is customary in England to exchange a few brief pleasantries and then begin the business talk. In Saudi Arabia, no business is discussed until coffee or tea is served and a few personal

matters are discussed. Starting business immediately is a sign of bad manners and lack of business experience. Sometimes keeping subordinates at the door delights the bosses. This is how they express their importance, forgetting that we are transient in life and in office. Taking other people's time is no more and no less than theft; just 'time is money' and a gross lack of courtesy.

11. The language of silence

Knowing when to be silent is a human quality prized since ancient times. Even through silence, people communicate something: approval, disapproval, discretion, reason, keeping a secret, admiration. A manager resorts to silence as a means of nonverbal communication because: he disapproves of certain opinions and does not want to discuss them in adversarial, he believes that there are certain facts, situations, on which it is better to fall silent, he does not want to divulge a work secret, a secret, he does not want to harm someone, he appreciates that time can solve a delicate situation, he believes that if he speaks, he makes enemies. On the other hand, by carefully using silence at key moments, in other words by preparing to listen, we can encourage the speaker to continue or to express feelings and attitudes that he would undoubtedly not otherwise have done. Silence, then, is a powerful communication tool, but it must be used skillfully.

12. Conclusions

Nonverbal communication plays a crucial role in communication, complementing what we express verbally and providing clues to our real emotions and intentions. Gestures, facial expressions and posture contribute to building or diminishing confidence in interactions. Congruence between verbal and non-verbal messages is essential for clear and effective communication, while discrepancies can cause confusion. In addition, the meaning of nonverbal language varies according to context and culture, requiring adaptability and sensitivity. Mastering this type of communication can improve personal and professional relationships.

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