

PSYCHOLOGY BEHIND NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION

It is common knowledge that humans employ two major communication types: verbal and nonverbal. Our body language, in comparison with other verbal means of communication, is unique. If we want to understand people accurately, we must combine information from the body and verbal expressions into one overall picture. These theses will consider a detailed outlook on nonverbal signals as means of interaction.

What is nonverbal communication?

Nonverbal communication is the intentional or unintentional transfer of information without words or without speech signs. Such nonverbals include gestures, posture, facial expressions, tactile sensations, physical movements (kinesics), body adornments (clothing, jewelry, hairstyle, tattoos, etc.) and even the tone, timbre and volume of a person's voice [1, c. 11]. These signals can give hints, as well as additional information and meaning beyond the oral message. They will help you to understand a person, the motives and reasons for his behavior — and this, in turn, will allow you to build your behavior tactics. Thus, we must acknowledge the differences between each type of nonverbal signals.

Types of nonverbal communication

In addition, it is vital to distinguish ways of nonverbal speech. The first step towards deeper exploration of nonverbal communication and behavior was laid with the launching of Charles Darwin's book “The Expression of Emotions in Humans and Animals” in 1872 [1, c. 8]. From then on, much research has been carried out concerning the types and expressions of non-lexical speech. Although these signals are frequently unnoticed and we lack conscious

awareness of them, studies have categorized nine types of nonverbal communication [3, c. 286]:

1. **Facial expressions** — our faces are extremely revealing, given the capacity to convey every emotion possible without uttering a word. Moreover, facial expressions are universal — they are the same in different cultures.

2. **Gestures** — conscious movements and signals are extremely common ways to talk without words. Hand signals and finger signs are used as general gestures (waving, pointing, using fingers to indicate numbers). Other gestures are arbitrary and associated with a certain culture: for instance, Italians are famous for using specific hand gestures as an alternative form of communication.

3. **Body language and posture** — posture and movement can also be a great source of information. Particularly eloquent is the body language that contradicts the spoken words: for example, if you notice that your interlocutor has changed the “open” pose to a “closed” one (crossed his arms on his chest, crossed his legs), it means that he does not like your words, or he does not agree with them.

4. **Paralinguistics** — it is a vocal communication that is not actually related to a language itself. It includes factors such as tone of the voice, its inflection and pitch.

5. **Proxemics** — an equally important type of nonverbal communication is the need for “personal space”. The distance that we consider intimate varies according to a range of factors: social norms, external factors, personality traits and the degree of friendliness.

6. **Eye gaze** — another essential part of non-lexical information transmission behavior is gazing, blinking, and eye expression. When we encounter people or things we like, the blinking speed increases, and the eyes widen. Another person’s gaze is an indicator of a full spectrum of emotions: from hostility to interest and attractiveness.

7. **Haptics** — it is a touch as a form of speech. Numerous studies have been done on the significance of mother's touch during infancy and early childhood. A classic study of monkeys conducted by Harry Harlow showed that deprivation of touch and contact hinders development [4, c. 10].

8. **Appearance** — people's choice of clothing, its color, hairstyle and other factors that make up the appearance are also considered as means of nonverbal communication. Studies in the field of color psychology has established that different colors can evoke different moods [5, c. 921]. Appearance is also able to change physiological reactions, interpretations, judgments. It is believed that the first impression you make about a person is based on his appearance.

9. **Artefacts** — these are objects and images used as ways of communicating without words. For instance, on your social media page you might choose a profile picture to represent your identity online and to share your personal information. A uniform, for example, can be used to provide a huge amount of information about an individual. Uniform is worn by a soldier or a policeman, while a doctor wears a white lab coat. At first glance, these outfits are an indicator of one's profession to others.

Nonverbal communication vs verbal communication

Recent psychological research indicates that a greater amount of information is transmitted in the process of nonverbal communication than in oral form. As experts have established, a person in the process of conversation transmits from 60 to 90 percent of information using non-verbal means of communication [3, c. 284].

One could also say about the differences between the two types of communication, which, as a rule, are the following: verbal communication is conscious, and nonverbal signals are considered much more automatic and unconscious by the individual. The individual himself rarely specifically plans his own gestures and body movements during a conversation, but, as a rule, thinks through what he plans to say or write. Nonverbal communication is not

often understandable and determined by precise rules, as during verbal communication. Overall, nonverbal communication significantly complements, demonstrates or emphasizes what a person says.

Interpreting nonverbal communication

Nowadays, it is said that nonverbal networking systems use their own sign system, which can be considered as a specific code. Any information should be encoded so that the system of codification and decodification is known to all interlocutors. In the case of verbal communication (speech), this codification system is well-known, and in nonverbal communication, it is necessary in each case to determine what is considered a code here. Your communication partner should be provided with a code, otherwise this system of nonverbal communication will not give any semantic addition to verbal communication. Nonverbal communication is subject to certain rules that you need to know in order to correctly interpretate the code. In our daily routine, we unconsciously follow them and feel when they are violated. Among the basic rules are the following [2, c. 80]:

- 1) it is necessary to use nonverbal signs so that they can be identified and recognized;
- 2) we need to be able to translate our feelings and intentions into nonverbal means (to encode);
- 3) the observer must be able to interpret nonverbal signs (decode them);
- 4) it is necessary to take into account the peculiarities of nonverbal messages (contextuality, ambiguity, spontaneity and unintentionality);
- 5) it is necessary to consider such factors as the situation, personality, gender, age, significance, culture of communication partners, etc.

All things considered, nonverbal communication that occurs without words accounts for a larger percentage of communication. This topic is actively researched by psychologists in present day. The recognition and concept of such behavior contributes to the achievement of the highest degree of mutual understanding.

References

1. Гарькавец С. А. Психология невербального общения: учебное пособие. Северодонецк: Изд-во «Петит», 2015. — 214 с.
2. Куницына В. Н., Казаринова Н. В., Погольша В. М. Межличностное общение. СПб.: Питер, 2001. — 544 с.
3. Eunson B. Communicating in the 21st Century, 4th Edition. John Wiley & Sons, 2015. — 688 p.
4. Harlow H. F. The nature of love. // American Psychologist. — 1958. — Volume 13. Issue 12. — p. 673 — 685.
5. Taylor C., Schloss K., Palmer S.E. et al. Color preferences in infants and adults are different. // Psychon Bull Rev. — 2013. — Volume 20. — p. 916 — 922.