4 Non-Verbal Communication

Activities

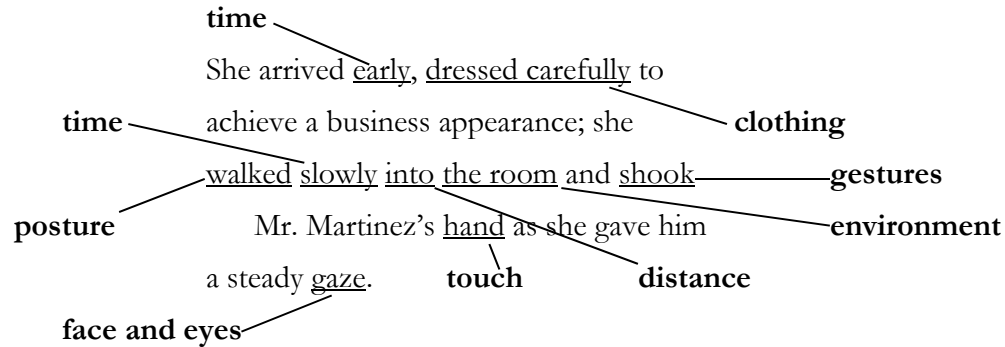# Activity 1: Categories of Non-Verbal Behaviour

Purpose
To analyze and categorize non-verbal behaviours

Instructions
1. Select a paragraph from a news article.
2. Underline or highlight as many references as you can to different types of non-verbal communication.
3. Draw a line from the words (or number them) to the margin and write the words describing the **type** of non-verbal behaviour in the margin: posture and gesture, face and eyes, voice, touch, physical attractiveness, clothing, distance, time, territoriality, or environment.

Example:

time

She arrived early, dressed carefully to

time   achieve a business appearance; she   **clothing**

walked slowly into the room and shook   **gestures**

posture   Mr. Martinez's hand as she gave him   **environment**

a steady gaze.   **touch**   **distance**

face and eyes

Your turn:

Insert two or three paragraphs from news articles (or print sources such as magazines) that make references to non-verbal communication. Label each type of non-verbal communication referred to.

Activity 2: Non-Verbal Impression Management

Purpose
To develop skills in using non-verbal communication to manage impressions and define relationships

Instructions
1. Read each situation. After reading it, describe as many non-verbal behaviours as you think are appropriate to help you manage the situation.
2. After recording your own thoughts, compare responses with your classmates.
3. Use as many **types** of non-verbal behaviour as you deem appropriate: posture and gesture, face and eyes, voice, touch, physical attractiveness, clothing, distance, time, territoriality, or environment.

Part I: Identity Management
1. You want to be seen as a competent and conscientious person who is also outgoing and friendly at your new job with Canada Customs and Revenue.
2. You left home after high school and now when you go back home you want your parents to see you as different from the rebellious high school student that you were. You want them to see you as a serious college student.

Part II: Defining the Relationship
3. You want to indicate to co-workers that you are warm and friendly, *and* that you are married and not available to date, flirt, or party.
4. You want to indicate to a sister or brother that the days of competitive sibling rivalry are over and that now (age 23) you want a close, respectful relationship in which you see each other as individuals.
5. You are extremely busy with school this semester but want your significant other/spouse to know how much you care about him/her even though you have little free time this semester.

Summary:
What types of non-verbal behaviours do you tend to rely on the most to create first impressions?

How could channels that you don't frequently use assist you in impression management?

Activity 3: Functions of Non-Verbal Communication

Purpose
To identify the functions of non-verbal communication in context

Instructions: Part I
For each scenario below, tell which function of communication is being illustrated: repeating, substituting, complementing, accenting, regulating, contradicting, or deceiving.

_____ 1. The teacher pointed to the letter "s" on the board each time she pronounced it for the first-graders.

_____ 2. The umpire shouted "safe" but made the sign for "out."

_____ 3. The parent looked at the child with a look that clearly told her the topic of "chicken guts" was off limits at the dinner table.

_____ 4. Each time the politician said the word "taxes" he pounded on the table.

_____ 5. Without saying a word, he just slipped his arm around her shoulders as if to tell the others that they were a couple.

_____ 6. First the instructor explained the karate form, then she demonstrated it.

_____ 7. The father did not want his children to be frightened in the storm, so he masked his own fear and wore a smile and confident look.

1. Are there some behaviours that might fulfill more than one function? Which ones?

2. Are functions always distinctly different or are there ways in which they overlap? Explain your answer.

Instructions: Part II
For each function, think of two examples (from your life, from films or stories) that illustrate that function.

Repeating
1.
2.

Substituting
1.
2.

Complementing
1.
2.

Accenting
1.
2.

Regulating
1.
2.

Contradicting
1.
2.

Deceiving
1.
2.

Instructions: Part III
Many cartoons are based on contradicting non-verbal behaviours. Insert a cartoon here to illustrate that.

Activity 4: Practising Non-Verbal Skills

Purpose
To illustrate the richness of non-verbal communication in conveying a variety of meanings

Instructions
1. Choose a partner.
2. Take turns saying the following sentences in each of the ways described.

a) **Target person: your friend**
Verbal message: I'd like to go with you this weekend.

Context: You frequently go away with each other, this is just routine, another weekend.
What non-verbal channels are used most distinctly to convey the message this way?

Context: You're hesitant. You've never gone with this friend on the weekend and you're suggesting it for the first time.
What non-verbal channels are used most distinctly to convey the message this way?

Context: Your friend is taking someone else with him/her, but you'd like to go. You wish you were the one invited to go with him/her.
What non-verbal channels are used most distinctly to convey the message this way?

b) **Target person: your spouse or significant other**
Verbal message: Do you want to go to the office party with me?

Context: I don't really want to go; I'm too tired, and I sure hope you don't want to go.
What non-verbal channels are used most distinctly to convey the message this way?

Context: I really want you to come with me because I'm excited about going.
What non-verbal channels are used most distinctly to convey the message this way?

Context: I have to go so I will, but I'm not excited about it. I'd like you to go with me so at least it isn't so miserable.
What non-verbal channels are used most distinctly to convey the message this way?

c) **Target person: your boss**
Verbal message: Do you think I'll get a promotion this year?

Context: sincere honest request for information
What non-verbal channels are used most distinctly to convey the message this way?

Context: as if you're already convinced you won't, you're sad, disillusioned
What non-verbal channels are used most distinctly to convey the message this way?

Context: as if it's a big joke because you know for sure you won't (because you just did)
What non-verbal channels are used most distinctly to convey the message this way?

d) *Target:* your child
Verbal message: Well, you're free to choose the college and the major you want.

Context: Parents clearly want to convey the message that if the child doesn't do as they suggest there will be consequences for the child.
What non-verbal channels are used most distinctly to convey the message this way?

Context: Parents sincerely believe their child will make the best choices and they want their child to make choices. They will respect their child and support whatever choices are made.
What non-verbal channels are used most distinctly to convey the message this way?

Context: Parents really don't care. They've been through this with two older children and just really don't care what decision the child makes. They're just resigned to having no input.
What non-verbal channels are used most distinctly to convey the message this way?

Debrief:

1. Which situations were hardest for you to convey? Why?

2. Which were easiest? Why?

3. List three attitudes and feelings (besides those in the text) that are easy to express non-verbally.

4. List three ideas that are difficult to express non-verbally.

5. Give an example of a situation in which you think the non-verbal communication may be more important than the verbal and explain why.

6. Give an example of a situation in which you think the verbal communication may be more important than non-verbal and explain why.

Activity 5: Exploring the Web

Instructions

1. Trying to express emotion online is often done through the use of what is commonly called emoticons (keystrokes that are used to represent facial expressions). Go to http://mason.gmu.edu/~afinn/html/tele/conventions/emoticons.htm for an introduction to the use of emoticons.

   a) What categories of emoticons do you find?

   b) What generalizations can you make about the parts of the face frequently used in the attempt to express emotions online?

   c) Can you generalize about which kinds of emotions are and aren't commonly expressed in emoticons?

2. Deception is closely related to non-verbal communication. Research scholarly research on deception and non-verbal communication and answer the following questions:

   a) What is the year of the oldest piece of research you find?

   b) What was the specific topic?

   c) List the titles of at least five different journals that publish deception research.

   d) What inferences can you draw with regard to who is interested in research on deception?

3. Choose a particular topic of non-verbal communication that you would like to know more about. Where can you find more information on your topic? What are the titles of articles and specific journals that might inform your search?

Activity 6: Clothing and Non-Verbal Communication

Purpose
To apply and discuss the concept of clothing as non-verbal communicators of information

Instructions: Part I
Choose three people in your class. Analyze them based on what they are wearing and how they move. Consider what assumptions you can make about them, and then see how accurate you are.

Instructions: Part II
Elementary schools and high school often have dress codes. Radical haircuts or revealing clothing are frowned upon. Think about reasons why this might be so and debate within your group whether or not you think it is fair to have these restrictions imposed upon students. What do these deviations say about the person? What do they say about the institution?

Instructions: Part III
Tattoos are on the rise in the US and Canada. Sleeve tattoos are a kind of clothing—a permanent kind! How do different styles of tattoos communicate different messages? Give examples or three or four types of tattoos.

Activity 7: Liar, Liar

Purpose
To apply and evaluate concepts in non-verbal communication

Instructions
Have you ever caught another person telling a lie? How did you know the person was lying? In this activity, you will reflect on deceptive non-verbal behaviour and its consequences.

In about 50 to 80 words, write a brief retelling of a situation when you discovered someone was telling a lie. The lie might reflect a gentle social myth, such as when a child asks her mother about whether there really is a Santa, or the lie might reflect an individual's efforts to get away with something, such as a confrontation with someone stealing cash from the register. What features do you recall about what the person said and how the person said it? What made you feel uneasy? Did you call the person out on the lie immediately or did you wait?

Next, review the discussion of deception on page 148. Pay particular attention to Table 4.3, which discusses non-verbal behaviours and deception. Do any of these clues relate to your experience of catching another person in a lie? Write a short analysis of how your experience agrees with or disagrees with the discussion in the textbook.

Finally, imagine you were staging a brief theatrical scene of the time you caught another person in a lie. You want to leave the audience genuinely wondering whether the person was lying or not. Looking at what the textbook says and at your own analysis, write a few directions to the actor who will be telling the lie. Tell the actor how you think he/she should behave non-verbally to ensure that the audience (and the message recipient) will believe the lie.

To extend your learning further, work through some scenes in your study group or with classmates. Do others see deceptive behaviour the same way you do? Discuss your observations.

Activity 8: Ambiguous Behaviours

Purpose

To evaluate variable interpretations of non-verbal communication

Instructions

In the textbook you will see images that "read" ambiguously: they could communicate different messages depending on the context in which the message was sent (e.g., happiness, dismay, fear, anger, etc.). In this activity, you will collect images and ask other people to interpret them.

Using old, unwanted magazines and newspapers, collect three images of men and women displaying gestures, facial expressions, spatial distance, and other non-verbal behaviours. Try to choose images that could suggest more than one interpretation—for instance, a couple who are either nostalgic or on the verge of breaking up, or a man who is either laughing or about to shout in anger. Clip out each image, being sure to remove any titles, captions, or other words that might suggest how to interpret the image. Mount each image on a page you can share with others.

Now, ask other a range of people what they see in each image. Do the images tell different stories to different people? Pay attention to people's interpretations, particularly based on people's age, gender, and cultural background.

This activity should underline the idea that although non-verbal behaviour may be ambiguous, it always has communicative value.

Activity 9: Watching Micro-Expressions

Purpose
To interpret and share another person's non-verbal behaviour
To use sharing as practice for perception checking

Instructions

With a friend or classmate, watch the "Christmas (Baby Please Come Home)" Carpool Karaoke segment from *The Late Late Show with James Corden* (December 20, 2018) on YouTube. As you watch, write down the emotions (and in some cases, micro-emotions) you observe on James Corden's face and on the faces of the various guests as they sing and interact. Does your list match your friend's/classmate's list? Where do you diverge? What do the similarities or differences in your reading of emotions suggest to you?

Activity 10: Characters as Presenting Selves

Purpose

To examine the representation of the presenting self in fictional characters
To evaluate how others interpret the ambiguous signals of non-verbal communication

Instructions

If you write creatively, you've probably heard the advice, "Show; don't tell." This advice refers to the way writers reveal elements of character and narrative. In a sense, authors draw on principles of identity management in their fiction to reveal their characters. This is a valuable skill to practise. Create a character you want to represent. Now clothe that person, style her/his hair, give her/him appropriate accessories, and move that person through the world briefly. Write a short scene (200 to 300 words) with this character in which non-verbal signals (such as how your character is dressed, how she/he walks, and how she/he speaks to others) tell a reader who the character really is. Post your scene on your course blog and invite classmates to comment on how they read the representation. Do the comments match your intentions?

Activity 11: Turf War

Purpose
To examine territoriality in the field
To evaluate how others respond to unexpected changes in non-verbal behaviours

Instructions

As an experiment, when you go to your next class, sit on the opposite side of the room from your usual seat. What happens? Who notices? How do people around you react? If you have other typical "territories" in your campus life, try altering them, too. For example, sit in a new seat on the bus or at the cafeteria, pick a new locker in the change room at the gym, or hang out in a new social space. How do you feel after a day of not inhabiting your usual "turf"? What kinds of responses have you noticed from others?

Activity 12: Affect Blending

Purpose

To apply concepts of expressions and emotions to complex communication

To use non-verbal communication to express learning

Instructions

Get creative! Draw a new emoji (one that doesn't currently exist) representing an affect blend (see the definition on page 153). How would you use this emoji—and with which audiences? How would you connect the emotional communication of the emoji you've drawn to the paralinguistic features discussed in this chapter? If possible, share your created emoji with others.