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## Research in Communication

Communication is a process in which people verbally or non-verbally share information and ideas. Nonverbal communication can be best defined as a silent form of communicating with a person or party without using any form of speech to grab an audience attention or to exploit a message. Nonverbal communication is often used to make an expression of a thought or thoughts and make your message more appealing and interesting to whom you are speaking. Nonverbal communication has a great influence on our social environment and the whole communication process. There are many types and functions of nonverbal communication. Nonverbal communication regulates relationships and can support or even replace verbal communications in many situations. Different genders and cultures use nonverbal communication differently and these differences can impact the nature of interpersonal communication. Nonverbal communication can become a barrier or tear down barriers to effective communication.

I conducted my own observation of nonverbal communication in a restaurant which is done on a daily basis. Nonverbal rules may differ according to the situation, and each situation determines its set of rules. The restaurant is located in Waynesboro, Ms, where I live. The patrons of the restaurant consisted of all types of cultures and class of families. The distinctive patterns of the customers were very noticeable. Different types of patrons had very different yet distinct sets of nonverbal communication behaviors. I observed three different groups, the older adults, the younger adults, and the children. I observed them differently to determine the differences that age and gender play a role in nonverbal behavior rules. Many different types of nonverbal communication were observed such as body language, hand movement, facial expressions, and eye contact.

There are four important functions of nonverbal communication. These functions can complement, regulate, substitute for, or accent a verbal message. In addition to the functions, there are many types of nonverbal communication. Those different types include paralanguage, body movement, facial expressions, eye messages, attractiveness, clothing, body adornment, space and distance, touch, time, smell and manner. There are cultural and co-cultural variations in each case of what are acceptable and unacceptable practice (Hybels & Weaver, 2007).

In describing the functions with complementing, one might use body language in an effort to support or add credibility to your words, and if that body language is seen as genuine then the overall message is strengthened (Hybels & Weaver, 2007). If the body language is perceived as fake or misleading, however, then it moves into the category of conflicting. In regulating, the body language serves the function of pacing and regulating communication (Hybels & Weaver,

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2007). For instance, in a group of people, there are a number of non-verbal cues indicating when one person is finished speaking and it is another person's turn. The function of substituting uses body language to replace verbal communication (Hybels & Weaver, 2007). For example, if you are caught in a conversation with someone who just keeps talking and talking, it is difficult to come out and tell that person you are tired of the conversation. Instead, you might substitute body language such as glancing away or stepping away. The last function of accenting is a type of body language that emphasizes, accentuates, softens, or otherwise enhances your verbal communication (Hybels & Weaver, 2007). You might point your finger to direct attention to the subject of your words, or you might reach out and touch the hand of a child whom you are correcting or disciplining.

Paralanguage refers to the non-verbal elements of communication used to modify meaning and convey emotion. Paralanguage may be expressed consciously or unconsciously, and it includes the pitch, volume, rate, and the quality. Sometimes the definition is restricted to vocally produced sounds. The study of paralanguage is known as paralinguistic cues. Body movements or kinesics are referred to all forms of body movements are an important part of non-verbal communication behavior. The transport of body movement has many specific meanings and the interpretations that may be a bound of culture. As many movements are carried out at an unawareness level, the body movements carry a risk of being misinterpreted in a different culture communications situation. Some related words for body movement may be emblems are a substitute for words and phrases, illustrators accompany or reinforce verbal messages, display of feelings show emotion, regulators control the flow and pace of communication, and adaptors release physical or emotional tension (Hybels & Weaver, 2007).

Facial expressions can show happiness, sadness, fear, and anger that are easily identifiable across cultures. In addition, facial expressions play an important role in closeness. Eye messages are messages given only with the eyes. In American culture, eye contact is a sign of honesty, credibility, warmth, and involvement. Other cultures require eye contact.

Conversations without eye contact represent disinterest, inattention, rudeness, shyness, or deception. Eye messages show a connection to others, attentiveness, involvement, immediacy but prolonged stares show negative and intimidating expressions. Eye messages have a delightful and wondrous aspect in the rolling of the eyes because it is known for flirting (Hybels & Weaver, 2007). The perception of nonverbal communication started during the first year of life when we learned how to communicate without words as infants. Infants learned very early the difference between a scowl and a smile and they soon learn how to convey their own feelings through non-verbal communication. The way nonverbal cues are perceived and interpreted in relationships can make all the difference between a positive and a negative impression. Paralinguistic enforces the old adage; it is not what you say but how you say it. No matter the rate of speed, the faster the communicator speaks, the more competent they may appear. The

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speakers with a high and varied pitch come across as more competent; a constant low pitch voice is associated with strength and maturity, while a constant high pitch voice signals tenseness and nervousness. Those who speak loudly are generally seen as aggressive and domineering, and speakers with soft voices are perceived as timid and polite. How individuals perceive nonverbal communication is often based on how they see themselves. If an individual takes everything personally, they may take offense to some nonverbal cues that are being used, whether they are intentional or unintentional. To avoid miscommunication, it is essential that speakers become more aware of the nonverbal cues that are used (Hybels & Weaver, 2007).

In the workplace, effective communication can be used to improve performance and to produce desired results. There are many non-verbal cues that are used every day in the workplace, most of which are stronger than spoken language. Professionally speaking, a handshake can make a strong first impression, whether it is positive or negative. Men tend to have better handshaking skills and etiquette than women do; handshakes should be inviting, strong but not overpowering. Workplace touching is often discouraged due to sending out mixed messages, but handshakes are usually accepted and encouraged in most cases. Eye contact is yet another important non-verbal cue that can be used both positively and negatively in the workplace. In the United States, eye contact conveys honesty and sincerity; making eye contact is often an invitation to open communication, and signifies the need for feedback. In contrast, avoiding eye contact signals distrust, suspicion, or lack of interest; similarly, prolonged eye contact or a stare signifies aggression or flirting (Henman, 2009). In the workplace, dressing professionally is something most employers require, it shows confidence in oneself. Dressing professionally includes clothes that are worn, personal hygiene and not overpowering cologne and perfume. American businesses value being on time and being conscientious of this is crucial in business. Paying attention to all these non-verbal types of communication can prove successful in almost every business.

Nonverbal communication has the ability to strengthen and develop existing relationships or it can destroy them. A relationship can be regulated by nonverbal communication because it can support or replace verbal communication. Some of the contributing factors are the sending and receiving ability and accuracy, the perception of appropriate social roles, and cognitive desire for interpersonal involvement. If the communicators are unaware of the types of messages they are sending and how the receiver is interpreting the messages difficulties can arise from nonverbal communication. If the perception of the receiver is not of the social norms for the particular situation could cause problems also. All the people involved must want the interaction to occur for reciprocal communication to be successful. Facial expressions can compel one to communicate interaction with another. Facial expressions can cause negative feelings if the other is evoked by them. Introduction and management rely on nonverbal communication in interpersonal relationships. Through research, interpersonal relationships have been successful through nonverbal clues (Dunn, 1999). Nonverbal communication has an impact on gender and

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cultural differences. There are different views from the society of males and females. Males are portrayed as aggressive, controlling, and having a take-charge attitude. Women are seen as sensitive, emotional, and passive. There is a difference how males and females communicate verbally and nonverbally. Women are more expressive when they use non-verbal communication, they tend to smile more than men and use their hands more. Men are less likely to make eye contact than women are. Men also come off as more relaxed, while women seem tenser. Men are more comfortable with close proximity to females, but women are more comfortable with close proximity with other females. In terms of interpreting non-verbal signals, women are better than men are (Coggins, 2006).

Culturally, there is a world of differences in nonverbal communication. In comparing the United States with Latin America, we can see many differences. The hand gesture we use to tell someone to come here is the hand palm up with the index finger extending out three or four times is different in Latin America. In Latin America, this hand gesture means you are romantically interested in a person and it is considered solicitation. To tell someone to come here in Latin America the palm is extended down and move all four fingers in and out together three or four times. When traveling on buses in Latin America the elders will hold their hand sideways with all four fingers extended to let one know there is a pickpocket nearby. In the United States, when visitors come to our country, we usually do not greet them personally. Latin Americans give hugs and the men greet the women with "besitos" meaning they touch the cheeks and make a kissing noise with lips (Institute of Languages, 2011).

Some barriers to nonverbal communication include cultural differences, deceptive gestures, inappropriate touching, negative nonverbal communication, and perceptual filters. The different cultural differences are ethnocentrism, stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination along with the hand gestures, touching, and facial expression. Ethnocentrism shows that one culture fills their group is superior to all other cultures. Stereotypes show the distorted or oversimplified views of different races of cultures. When a culture is a prejudice towards another culture or group, a negative attitude is shown based on little or no experience. To avoid or exclude oneself from another culture or group discrimination is shown (Hybels & Weaver, 2007). Different gestures often have vastly different meanings to people of different cultures. Nonverbal gestures can lead to misinterpretation. Touching can cause many problems in communicating if it is done incorrectly. A person may touch the other person during a conversation a lot and move closer to them. Some people find touching as an invasion of their personal space. This is a barrier to all communication; people have a hard time communicating when they are uncomfortable. When a person displays negative nonverbal communication, it can also act as a barrier. For example, slouching, rolling of the eyes, moving quickly or slowly, or performing a variety of other negative physical behaviors, makes it difficult to communicate with them at all. This is because the person is creating a negative situation and when people feel uncomfortable they are unwilling to communicate. Facial expression can show frustration, anger, embarrassment, or uncertainty.

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They can contradict the verbal expression by sending the real message that the speaker wants to send (Hybels & Weaver, 2007).

It is very important to learn how to improve nonverbal communication now that we have discovered that a communicator's nonverbal communication can influence another's perception of a message and that of the communicator. One must first monitor our own nonverbal communication skills. We should pay close attention when we are engaged in everyday routine conversations. It will help us to stay attuned to what we are doing and what kind of impression we are giving others. We need to ask ourselves these questions. Do we allow enough personal space so others are comfortable? Do we show our interest by making eye contact with others? Is our face expression appropriate for the conversation at hand? Is the voice tone appropriate for the situation? By being aware of these things we can improve our nonverbal communication skills.

In addition to those skills, we also must learn to be good discriminative listeners. It is relatively simple to hear a message, but we also need to be aware of nonverbal cues from others. We often get so preoccupied with what we are saying and what we are going to say as a response, that we are not sensitive to others needs. People often these express needs through their nonverbal communication, as opposed to what they are saying. Overcoming cultural barriers is another important step in communicating effectively. It is important to understand all aspects of communication (Hybels & Weaver, 2007). "Successful communication between people across cultures requires not only an understanding of language but also of the nonverbal aspects of communication that are part of any speech community" (Ha, 2008). It is more important to understand the non-verbal aspects of communication when people do not speak the same language verbally.

In conclusion, communication is complex and multifaceted. Nonverbal communication is a strong factor in today's society and is used in many cultures. It gives insight to others true emotions and feelings, as well as their truthfulness and sincerity. Nonverbal communication can come in many forms, it can add to, or replace verbal communication, establish relationships and boundaries, and reflect different cultural values. It is symbolic, can be intentional or unintentional and differs between genders and cultures. Effective nonverbal communication can benefit us in interpersonal relationships, our careers and across cultures. It is our responsibility as effective communicators to understand the dynamics of this form of communication and learn to use it so it benefits everyone involved. By tearing down any personal barriers or biases, and recognize our strengths and weaknesses, we can ultimately communicate in ways that decrease the likelihood of misunderstanding and increase our nonverbal communication as well as verbally proficiency.

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