




Non-Verbal Communication

AS Level Communication & Culture
Term 2



Defining Verbal & Non-Verbal

Before we turn our attention to a detailed explanation of non-verbal communication (NVC), we need to be very clear about our understanding of the term 'verbal'



Verbal Communication

- We often use the term 'verbal' to mean 'spoken' eg. "I gave her a verbal warning"
- In Communication & Culture, we use the word 'verbal' in a slightly different and more technical way

Definition of Verbal

Verbal = communicating with words and language (as opposed to images, actions or behaviour)

Verbal communication is restricted to language

'Design Features' of Language

- Language enables us to communicate about events beyond our immediate sensory experience
- The capacity of language is infinite

(See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Design_Features_of_Language for a full list of features)

Definition of NVC

- All this leaves us with a definition of NVC as follows:

“All communication other than that involving words and language”

- This is fine but could include everything from animal communication to films to gardening. For our purposes we will use a more restricted definition:

“Bodily communication, other than words and language”

Forms

The discussions will focus on two key areas:

3. Different categories (or types) of NVC
5. The functions (or uses) of NVC

Before we do this, we need to establish some general points about NVC and its relationship to language and culture

Relationship between NVC, Language & Culture

- When travelling, we do not, on the whole, make the assumption that everyone will understand our first and preferred language
- Most of us accept we must either learn a new language or rely entirely on verbal signals for communication
- We assume we will have no difficulty in decoding non-verbal clues
- **We need to be aware of the enormous range and diversity of non-verbal behaviour**

What emotions do these facial expressions portray?



NVC, Language & Culture

- Even in the secure territory of your own familiar culture, care is needed in the interpretation of non-verbal clues
- Jumping to conclusions about meanings of non-verbal clues can be dangerous

Your Approach to NVC

- You should suggest possible meanings and interpretations when analysing NVC, whilst paying due regard to the influence of context and culture and context
- Your own culture and context has an impact on the deciphering of NVC
- Interpretations are both relative and subjective

Categorisation of NVC – Paralanguage

PARALANGUAGE CONSISTS OF THE NON-VERBAL ELEMENTS THAT ACCOMPANY SPEECH. IT INCLUDES:

- The way we speak (also known as prosodic features)
- Volume, pitch, intonation, speed of delivery, articulation, rhythm
- The sounds we make other than language
- Laughter, crying, yawning, sighing, screeching, coughing
- Filled pauses such as 'Mmmm', 'Ahhh', 'Ummm'
- Unfilled pauses

Categorisation of NVC - Paralanguage

There are clear variations both within and between cultures in the use of paralinguistic features.

David Crystal points out some cultural differences:

“A ‘breathy’ or ‘husky’ tone of voice conveys deep emotion or sexual desire in many languages, but in Japanese, it is routinely used as a way of conveying respect or submission. A ‘creaky’ or ‘gravelly’ tone of voice is often used in English to convey unimportance or disparagement; but in Finnish, it is a normal feature of many voice qualities. And there is no equivalent in English to the use of strongly nasalised speech to convey a range of emotional nuances in Portuguese”

(Crystal, 1987)

Accent & Paralanguage

Elocution lessons were once very popular amongst the middle classes, especially for those young people who were sent to 'finishing school' as a preparation for 'polite society.'

ACTIVITY –

- Why do you think that some parents still see the advantage of elocution lessons?
- Do you agree that teenagers in the UK are 'poor at expressing themselves'?

Categorisation of NVC – Physical Appearance

- Clothing, hairstyle, make-up, body adornment, jewellery, tattoos, piercings, glasses, facial hair, accessories such as bags
- You only have to think of the huge industries associated with the above examples to recognise the cultural significance of physical appearance

What do you assume about these people?



Categorisation of NVC – Physical Appearance

- Includes the things with which we cover or adorn our bodies, but also the shape and size of our bodies
- It is the body's capacity to communicate aspects of an individual's identity which makes us so aware of our physical appearance

Categorisation of NVC – Physical Appearance

- Self expression is a fairly recent development in historical terms
- Many societies had (and some still do have) highly regulated codes of dress, often linked to rank and status



Tudor monarchs, such as Elizabeth I, used Sumptuary Laws and Statutes of Apparel to control what people could wear eg. only royalty were permitted to wear ermine trims while fox and other trims were restricted to members of the nobility.

Categorisation of NVC – Physical Appearance

- Self expression in contemporary culture is also **limited** by requirements to wear uniforms or to observe **dress codes**
- Not necessarily restricted to schools and public services
- Many corporations and organisations expect employees to communicate a **corporate rather than an individual identity**



Further Categories of NVC - Activity

Read the information sheet on some more categories of NVC – on the task sheet, jot down the key points for each type. We will then take whole-class feedback.

- Body movement (kinesics)
- Closeness (proxemics)
- Touching (haptics)
- Eye movement (oculesics)
- Smells (olfactics)

Body Movement - Kinesics



- Gesture, facial expression, posture, head nodding, orientation
- Emblems – gestures with specific cultural meanings attached
- Illustrators reinforce words of speakers
- Adapters are unconscious gestures to relieve stress or boredom
- Posture is heavily laden with value judgements



Closeness - Proxemics

- Study of how we use space and distance
- Includes seating arrangements, queuing and territoriality
- Ideas of 'personal space', 'invasion of personal space' and 'comfort zones'
- Use of objects as 'markers' to indicate ownership of space

Touching - Haptics



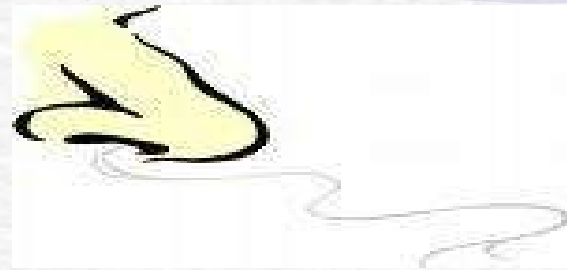
- Physical contact such as holding, hitting, kissing, stroking, shaking hands, guiding
- Linked to proxemics
- Touch is very important in our early development
- Many rules and taboos regulating physical contact



Eye Movement - Oculesics

- Eye movement, length and direction of gaze, changes in pupil size
- We are hypersensitive to information imparted by eyes
- Can be argued eyes reveal the truthfulness of what is being said

Smell - Olfactics



- Humans do not have a particularly well-developed sense of smell compared with other species
- Perfumes and deodorants send powerful messages, as can the natural body odours we try to suppress
- A rapidly growing industry has developed around the use of smells

Complex Messages

- Rare for these non-verbal codes to operate in isolation from one another, or separately from language
- We create and perceive messages using signs from a range of verbal and non-verbal codes
- To make this even more complex, these signs and codes do not always pull in the same direction

Communicative Competence

This idea refers to our ability to use language not just accurately but appropriately. A competent communicator will:

- Recognise and use different verbal and non-verbal styles as they are suited to different social situations
- Recognise the subtle interplay of verbal and non-verbal elements in communication
- Compensate for possible misinterpretations in communication with others

The Functions of NVC

- Communicating feelings, emotions and attitudes
- Replacing and regulating language
- Other Functions

Communicating Feelings, Emotions and Attitudes

- NVC has a particularly important role in establishing and maintaining relationships, otherwise known as an affective function
- We rely more heavily on NVC in this area of personal communication
- Looks, glances, changes in orientation allow others to know what sort of relationship we want to have
- We use NVC to establish a mutually acceptable level of intimacy

- Non-verbal leakage – messages 'slipping out' in spite of our attempts to control them – ensures that high credibility is given to non-verbal cues in the area of feeling, emotion and attitude
- Puts a lot of power in the hands of a skilled communicator
- Interpersonal attitudes can also be indicated by body closeness and orientation



Communicating Power & Status

- Within organisations such as the army, positions within the hierarchy are clearly signalled by uniforms, badges and behavioural codes such as saluting
- In other organisations the non-verbal rules of the pecking order may not be so overt, but they are just as carefully observed

Peter Collett's Handshake Theory

- The Bonecrusher
- The Limp Handshake
- The Firm Handshake
- The Limpet Handshake
- The Clammy Handshake
- The Reinforced Handshake
- The Relocated Handshake
- The Upper Handshake



The Limp Handshake may seem the most likely to offer evidence of submissiveness, but this is not necessarily so, as Collett's more detailed explanation reveals:

"A limp handshake occurs when someone offers a hand that is totally relaxed. It doesn't exert any pressure on the other person's hand and it doesn't contribute to the mutual production of the handshake. A person who offers a limp handshake is someone who, in more senses than one, doesn't connect with the other person. Like their hand, they remain passive and detached – they're simply not focused on the person they're greeting. This often happens with people who are self-important or who have to shake hands with a lot of people... Women who want to cultivate an impression of languid femininity often present a rather limp hand to the person they're greeting. Strong people often do the same, but in their case it's to emphasise their strength. It's said that Mike Tyson offers a relaxed, almost tender hand when he greets people outside the boxing ring – the complete opposite to what happens inside the ring."

(Collett, 2003)



Replacing & Regulating Language

- The role of NVC in inflecting the meaning of a sentence can be explored by 'performing' the following sentence in different ways

Well, I really enjoyed the party last night.

Replacing & Regulating Language

- Paralinguistic features, such as pitch, tone and emphasis
- Throw in other non-verbal cues such as eyebrow lifting or illustrators such as the use of the index and first finger of both hands to indicate inverted commas around a word
- Number of potential meanings rapidly increases

Replacing & Regulating Language

- Non-verbal cues also make a significant contribution of conversation management
- Rules of turn taking allow us to have coherent discussions without constantly talking over the top of each other
- Paralanguage, gaze, eye contact and head movement all play a part
- It's a set of rules that takes some time to grasp
- Women typically have a more cooperative conversational style whereas men tend to provide less non-verbal feedback

Other Functions

- Many other uses to which we put our non-verbal codes including:
 - self expression
 - group membership
 - persuasion and rhetoric
 - indicating role

Activity 1

Consider a scenario that shows NVC at work in one of the following areas:

- Power/status
- Emotion/feeling
- Attitude/Identity

Activity 2

Look at the following situations. In each case try to identify a verbal form, a verbal function, a non-verbal form and a non-verbal function that could be associated with the situation.

A JUDGE addressing a member of the jury who is not paying attention

An upset and lost child approaches YOU in a busy supermarket

YOU want to get past the doorman and into a crowded pub

A MOTHER wants her teenage daughter to come home before midnight