

Importance of Nonverbal Communication

Chira (2013) simply defines non-verbal communication' (NVC) as features of human communication that are not part of verbal language. Conversely, even when the main intended messages are through spoken or written language, they are never transmitted or received in a vacuum. Communication occur in non-verbal contexts as well, which may help or hinder the recipient in receiving exactly the message the emitter intended (Keith, 1972). As Schussler (2010) points out many non-verbal systems that are associated with speech include eye contact, proxemics, gesture, body contact, posture, body orientation, facial expression, and gaze. NVC may be also extended to semiotic systems such as clothing décor, furniture arrangement (Chira, 2013). NVC derives from various sources, from the way we look at someone to their hairstyle. Our eye contact is an intricate role in NVC; eye contact is essential when you want to analyze and interpret facial expressions. We use our mouths especially when smiling or grimacing; there is much emotional content in our smiles. Our posture, sitting forwards or backwards can portray laziness or alertness. The gestures we make, e.g. the use of arms movements when talking; our gestures complete speech; we remember more of what is being said if words are accompanied by gestures (Keith, 1972). When we gesture we tell someone something or draw his or her attention to something. Other forms of NVC include: the orientation of the body to the addressee can either; body distance (too close or too far away from others); smell (including perfumes); skin (including blushing, pigmentation); hair (including texture, length, style); clothes (Chira, 2013).

Very often NVC may mean different things, e.g. 'to wink at somebody' can mean 'I am kidding/this is a lie/an informal greeting/I can play fast and loose/I pay my addresses to this girl'/a hint at sex; 'gaze' can mean 'furry/irritation/support/admiration/dislike/anger'; 'silence' can mean 'familiarity/weakness/one is distant/isolated/inaccessible (Chira, 2013). In addition, to further explain how complex NVC can be Chira (2013) breaks down how the distance when communicating with someone can be part of the overall perception of the relationship between the members. Within the framework of a certain culture, specific distances are suitable for some particular activities and a shift from one area to another may be decoded as an attempt to modify the character of the interaction. How many interpersonal distances are there? Hall (1963) states that the proxemics system in the USA has four levels, i.e. public distance (12 ft. from hearers), intimate (from full body contact to 1.5 ft.), social-consultative (close 4-7 ft., far 7-12 ft.), and casual/personal (1.5-4 ft.). Distance is a marker of intimacy and interlocutors can be responsive to distance. Hall (1963) also states that the distance favored by Arabs in the conduct of their transactions may be felt by Americans as intrusive and disturbing. Distances may also depend on contextual factors (in large rooms people stand closer together than they do in small rooms; in Britain and America male pairs seem to interact at greater distances than female pairs) (Chira, 2013).

Norms and patterns imposed by society are important in carrying out conversations and depending on the part of the world you live in different NVC can mean different things. That why as society changes with the increase use of social media as a means of communication we should never lose sight of the importance of NVC.

1 REFERENCES

- Chira, D. (2013, October 24-26). *NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION. NOTES ON PROXEMICS AND EYE CONTACT*. Retrieved from Real.mtak.hu:
http://real.mtak.hu/22476/1/Constructions_of_Identity_VII_u_091138.409662.pdf#page=69
- Keith, R. M. (1972, April). *Section of Paediatrics*. Retrieved from NCBI NIH:
<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1644201/pdf/procrsmed00348-0037.pdf>
- Schussler, S. (2010). *It's a Jungle in There*. New York: Sterling Publishing Co., Inc.