

UNDERSTANDING BODY LANGUAGE AND FACIAL EXPRESSIONS

EGAMBERDIYEVA IRODAXON

TEACHER OF ANDIJAN STATE INSTITUTE OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES

ABDULLAJONOV AHRORBEK

STUDENT OF ANDIJAN STATE INSTITUTE OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Annotation : This article discusses the roles played by body language in communication, as well as body language examples and the meaning behind them so you know what to look for when you're trying to interpret nonverbal actions.

Key words : nonverbal signal, body, expressions, emotion, intention.

Introduction

Body language refers to the nonverbal signals that we use to communicate. These nonverbal signals make up a huge part of daily communication. In fact, body language may account for between 60% to 65% of all communication. Examples of body language include facial expressions, eye gaze, gestures, posture, and body movements. In many cases, the things we *don't* say can convey volumes of information. So, why is body language important? Body language can help us understand others and ourselves. It provides us with information about how people may be feeling in a given situation. We can also use body language to express emotions or intentions. Facial expressions, gestures, and eye gaze are often identified as the three major types of body language, but other aspects such as posture and personal distance can also be used to convey information. Understanding body language is important, but it is also essential to pay attention to other cues such as context. In many cases, you should look at signals as a group rather than focus on a single action.

Body language

While the key to success in both personal and professional relationships lies in your ability to communicate well, it's not the words that you use but your nonverbal cues or "body language" that speak the loudest. Body language is the use of physical behavior, expressions, and mannerisms to communicate nonverbally, often done instinctively rather than consciously. Whether you're aware of it or not, when you interact with others, you're continuously giving and receiving wordless signals. All of your nonverbal behaviors—the gestures you make, your posture, your tone of voice, how much eye contact you make—send strong messages. They can put people at ease, build trust, and draw others towards you, or they can offend, confuse, and undermine what you're trying to convey. These messages don't stop when you stop speaking either. Even when you're silent, you're still communicating nonverbally. In some

instances, what comes out of your mouth and what you communicate through your body language may be two totally different things. If you say one thing, but your body language says something else, your listener will likely feel that you're being dishonest. If you say "yes" while shaking your head no, for example. When faced with such mixed signals, the listener has to choose whether to believe your verbal or nonverbal message. Since body language is a natural, unconscious language that broadcasts your true feelings and intentions, they'll likely choose the nonverbal message. However, by improving how you understand and use nonverbal communication, you can express what you really mean, connect better with others, and build stronger, more rewarding relationships. Your nonverbal communication cues—the way you listen, look, move, and react—tell the person you're communicating with whether or not you care, if you're being truthful, and how well you're listening. When your nonverbal signals match up with the words you're saying, they increase trust, clarity, and rapport. When they don't, they can generate tension, mistrust, and confusion. If you want to become a better communicator, it's important to become more sensitive not only to the body language and nonverbal cues of others, but also to your own.

Body language can play five roles:

Repetition: It repeats and often strengthens the message you're making verbally.

Contradiction: It can contradict the message you're trying to convey, thus indicating to your listener that you may not be telling the truth.

Substitution: It can substitute for a verbal message. For example, your facial expression often conveys a far more vivid message than words ever can.

Complementing: It may add to or complement your verbal message. As a boss, if you pat an employee on the back in addition to giving praise, it can increase the impact of your message.

Accenting: It may accent or underline a verbal message. Pounding the table, for example, can underline the importance of your message.

Facial expressions

Think for a moment about how much a person is able to convey with just a facial expression. A smile can indicate approval or happiness. A frown can signal disapproval or unhappiness. In some cases, our facial expressions may reveal our true feelings about a particular situation. While you say that you are feeling fine, the look on your face may tell people otherwise. Just a few examples of emotions that can be expressed via facial expressions include:

- Happiness
- Sadness
- Anger

- Surprise
- Disgust
- Fear
- Confusion
- Excitement
- Desire
- Contempt

The expression on a person's face can even help determine if we trust or believe what the individual is saying. There are many interesting findings about body language in psychology research. One study found that the most trustworthy facial expression involved a slight raise of the eyebrows and a slight smile. This expression, the researchers suggested, conveys both friendliness and confidence. Facial expressions are also among the most universal forms of body language. The expressions used to convey fear, anger, sadness, and happiness are similar throughout the world.

Conclusion

Understanding body language can go a long way toward helping you better communicate with others and interpreting what others might be trying to convey. While it may be tempting to pick apart signals one by one, it's important to look at these nonverbal signals in relation to verbal communication, other nonverbal signals, and the situation. You can also learn more about how to improve your nonverbal communication to become better at letting people know what you are feeling—without even saying a word.

References

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