Non-verbal communication report

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Understanding The Power of Non-verbal Communication in Workplace

If you have ever seen the drama series about criminal psychology *Lie To Me*, you must have been never forgot this saying of Cal Lightman – the main character: “Body language tells the truth, even from the grave”. His implication states the best meaning of so-called “non-verbal”, as known as body language. While people simply understand language is word-related or “verbal” through tools such as writing, speaking and listening, “non-verbal” as another kind of communication seems to be more effective. This paper will examine the conducted researches as well as factual applications that show the importance and efficiency of this aspect of communication.

Without our intentions, non-verbal behaviors play an important role in the communication process. According to Rane (2010), in the communication phenomena, the body language accounts for 55%, vocal tone account for 38 % while verbal content contributes only 7%. In total, nonverbal accounts for 93% of communication process. Kurien & Daisy (2010) emphasize that the good understanding on nonverbal communication of both employer and employees will lead to the growth of an organization.

Although non-verbal is defined as the wordless world of communication and is distinct from speech, Rane (2010) states that it can illustrate personal feeling, emotion, attitude and thoughts of the person. There are eight types of nonverbal communication developed by Rane (2010) and Micah (2011):

- First of all is facial expression. Rane (2010) states that every facial muscle is an instrument of communication and it is recognized by people everywhere, regardless of culture or language. Basically, facial expression is defined in six kinds, including joy, surprise, fear, anger, disgust and sadness. The changes of facial expression and eye movement convey different meanings.
• The next one is smile. A good smile can show your positive attitude as well as build a relaxing conversation. A smile is a key to open the door to communication because it gives positive signals, create favorite impact and earn goodwill (Rane 2010).

• Third is eye contact, which is quite easy to be noticed. The eyes are indeed the most communicative component of human face. It is highly expressive so it should be considered carefully about presence or absence of eye contact with different receivers and at the right time. Making good eye contact with the people you are talking to can show your confidence and your engagement (Rane 2010).

• Fourthly, gestures are the effective movement that compliments the spoken word and conveys the message. The physical actions such as nodding, pointing, putting hand over somebody’s shoulder, they all indicate the messages and interpreted by the receivers. Therefore, when talking, the hands can be used as an effective tool to exaggerate the importance of the speaker’s message (Rane 2010).

• Fifthly, posture includes sitting posture, standing posture, walking style and head movement. Your body posture also demonstrates confidence and trustworthiness. For example, sitting on a chair with the back straight and slightly lean forward can indicates the professionalism and comfort of the person. Similarly, the walking posture also can define the mood of people (Rane 2010).

• Sixthly, the scientists point out that the way a person dresses speaks about his/her personality. Depends on different occasions, there are different codes of dress up that reflect the meanings and purpose of that situation as well as show the respect to the others. For example, in the Presidential Debate, or The Great Debate, in 1960 between Kennedy versus Nixon, Nixon wore the gray – blue suit that matches with the stage background. He was injured, looked angry, sick and not prepared while John F. Kennedy wore black suit which contrasts with the background. In addition, as his performance and body language was exceptional, Kennedy won the election with enormous votes (Rane 2010).

• Seventh is handshake. Different types of handshakes should be applied in most appropriate situation. For example, in win-win situation, we use right handshake,
but in high degree of respect, using both hands. The handshake should last in three seconds. Having handshake in appropriate situation can impact the relationship effectively (Rane 2010). The video, *Is Obama different*, on Youtube (Xiahoud 2009) is an illustration of handshake power. In the clip, the US President Barack Obama shook hand with a British policeman while the UK Prime Minister Gordon Brown ignore him. Obviously, Barack Obama had left a friendly and warm attitude to the England media and people rather than their own Prime Minister.

- Last is the tone of voice. Although the voice is related to verbal communication, it varies from person to person. Therefore, it is also considered as a part of individual body language. Changing the tone of voice during the conversation can help other people know about your interest and engagement, and therefore can lead to the success of communication (Rane 2010).

Understanding and using non-verbal communication can bring many benefits for the speaker. Firstly, body language can help the speaker to capture the receiver’s attention to start a conversation (Bull 2001). Secondly, non-verbal behavior is visible to the receivers and makes the verbal communication more effective, quicker and easier to understand (Bull 2001). Thirdly, the body-language also depicts the gravity or seriousness of the message (Rane 2010), making the speaker becomes the smart communicator. In addition, with appropriate body language, the conversation can become more interesting and conducive to the receivers (Rane 2010). And lastly, facial expressional and vocal cues, or tone of voice, have been used to indicates the deception or honesty of the speakers (Zuckerman & DeFrank 1979).

However, in multi-cultural communication, non-verbal behavior can result in some bad consequences because different cultural backgrounds have different meanings about facial expression or gestures. Therefore, if the non-verbal signal is negative and confusing for the receiver, the connection and trust between the sender and receiver can be damaged. Moreover, when the receivers are inactive, the body language can be ineffective and harder to communicate the right message. Besides that, nonverbal behavior is likely to be more
effective in small group of people and in face-to-face communication. People who show the indecent body language probably create bad impressions for others.

Therefore, in order to be a smart communicator, the speaker should understand the cultural background of receivers clearly in order to make proper body language. In addition, establishing a good eye-contact at the beginning of conversation to build trust and engagement with the receivers is a good starting point (Cherry n.d). Additionally, paying attention in the tone of voice, gestures and postures to make sure that they are not overdone or confusing to the audience is also neccessary. In addition to this point, the context of the the speech is also needed to consider (Cherry n.d). For instance, some occasions require more formal and prim than others. And last is practicing. Similarly to verbal communication, non-verbal behaviors necessitate a careful practice in order to improve the improper signals as well as enhance the quality of speech.
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