

NONVERBAL MEANS OF COMMUNICATION AND SIGNS

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Abstract: This article is devoted to non-verbal communication and its various means and forms. The article tells about the importance and features of non-verbal communication and its differences from verbal communication and the degree of study of non-verbal communication. Signs and symbols are common forms of non-verbal communication that exist and are widely used to convey information.

Keywords: semiotics, signs, nonverbal communication, Proxemics, Haptics, the material shell, the designated object, the rules of interpretation

Аннотация: Статья посвящена невербальной коммуникации и ее различным средствам и формам. В статье рассказывается о значении и особенностях невербальной коммуникации, ее отличиях от вербальной коммуникации, степени изученности невербальной коммуникации. Знаки и символы являются распространенными формами невербальной коммуникации, которые существуют и широко используются для передачи информации.

Ключевые слова: семиотика, знаки, невербальная коммуникация, проксемика, гаптика, материальная оболочка, обозначаемый объект, правила интерпретации

There are different definitions of the word "communication", which are the following: Process of interaction between two or more people is called communication when exchanging information that has affective-evaluative and cognitive character. Or communication is a complex, all-encompassing process of establishing and development of relations, which can arise from the need for joint activities between human beings and consists of the exchange of information, the development of a single path interaction, as well as the process of perception and understanding of another

person [1] – this is one of the most complete and accurate definitions of the concept of "communication". Communication inherent in all living beings, but at the human level it takes on the most advanced forms and understood through speech. In communication, we can distinguish the following perspectives: content, purpose and means.

Nonverbal communication, which includes facial expressions, gestures, posture, eye contact, and other physical movements, is a crucial component of human interaction. It provides a substantial amount of meaning in social interactions, frequently augmenting or even replacing spoken communication. This study examines the characteristics and roles of nonverbal communication, referencing significant theories and studies from psychology, linguistics, and social science. It examines the diverse modalities of nonverbal communication, the theoretical constructs elucidating its importance, and its function in augmenting interpersonal interaction and emotional expression. The research underscores the cross-cultural aspects of nonverbal communication, stressing the significance of context in the interpretation of nonverbal cues.

Nonverbal communication denotes the conveyance of messages or information using methods apart from spoken or written language. It encompasses a range of communicative behaviours, including facial expressions, body language, posture, eye contact, tactile interaction, and spatial utilisation. These signals frequently function concurrently with spoken communication, reinforcing, altering, or even contradicting the spoken word. Although verbal communication has historically been viewed as the principal means of human contact, research indicates that nonverbal communication is essential for expressing meaning, emotions, and social dynamics (Mehrabian, 1972).

Non-verbal signals are valuable because they emerge instinctively and unconsciously, and unlike words, they consistently reflect genuine feelings. Non-verbal behaviour is influenced by national cultural backgrounds. Each country and nation possesses an own system of non-verbal communication, encompassing behaviours, gestures, body language, and facial expressions, shaped by their cultural and national attributes.

The capacity to perceive and react to nonverbal signals is a crucial competency in human interaction, influencing social connections, emotional exchanges, and decision-making processes. Nonverbal communication may be both deliberate and inadvertent, with persons frequently oblivious to the signals they convey. This paper examines the diverse forms of nonverbal communication, the ideas elucidating its importance, and the ramifications of nonverbal signals across various fields.

Numerous fundamental ideas have been created to comprehend the significance of nonverbal communication in human relationships. The most influential include:

Mehrabian's Communication Model: In 1972, Mehrabian posited that nonverbal components—such as vocal tone, facial expressions, and gestures—constitute a substantial amount of the emotional content in communication. This paradigm posits that nonverbal clues account for 93% of the emotional message, with 55% derived from facial expressions and body language, and 38% from vocal tone. This indicates that nonverbal communication significantly influences the expression of emotions and attitudes.

Ekman and Friesen's Theory of Universal Emotions: In 1975, Ekman and Friesen recognised facial expressions as universal indicators of emotions across diverse cultures. They contended that six fundamental emotions exist—happiness, sadness, fear, surprise, wrath, and disgust—each associated with a widely acknowledged facial expression. This idea emphasises the biological and evolutionary foundations of nonverbal communication, proposing that specific nonverbal behaviours are inherent and universally shared across humans.

Ilkhom Aslanov in his book "Psychology of social activity and behavior" notes the following points: Non-verbal communication can include an optokinetic system of signs, which can include pantomime (movements of the body and limbs) and facial expressions.

Burgoon's Expectancy Violations Theory asserts that individuals form expectations regarding others' nonverbal behaviour, influenced by cultural norms and personal experiences. Violations of these expectations can result in discomfort or fascination, contingent upon the interpretation of the transgression (Burgoon, 1993). This theory

emphasises the fluidity of nonverbal communication and the significance of context in influencing the interpretation of nonverbal signals.

Types of Nonverbal Communication

Nonverbal communication can be classified into various unique types, each fulfilling different roles in interpersonal interactions:

Facial expressions are arguably the most commonly acknowledged type of nonverbal communication. Ekman (1992) posits that facial expressions can convey a broad spectrum of emotions, frequently with greater precision than verbal communication. The face serves as a potent translator of emotional states, with nuanced alterations in muscle movements expressing sensations such as happiness, sadness, surprise, and others. These expressions are frequently instinctive and ubiquitous, indicating a biological foundation for their emergence.

Body Language and Gestures: Body language denotes the use of posture, motions, and gestures to convey information. For instance, open body language, characterised by uncrossed arms and a relaxed posture, generally conveys approachability and receptiveness, whereas closed body language, exemplified by crossed arms or a stooped posture, may suggest defensiveness or unease. Gestures, such as hand gestures and nods, are essential for communication, often communicating specific meanings (e.g., a thumbs-up signifies approval) or enhancing vocal communications.

Eye contact is crucial for controlling communication and fostering interpersonal interactions. It can express curiosity, attentiveness, affection, or domination, contingent upon the situation and cultural conventions. In certain cultures, sustained eye contact is perceived as a manifestation of confidence and integrity, whilst in others, it may be regarded as impolite or aggressive (Argyle, 1975). Eye contact facilitates the regulation of conversational dynamics, indicating when it is suitable for an individual to speak or listen.

Proxemics pertains to the physical distance persons preserve throughout interactions, conveying degrees of intimacy, formality, or authority. Hall (1966) delineated various spatial zones—intimate, personal, social, and public—that affect the dynamics of social interactions. For example, proximity in an intimate connection

signifies familiarity and trust, yet increased distance in a professional context denotes formality and respect.

Haptics (Touch): Touch serves as a powerful mode of nonverbal communication, frequently employed to express warmth, empathy, or compassion. A handshake, embrace, or pat on the back might convey camaraderie or reassurance, whereas aggressive or unwelcome touch may signify discomfort or dominance. The significance of touch is profoundly contingent on circumstance and differs throughout cultures.

Paralinguistics encompasses the vocal components of speech, such as tone, pitch, volume, and speech tempo. Vocal signals can significantly modify the interpretation of spoken words, signalling whether a message is conveyed playfully, aggressively, or genuinely. A sarcastic tone can convert a positive comment into a negative one, but a warm tone can amplify the significance of a compliment.

Silence, frequently disregarded as a mode of nonverbal communication, holds substantial significance in the communicative process. Silence can signify contemplation, agreement, discomfort, or displeasure. It can be employed strategically to enhance emphasis, allow for introspection, or indicate the conclusion of a conversation.

A person from ancient times to the present day has used a variety of signs to transmit information and store it. Signs and symbols as objects and means of non-verbal communication such as: petroglyphs, hieroglyphs, inscriptions, coinage and patterns; in modern trends: in advertising, in information technology, in medicine and in the areas of social, political and economic life of society, this is an effective method for exchanging, storing information and influencing the addressee in large and narrow circles. (for example, in traffic, the use of road signs and traffic signals). It is impossible to imagine how a person would exist without the use of signs. Thus, semiotics, the science of signs, is a bridge connecting various spheres of human society, the development of this area will provide a better understanding of reality. Semiotics makes it possible to discover the sign character of various situations in human society. Ignorance of the socially determined meaning of signs, their erroneous interpretation not only complicates communication, but can lead to its complete rupture.

In order to receive, store, process, and transmit information or knowledge, a sign is a tangible thing that serves as an objective representation of another object, concept, property, or connection. Through a variety of communication channels and its different (mathematical, statistical, and logical) processing, information can be provided through the use of signals. The sign takes the role of the actual item, giving the perceiver specific impressions and information about a given circumstance or occurrence. We refer to this knowledge-gathering process as interpretation.

A significant characteristic of a sign is its ability to signify or substitute not merely one thing or specific occurrence, but an entire array of objects or phenomena. The notion of the volume of a symbol is presented in this context. The more the specificity of the real-world things represented by a sign, the larger its volume.

Another equally significant characteristic of a sign is its capacity to elicit in an individual concepts regarding the essence of the object or occurrence represented by the sign. The entirety of information (knowledge) on the specified object and its interrelations with other objects is referred to as the concept of the sign.

Road signs on the roadways, emoticons and symbols on the Internet, and vibrant, colourful imagery on advertising posters are just a few of the signs and symbols we come across on a daily basis. There are many indications all around us, and by examining them and deciphering the messages they convey, we can learn about the actual circumstances and environment.

Semiotics is the study of signs and how they are categorised. However, what exactly is a sign?

Signs are tangible, perceptual items that are used to transmit and preserve the content and meaning of other objects. The smallest unit in a sign system that conveys and contains information is a sign. Signs are used to represent other things.

According to N. Mechkovskaya “Each sign has, firstly, a material side - this is its signifier (lat. signans), or a plane of expressions, and secondly, an ideal side - this is the meaning of the sign, or content, in terms of semiotics - the signified (from lat. signatum), or content plan.

“Objects of various types can act as a sign: objects, phenomena, properties, relationships, actions.”, and also that “the material nature of objects used as signs turns out to be not fundamental for cognitive processes and the functioning of the language, but it is determined mainly by the convenience or accessibility of the production and perception of signs.”

Signs serve a variety of purposes in human existence. They function as instances of particular types of events, they serve as predictive milestones or action plans, they enable individuals to see patterns in things, and the list goes on and on.

A sign is broadly defined in semiotics as a material object that, under specific circumstances (scientists refer to this as "forming a sign situation"), corresponds to a particular "meaning." This "meaning" can be anything, including a real or fictional object, phenomenon, process, fantastic or fabulous creature, or abstract concept.

We can consider that there are three main features of the signs: 1) the material shell, 2) the designated object, 3) the rules of interpretation that are established by people.

Scientists give different classifications of signs, one of them is the division of signs into conventional, figurative and natural.

Cultural and Contextual Factors in Nonverbal Communication

The interpretation of nonverbal signals is shaped by cultural conventions and the circumstances of the interaction. Nonverbal communication is not universal; many cultures attribute distinct meanings to identical behaviours. For instance, whereas direct eye contact is often perceived as a mark of respect in some Western cultures, it may be regarded as impolite or aggressive in certain Asian cultures (Gudykunst & Kim, 2003). Likewise, the utilisation of personal space can differ markedly among cultures, with certain cultures valuing closeness as an indication of affection, while others favour more physical distance.

The context significantly influences the interpretation of nonverbal signals. A single gesture can signify various meanings contingent upon the context. A thumbs-up may indicate approval in one situation, while be deemed offensive in another. Nonverbal

communication must be interpreted with the verbal message and the cultural, social, and relational contexts in which it transpires.

Nonverbal communication is a crucial element of human contact, playing a vital role in conveying emotions, social signals, and interpersonal communications. Individuals convey a broad spectrum of information through facial expressions, body language, eye contact, touch, and other nonverbal modalities, which may complement or occasionally contradict verbal communication. Comprehending nonverbal communication is essential for augmenting interpersonal relationships, resolving conflict, and enhancing communication across diverse domains, such as education, healthcare, marketing, and multicultural interactions. Ongoing investigation of the intricate relationship between verbal and nonverbal communication, especially in cross-cultural settings, will enhance our comprehension of human interaction and communication dynamics.

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