Importance of Nonverbal Communication

Erin M. Ellis

South Lyon High School

December 17,2020

Abstract

In this paper I will be talking about nonverbal communication and how important it can be in determining how people are feeling. Through my paper I would like to convey the fact that there is more to a conversation than what meets the ear. There is a purpose behind what people say vs what they don't but rather show, and making that known is a step to better communication and having a greater understanding of those around you. After reading the book *Blink* by Malcolm Gladwell, I was really intrigued by the idea that not everyone is getting the full story of people because they aren't looking further than the words being spoken. In doing this research I found that understanding nonverbal cues helps resolve conflicts easier in many different aspects of people's lives and lead to better communication overall. I also found a lot of research showing when it is most important to pay attention to these cues and how it will help you in tricky situations.

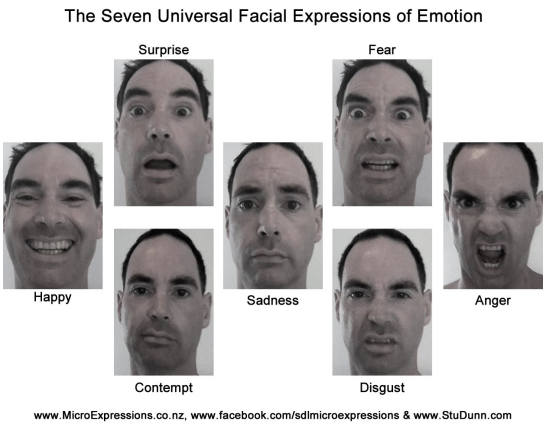
(Word Count: 168)

When we are communicating with each other, we often tend to hyperfocus on the actual words being spoken rather than reading the entire situation as a whole. Using our voice to express how we feel is only a part of uncovering what is trying to be told. This can lead to miscommunications between people and will leave you not knowing the entirety of what was being discussed. Most of what we are actually feeling shows through our facial expressions. Reading someone's facial expressions is one of the biggest forms of nonverbal communication and knowing how to read someone's face is extremely helpful in telling how a person is actually feeling.

There are 7 common formulations of expressions that are used universally which are: happiness, anger, disgust, surprise, sadness, contempt and fear. If we take away any words being spoken these faces are there to help show raw emotions of how someone is feeling. Oftentimes the actual phrases being verbalized aren't giving us as much information as the face being painted on the person and their tone of voice. Because of this, it is our responsibility to be engaged with whoever is on the other end of the conversation and read further into the nonverbal cues everyone portrays.

My sources do a really good job with explaining how to read facial expressions, body language and tone of voice. They really show the importance of understanding all these aspects of a conversation and how without these unspoken hints, we would be very lost when it comes to the deeper meaning of someone's words. In addition I also have sources that go into details about how the faces you portray can tell a lot about the entire personality of a person and how people see them based on their facial expressions.

Our faces show a lot more than we tend to think they do. Knowing what these expressions mean is so important in navigating through communication with others. There are however some specific areas of one's life where knowing how to read these facial expressions is crucial. One of these places is your place of work. In an article written by Professor David Matsumoto and research scientist Hyi Sung Hwang it says, "...and better information about emotional states provides the basis for better cooperation, negotiation, or sales" (2011,para. 9). If we are able to further analyze the facial expressions of those around us while in the workplace, you will get a lot better communication and more positive results in your outcome. This comes in handy particularly for professions that require a great deal of communication and Marie Huntington, a legal and business writer, lists some of these professions and states, "...certain occupations —such as teachers, salespeople, journalists, doctors, lawyers and corporate executives— spend a great deal of their workday communicating with others" (Huntington, 2019, para. 3). Jobs like these require a great deal of time spent with other people and without being able to know what certain facial expressions mean they would rarely be getting all the information that they could get to help them even further. This can then lead to issues especially if you are a teacher or doctor because of the relationship you have to have with the patients/students. Huntington (2019) describes this by saying communicating in noverbal ways can help convey the information in a more clear way so that the person on the



other side of it can get a better understanding. Although you cannot read into every little face made by others in every aspect of your life, this research has shown that it is extremely significant in places that require lots of different styles of communication.

Facial expressions aren't the only important nonverbal cues that we need to have a better understanding of. Another big aspect of them is body language. Author Fatik Baran Madal said in an article about nonverbal communication, "We use body language without being aware of it, perceive and interpret other people's body language" (2014, para.1). The author is trying to describe how we don't typically think of using our body as a way to communicate with others and it often gets overlooked. The article also provides a statistic of the breakdown of communication that states, "In a message, the verbal part (words) accounts for 7%, the vocal part (tone, dialect, accent) for 38%, and the nonverbal part (body language) for 55%" (Madal, 2014, para. 11). These numbers just give further information about how much communication comes from our body and how little actually comes from the words we speak. We spend way too much time focusing on the words being uttered rather than the cues to tell us how the person actually feels. This can have impacts on the relationships around us in a positive or negative way depending on if you actually pay attention to the nonverbal cues of the body that the other person is giving you. In an article about body language in relationships it states how in our relationships there is a greater influence through nonverbal cues than speaking with our words actually does (Reddy,2018, para.1). If you aren't reading into the cues your partner in the relationship is giving, then you will have a much harder time developing a strong, open, and trustworthy partnership because what is trying to be communicated isn't fully coming through the words

only. Getting a better understanding of how to accurately read this kind of nonverbal cue one will be able to have greater interactions in their personal life.

Although I've discussed how verbal cues don't always give us all the information about the situation it is important to also look into the tone of voice being used to say the words coming out of someone's mouth. Tone of voice is going to set the scene for the entire conversation and something that people pick up on to get a better understanding of the feelings being shared through the words. In the book Blink, by Malcolm Gladwell(2005), it describes how communication and your level of satisfaction with the conversation is going to come from the tone of voice being used and because it comes down to the level of approval of the tone being used (pg. 43). This means that if you aren't listening to the tone of the other person, you won't leave the conversation with a satisfied feeling because you didn't read into the context of what the feeling was behind the words. Someone could be saying that they are super happy but if their tone sounds sad and the receiver on the other end of the conversations doesn't pick up on it, that is missing information that one might need. Tone of voice can also help with showing our personalities. Data has shown that a more low tone is going to be perceived as a more dominant person and someone with a high tone are to be seen as people with more soft personalities (Mikulak, 2016, para. 30). This can also go along with lots of other personality traits as well. Without the tone in how people speak, it would be very difficult to get a good read on how the person carries themselves. Not only can tone help those around you it can also help us determine what we are feeling for ourselves. An author from the site Psychology Today explains how the truth doesn't come out in our words but rather the tone of our words and how this tone will show the truth whether we know exactly what we feel or don't (Lickerman, 2010, para. 4). Tone is

going to be useful in any situation because if we want to communicate something but can't find the words to, our tone will and if one doesn't know what they are feeling at all, the person on the other end of the conversation can use their tone of voice to help them figure out what they are trying to say. Even though tone is still something we hear it is just as important as the nonverbal cues that we see with our eyes.

In order to get a better understanding of those around us, we must pay closer attention nonverbal cues and where they are most significant. By taking a closer look at things such as facial expressions, body language and tone of voice we are able to understand those around us on a much deeper level and create a trustworthy bond with whomever we may be speaking with. Not only that but by using these three things when we are speaking it can allow the receiver of the conversation to be able to help us navigate whatever it is that we are feeling about what is being said. I encourage people to work on hyper focusing on the nonverbal cues more often and see how the interactions around start to become more eye opening and appreciated.

References

Gladwell, M. (2005). *Blink: The power of thinking without thinking*. London: Penguin Books.

Huntington, M. (2019, March 08). How Nonverbal Communication Can Help in the Workplace. Small Business-chron.com. Retrieved December 12, 2020, from https://smallbusiness.chron.com/nonverbal-communication-can-workplace-21523.html

Lickerman, A. (2010, August 05). The Importance of Tone. Psychology Today. Retrieved December 12, 2020, from https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/happiness-in-world/201008/the-importance-tone

Mandal, F. (2014, May). *Nonverbal Communications in Humans*. Retrieved December 16, 2020, from http://web.a.ebscohost.com/ehost/detail/detail?vid=27&sid=3c28e36f-2a6a-468c-8bb7-d4321a7bc792%40sdc-v-sessmgr03&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWhvc3QtbGl2ZSZzY29wZT1zaXRl#db=a9h&AN=95832702

Matsumoto, D., & Sung Hwang, H. (2011, May). Reading facial expressions of emotion. Apa.org.

Retrieved December 02, 2020, from https://www.apa.org/science/about/psa/2011/05/facial-expressions

Reddy, V. (2018, February 21). How Body Language Can Impact Your Relationships.

tut.com . Retrieved December 12, 2020, from

https://www.tut.com/article/details/559-how-body-language-can-impact-your-relationships/?articleId=559