

Elements of Nonverbal Communication

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Nonverbal communication may be defined as "those behaviors and characteristics that convey meaning without the use of words" (Floyd, 2009, p. 209). The nonverbal portion of any message is extremely important but often overlooked. Although scholars have disputed the exact percentages, there is overall agreement that nonverbal messages are critical to conveying meaning accurately.

The nonverbal part of a message contains a high percentage of the relational portion of a message. For example, a woman tells her husband, "We need to talk," and the husband says, "Okay," but continues to talk on e-mail to a friend. In other words, the nonverbal message contradicts the verbal message and carries the moment. It is important to note that in general, when the nonverbal message contradicts the verbal, people tend to put great emphasis on what is done rather than what is said. Nonverbal communication has multiple functions. It can repeat the verbal message (a wave while saying "goodbye"), substitute for the verbal (a silent wave goodbye), regulate the verbal (a vocal intonation), or complement and accent the nonverbal (a finger circling the ear to signal that "he's crazy").

What are the differences between verbal and nonverbal messages? Verbal messages use a single channel—you cannot say two words simultaneously. Nonverbal messages do not arrive in a sequential manner. Rather, they bombard you simultaneously through a variety of channels. You observe people's facial expressions, how they are dressed, and their gestures as you hear their vocal intonation and quality. Verbal messages are discrete—they have clear beginnings and endings. Unlike the spoken word, nonverbal messages are continuous. While you usually think about what you are going to say, most nonverbal messages are not deliberate. They are often unconscious. For example, although you might smile because you want to appear happy, your slumped shoulders might "give it away." There are just too many nonverbal channels to be able to think about and control all of them. Finally, verbal and nonverbal messages differ in their degree of ambiguity. In general, nonverbal messages are more ambiguous. What does it mean when the teacher smiles at your answer in class? Is the smile a signal of approval or is your answer wrong but amusing? The best way to find out is to ask for verbal clarification.

Skilled communicators can use nonverbal messages to deceive others. Not surprisingly, expressive communicators are more successful at deception than more unexpressive people because they control their communication behaviors more effectively (Floyd, 2009). Nonverbal communication may be designed to create discomfort or fear in the intended recipient of the message. For example, "Personal space intrusions are violations of 'private' bodily proximity boundaries" (Cupach & Spitzberg, 2004, p. 82) that may occur in cases of stalking. Nonverbal intimidation often involves objects that convey a sense of threat or may include staring at a victim with malevolent facial expressions. (Cupach & Spitzberg, 2004). For example, in a laboratory study of handholding when faced with a possible threat of electric shock, women were asked to hold the hand of a stranger, their husband, or no one. The researchers found that both stranger hand-holding and spousal hand-holding reduced subjective unpleasantness and arousal: spousal hand-holding was particularly powerful (Coan, Schaefer, & Davidson (2006).

In the article that follows, Knapp and Hall describe the three primary types of nonverbal communication that provide a continuous flow of messages. They stress the importance of physical context as well as the physical characteristics of communicators and their behaviors. Finally, they elaborate on how each of these types of nonverbal communication can contradict, repeat, substitute for, regulate, and complement the verbal messages. In addition, remember that nonverbal messages across cultures so crossed fingers in one culture may have a very different meaning in another one. As you read this chapter ask yourself the following question: Am I satisfied with my skills at interpreting others' nonverbal messages and, if not, how can I begin to improve my competence?

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CLASSIFYING NONVERBAL BEHAVIOR

The theory and research associated with nonverbal communication focus on three primary units: the environmental structures and conditions within which communication takes place, the physical characteristics of the communicators themselves, and the various behaviors manifested by the communicators. A detailed breakdown of these three features follows.

THE COMMUNICATION ENVIRONMENT

Physical Environment

Although most of the emphasis in nonverbal research is on the appearance and behavior of the persons communicating, increasing attention is being given to the influence of nonhuman factors on human transactions. People change environments to help them accomplish their communicative goals; conversely, environments can affect our moods, choices of words, and actions. Thus this category concerns those elements that impinge on the human relationship but are not directly a part of it. Environmental factors include the furniture, architectural style, interior decorating, lighting conditions, colors, temperature, additional noises or music, and the like, amid which the interaction occurs. Variations in arrangements, materials, shapes, or surfaces of objects in the interacting environment can be extremely influential on the outcome of an interpersonal relationship. This category also includes what might be called *traces of action*. For instance, as you observe cigarette butts, orange peels, and wastepaper left by the person you will soon interact with, you form an impression that will eventually influence your meeting. Perceptions of time and timing comprise another important part of the communicative environment. When something occurs, how frequently it occurs, and the tempo or rhythm of actions are clearly a part of the communicative world even though they are not a part of the physical environment per se.

Spatial Environment

Proxemics is the study of the use and perception of social and personal space. Under this heading is a body of work called *small group ecology*, which concerns itself with how people use and respond to spatial relationships in formal and informal group settings. Such studies deal with seating and spatial arrangements as related to leadership, communication flow, and the task at hand. On an even broader level, some attention has been given to spatial relationships in crowds and densely populated situations. Personal space orientation is sometimes studied in the context of conversation distance and how it varies according to sex, status, roles, cultural orientation, and so forth. The term *territoriality* is also used frequently in the study of proxemics to denote the human tendency to stake out personal territory (or untouchable space) much as wild animals and birds do.

THE COMMUNICATORS' PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS

This category covers things that remain relatively unchanged during the period of interaction. They are influential nonverbal cues that are not visibly movement bound. Included are physique or body shape, general attractiveness, height, weight, hair, skin color or tone, and so forth. Odors (body or breath) associated with the person are normally considered part of a person's physical appearance. Further, objects associated with the interactants also may affect their physical appearance. These are called *artifacts* and include things such as clothes, lipstick, eyeglasses, wigs and other hairpieces, false eyelashes, jewelry, and accessories such as attaché cases.

BODY MOVEMENT AND POSITION

Body movement and position typically includes gestures, movements of the body (limbs, hands, head, feet, and legs), facial expressions (smiles), eye behavior (blinking, direction and length of gaze, and pupil dilation), and posture. The furrow of the brow, the slump of a shoulder, and the tilt of a head are all considered body movements and positions. Specifically, the major areas

are gestures, posture, touching behavior, facial expressions, and eye behavior.

Gesture

There are many different types of gestures (and variations of these types), but the most frequently studied are the following:

Speech independent. These gestures are not tied to speech, but they have a direct verbal translation or dictionary definition, usually consisting of a word or two or a phrase. There is high agreement among members of a culture or subculture on the verbal "translation" of these signals. The gesture used to represent "A-OK" or "Peace" (also known as the "V-for-Victory" sign) are examples of speech-independent gestures for large segments of the U.S. culture.

Speech related. These gestures are directly tied to, or accompany, speech—often serving to illustrate what is being said verbally. These movements may accent or emphasize a word or phrase, sketch a path of thought, point to present objects, depict a spatial relationship, depict the rhythm or pacing of an event, draw a picture of a referent, depict a bodily action, or serve as commentary on the regulation and organization of the interactive process.

Posture

Posture is normally studied in conjunction with other nonverbal signals to determine the degree of attention or involvement, the degree of status relative to the other interactive partner, or the degree of liking for the other interactant. A forward-leaning posture, for example, has been associated with higher involvement, more liking, and lower status in studies where the interactants did not know each other very well. Posture is also a key indicator of the intensity of some emotional states, for example, the drooping posture associated with sadness or the rigid, tense posture associated with anger. The extent to which the communicators mirror each other's posture may also reflect rapport or an attempt to build rapport.

Touching Behavior

Touching may be self-focused or other focused. Self-focused manipulations, not usually made for

purposes of communicating, may reflect a person's particular state or a habit. Many are commonly called *nervous mannerisms*. Some of these actions are relics from an earlier time in life—times when we were first learning how to manage our emotions, develop social contacts, or perform some instructional task. Sometimes we perform these manipulations as we adapt to such learning experiences, and they stay with us when we face similar situations later in life, often as only part of the original movement. Some refer to these types of self-focused manipulation as *adaptors*. These adaptors may involve various manipulations of one's own body such as licking, picking, holding, pinching, and scratching. Object adaptors are manipulations practiced in conjunction with an object, as when a reformed male cigarette smoker reaches toward his breast pocket for the nonexistent package of cigarettes. Of course, not all behaviors that reflect habitual actions or an anxious disposition can be traced to earlier adaptations, but they do represent a part of the overall pattern of bodily action.

One of the most potent forms of nonverbal communication occurs when two people touch. Touch can be virtually electric, but it also can irritate, condescend, or comfort. Touch is a highly ambiguous form of behavior whose meaning often takes more from the context, the nature of the relationship, and the manner of execution than from the configuration of the touch per se. Some researchers are concerned with touching behavior as an important factor in the child's early development; some are concerned with adult touching behavior. Subcategories include stroking, hitting, greetings and farewells, holding, and guiding another's movements.

Facial Expressions

Most studies of the face are concerned with the configurations that display various emotional states. The six primary affects receiving the most study are anger, sadness, surprise, happiness, fear, and disgust. Facial expressions also can function as regulatory gestures, providing feedback and managing the flow of interaction. In fact, some

researchers believe the primary function of the face is to communicate, not to express emotions.

Eye Behavior

Where we look, when we look, and how long we look during interaction are the primary foci for studies of gazing. *Gaze* refers to the eye movement we make in the general direction of another's face. *Mutual gaze* occurs when interactants look into each other's eyes. The dilation and constriction of our pupils also has interest to those who study nonverbal communication because it is sometimes an indicator of interest, attention, or involvement.

Vocal Behavior

Vocal behavior deals with *how* something is said, not what is said. It deals with the range of nonverbal vocal cues surrounding common speech behavior. Generally, a distinction is made between two types of sounds:

1. The sound variations made with the vocal cords during talk that are a function of changes in pitch, duration, loudness, and silence.
2. Sounds that result from physiological mechanisms other than the vocal cords, for example, the pharyngeal, oral, or nasal cavities.

Most of the research on vocal behavior and its effects on human interaction has focused on the pitch level and variability; the duration of sounds (clipped or drawn out); pauses within the speech stream and the latency of response during turn exchanges; loudness level and variability; resonance; precise or slurred articulation; rate; rhythm; and intruding sound during speech such as "uh" or "um." The study of vocal signals encompasses a broad range of interests, from questions focusing on stereotypes associated with certain voices to questions about the effects of vocal behavior on comprehension and persuasion. Thus even specialized sounds such as laughing, belching, yawning, swallowing, moaning, and the like, may be of interest to the extent that they may affect the outcome of interaction.

NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION IN THE TOTAL COMMUNICATION PROCESS

Even though this [chapter] emphasizes nonverbal communication, don't forget the inseparable nature of verbal and nonverbal signals. Ray Birdwhistell, a pioneer in nonverbal research, reportedly said that studying only *nonverbal* communication is like studying *noncardiac* physiology. His point is well taken. It is not easy to dissect human interaction and make one diagnosis that concerns only verbal behavior and another that concerns only nonverbal behavior. The verbal dimension is so intimately woven and subtly represented in so much of what has been previously labeled *nonverbal* that the term does not always adequately describe the behavior under study. Some of the most noteworthy scholars associated with nonverbal study refuse to segregate words from gestures and hence work under the broader terms of *communication* or *face-to-face interaction* (McNeill, 2000). Kendon (1983, pp. 17, 20) puts it this way:

It is a common observation that, when a person speaks, muscular systems besides those of the lips, tongue, and jaws often become active.... Gesticulation is organized as part of the same overall unit of action by which speech is also organized.... Gesture and speech are available as two separate modes of representation and are coordinated because both are being guided by the same overall aim. That aim is to produce a pattern of action that will accomplish the representation of a meaning.

Because verbal and nonverbal systems operate together as part of the larger communication process, efforts to distinguish clearly between the two have not been very successful. One common misconception, for example, assumes nonverbal behavior is used solely to communicate emotional messages, whereas verbal behavior is for conveying ideas. Words can carry much emotion—we can talk explicitly about emotions, and we also communicate emotion between the lines in verbal nuances. Conversely, nonverbal cues are often

used for purposes other than showing emotion; as examples, people in conversation use eye movements to help tell each other when it is time to switch speaking turns, and people commonly use hand gestures while talking to help convey their ideas (McNeill, 2000).

Argyle (1988) has identified the following primary functions of nonverbal behavior in human communication as follows:

1. Expressing emotion.
2. Conveying interpersonal attitudes (like/dislike, dominance/submission, etc.).
3. Presenting one's personality to others.
4. Accompanying speech for the purposes of managing turn taking, feedback, attention, and so on.

Argyle also notes that nonverbal behaviors are important in many rituals, such as greeting. Notice that none of these functions of nonverbal behavior is limited to nonverbal behavior alone; that is, we can express emotions and attitudes, present ourselves in a particular light, and manage the interaction using verbal cues, too. This does not suggest, however, that in any given situation we might not rely more heavily on verbal behavior for some purposes and on nonverbal for others.

We also need to recognize that the ways we attribute meanings to verbal and nonverbal behavior are not all that different either. Nonverbal actions, like verbal ones, may communicate more than one message at a time—for example, the way you nonverbally make it clear to another person that you want to keep talking may simultaneously express your need for dominance over that person and, perhaps, your emotional state. When you grip a child's shoulder during a reprimand, you may increase comprehension and recall, but you may also elicit such a negative reaction that the child fails to obey. A smile can be a part of an emotional expression, an attitudinal message, part of a self-presentation, or a listener response to manage the interaction. And, like verbal behavior, the meanings attributed to nonverbal behavior may be stereotyped, idiomatic, or ambiguous. Furthermore, the same nonverbal

behavior performed in different contexts may, like words, receive different attributions of meaning. For example, looking down at the floor may reflect sadness in one situation and submissiveness or lack of involvement in another. Finally, in an effort to identify the fundamental categories of meaning associated with nonverbal behavior, Mehrabian (1970, 1981) identified a threefold perspective resulting from his extensive testing:

1. *Immediacy*. Sometimes we react to things by evaluating them—positive or negative, good or bad, like or dislike.
2. *Status*. Sometimes we enact or perceive behaviors that indicate various aspects of status to us—strong or weak, superior or subordinate.
3. *Responsiveness*. This third category refers to our perceptions of activity—slow or fast, active or passive.

In various verbal and nonverbal studies over the past three decades, dimensions similar to Mehrabian's have been reported consistently by investigators from diverse fields studying diverse phenomena. It is reasonable to conclude, therefore, that these three dimensions are basic responses to our environment and are reflected in the way we assign meaning to both verbal and nonverbal behavior. Most of this work, however, depends on subjects translating their reactions to a nonverbal act into one identified by verbal descriptors. This issue has already been addressed in our discussion of the way the brain processes different pieces of information. In general, then, nonverbal signals, like words, can and do have multiple uses and meanings; like words, nonverbal signals have denotative and connotative meanings; and like words, nonverbal signals play an active role in communicating liking, power, and responsiveness. With these in mind, we can now examine some of the important ways verbal and nonverbal behavior interrelate during human interaction. Ekman (1965) identified the following: repeating, contradicting, complementing, substituting, accenting/moderating, and regulating.

Repeating

Nonverbal communication can simply repeat what was said verbally. For instance, if you told a person he or she had to go north to find a newspaper stand and then pointed in the proper direction, this would be considered repetition.

Conflicting

Verbal and nonverbal signals can be at variance with one another in a variety of ways. They may communicate two contradictory messages or two messages that seem incongruous or in conflict with one another. In both instances two messages that do not appear to be consistent with one another are perceived. It is quite common (and probably functional) to have mixed feelings about some things. As a result, incongruous verbal and nonverbal messages may be more common than we realize. But it is the more dramatic contradictions we are more likely to notice. Perhaps it is the parent who yells to his or her child in an angry voice, "Of course I love you!" Or the public speaker, who, with trembling hands and knees and beads of perspiration on the brow, claims, "I'm not nervous."

Why do these conflicting messages occur? In some cases it is a natural response to a situation in which communicators perceive themselves in a bind. They do not want to tell the truth, and they do not want to lie. As a result, their ambivalence and frustration produce a discrepant message (Bavelas et al., 1990). Suppose you have just given a terrible presentation, and you ask me how you did. I may say you did fine, but my voice, face, and body may not support my words. In other situations, conflicting messages occur because people do an imperfect job of lying. On still other occasions, conflicting messages may be the result of an attempt to communicate sarcasm or irony, saying one thing with words and the opposite with vocal tone and/or facial expression. The term *coy* is used to describe the display of coexisting signals that invite friendly contact with those that signal rejection and withdrawal. We live in a complex world that makes feelings of ambivalence or mixed emotions a much more common experience in everyday life than we sometimes acknowledge (Weigert, 1991).

These displays of incongruous or conflicting signals may occur in a variety of ways. Sometimes two nonverbal signals may manifest the discord (e.g., vocal with visual), but verbal and nonverbal signals can combine in several ways: positive voice/negative words, negative voice/positive words, positive face/negative words, negative face/positive words.

When confronted with conflicting verbal and nonverbal messages that matter to us, how do we react? Leathers (1979) has identified a common three-step process:

1. The first reaction is confusion and uncertainty.
2. Next, we search for additional information that will clarify the situation.
3. If clarification is not forthcoming, we will probably react with displeasure, hostility, or even withdrawal.

Responses to conflicting messages are often ambiguous themselves. Some believe a constant barrage of inconsistent messages can contribute to a psychopathology for the receiver. This may be particularly true when people have a close relationship and the receiver has no other people he or she can turn to for discussion and possible clarification of the confusion. Some research finds that parents of disturbed children produce more messages with conflicting cues (Bugental, Love, Kaswan, & April, 1971). Other work suggests that the differences are not in conflicting cues but in negative messages; that is, parents with disturbed children send more negative messages (Beakel & Mehrabian, 1969). The combination of negativity, confusion, and punishment can be very harmful if it is a common style of communication directed toward children. Date rape is another situation in which testimony often centers around the extent to which the signals of rejection were unequivocal.

We do not wish to give the impression that all forms of discrepancy are harmful. Our daily conversations are probably peppered with instances where gestures and speech do not exactly match one another—for example, a speaker telling a story about someone climbing up a pipe while simultaneously gesturing like he or she was climbing a

ladder (McNeill, Cassell, & McCullough, 1994). Sometimes these discrepancies go unnoticed, and many are cognitively “resolved” without overtly discussing the mismatch. Even contradictions with more important implications for the conversants may not, in some situations, be considered very harmful. Moreover, as stated earlier, discrepancy is *required* for achieving certain effects: Sarcasm occurs when the words are pleasant and the voice quality is unpleasant; when the words are unpleasant but the tone of voice is pleasant, we are likely to communicate the message “just joking.”

Finally, some discrepancies may be helpful in certain situations. In an experiment, teachers used mixed messages while teaching a lesson to sixth-grade pupils. When the teachers combined positive words with a negative nonverbal demeanor, pupils learned more than with any other combination (Woolfolk, 1978). Similarly, a study of doctors talking with patients found that the combination of positive words said in a negative voice tone was associated with the highest levels of patient satisfaction with the visit (Hall, Roter, & Rand, 1981). Possibly the positive verbal/negative nonverbal combination is perceived in classrooms and doctors’ offices as serious and concerned and, therefore, makes a better impression.

Some research has questioned whether we trust and believe nonverbal signals more than verbal when we are confronted with conflicting messages (Bugental, 1974; Mehrabian, 1972; Stiff, Hale, Garlick, & Rogan, 1990). Burgoon (1980, p. 184), after surveying numerous studies in this area, concluded, “the nonverbal channels carry more information and are believed more than the verbal band, and... visual cues generally carry more weight than vocal ones.”

Burgoon goes on to discuss some important reservations about this general conclusion. It is often assumed that nonverbal signals are more spontaneous, harder to fake, and less likely to be manipulated—hence, more believable. It is probably more accurate to say, however, that some nonverbal behaviors are more spontaneous and harder to fake than others and that some people are more proficient than others at nonverbal deception. With two conflicting cues (both of which are

nonverbal) we predictably place our reliance on the cues we consider harder to fake. One research team found that people tended to rely primarily on visual cues in visual/auditory discrepancies, but when the discrepancy was great, people tended to rely on the audio signals (DePaulo, Rosenthal, Eisenstat, Rogers, & Finkelstein, 1978).

Credibility of the information presented is also an important factor in determining which cues to believe most in inconsistent messages. If the information being communicated in one channel lacks credibility, we are likely to discount it and look to other channels for the "real" message (Bugental, 1974). Sometimes we are faced with the difficult dilemma of perceiving the meaning communicated by hard-to-fake cues that do not seem credible. If a person says, "This is really great" with a sad tone of voice upon receiving a gift you know was long desired, you are likely to search for other explanations—for example, something else may be bothering the person.

Interestingly, young children seem to give less credence to certain nonverbal cues than adults do when confronted with conflicting verbal and nonverbal messages (Bugental, Kaswan, Love, & Fox, 1970; Bugental, Love, & Gianetto, 1971; Volkmar & Siegel, 1982). Conflicting messages in which the speaker smiled while making a critical statement were interpreted more negatively by children than adults, particularly when the speaker was a woman.

Other work casts a further shadow on the "reliance on nonverbal cues in conflicting message situations" theory. Shapiro (1968) found that student judges differed as to whether they relied on linguistic or facial cues when asked to select the affect being communicated by incongruent sketched faces and written messages and to be consistent in their choices. Vande Creek and Watkins (1972) extended Shapiro's work by using real voices and moving pictures. The stimulus persons were portraying inconsistencies in the degree of stress in verbal and nonverbal channels. Again, they found some respondents tended to rely primarily on verbal cues, some tended to rely on nonverbal cues, and some responded to the degree of stress in general regardless of the channels manifesting

it. The cross-cultural research of Solomon and Ali (1975) suggests that familiarity with the verbal language may affect our reliance on verbal or nonverbal cues. They found, for instance, that persons who were not as familiar with the language used to construct the contradictory message relied on the content for judgments of affective meaning. Those who knew the language well were more apt to rely on the vocal intonation for the affective meaning. So it appears some people rely more heavily on the verbal message, whereas others rely on the nonverbal.

We do not know all the conditions that affect which signals people look to for valid information. As a general rule, people tend to rely on those signals they perceive harder to fake, but this will most likely vary with the situation; so the ultimate impact of verbal, visual, and vocal signals is best determined by a close examination of the people involved and the communication context.

Complementing

Nonverbal behavior can modify, or elaborate on, verbal messages. When the verbal and nonverbal channels are complementary, rather than conflicting, our messages are usually decoded more accurately. Some evidence suggests that complementary nonverbal signals also may be helpful in remembering the verbal message. A student who reflects an attitude of embarrassment when talking to a professor about a poor performance in class assignments is exhibiting nonverbal behavior that complements the verbal. When clarity is of utmost importance (as in a job interview or when making up with a loved one after a fight), we should be especially concerned with making the meanings of verbal and nonverbal behavior complement one another.

Substituting

Nonverbal behavior can substitute for verbal messages. It may indicate more permanent characteristics (sex, age), moderately long-lasting features (personality, attitudes, social group), and relatively short-term states. In the latter case, we may find a dejected and downtrodden executive (or janitor) walk into his or her house after work with a facial

expression that substitutes for the statement, "I've had a rotten day." With a little practice, people soon learn to identify a wide range of these substitute nonverbal displays—all the way from "It's been a fantastic, great day!" to "Oh, God, am I miserable!" We do not need to ask for verbal confirmation of our perception.

Sometimes, when substitute nonverbal behavior fails, the communicator resorts to the verbal level. Consider the woman who wants her date to stop trying to become physically intimate with her. She may stiffen, stare straight ahead, act unresponsive and cool. If the suitor still does not stop, she might say something like, "Look, Larry, please don't ruin a nice friendship."

Accenting/Moderating

Nonverbal behavior may accent (amplify) or moderate (tone down) parts of the verbal message. Accenting is much like underlining or *italicizing* written words to emphasize them. Movements of the head and hands are frequently used to accent the verbal message. When a father scolds his son about staying out too late, he may accent a particular phrase with a firm grip on the son's shoulder and an accompanying frown. In some instances, one set of nonverbal cues can accent or moderate other nonverbal cues. The intensity of a facial expression of emotion, for example, may be revealed by observing other parts of the body.

Regulating

Nonverbal behavior is also used to regulate the verbal behavior. We do this in two ways:

1. Coordinating our own verbal and nonverbal behavior in the production of our messages.
2. Coordinating our verbal and nonverbal messages behavior with those of our interaction partner(s).

We regulate the production of our own messages in a variety of ways. Sometimes we use nonverbal signs to segment units of interaction. Posture changes may demarcate a topic change; a gesture may forecast the verbalization of a particular idea; pauses may help in organizing spoken information

into units. When we speak of a series of things, we may communicate discreteness by linear, staccato movements of the arm and hand; for example, "We must consider A, B, and C." When we insert one of these chopping gestures after each letter, it may suggest a separate consideration of each letter; a single chop after C might indicate either a consideration of all three (as a group) or just C in particular.

We also regulate the flow of verbal and nonverbal behavior between ourself and an interactant. This may manifest itself in the type of behavior two interactants elicit from one another (e.g., every time one person gets mad and yells, the other behaves in a solicitous manner) or in less obvious ways (e.g., the signals of initiation, continuation, and termination of interaction). The way one person stops talking and another starts in a smooth, synchronized manner may be as important to a satisfactory interaction as the content. After all, we do make judgments about people based on their regulatory skills (for example, "Talking to him is like talking to a wall" or "You can't get a word in edgewise with her"). When another person frequently interrupts or is inattentive, we may feel this person is making a statement about the relationship, perhaps one of disrespect. There are rules for regulating conversations, but they are generally implicit. It is not written down, but we seem to know that two people should not talk at the same time, that each person should get an equal number of turns at talking if he or she desires, that a question should be answered, and so forth. Wiemann's (1977) research found that relatively minute changes in these regulatory behaviors (interruptions, pauses longer than 3 seconds, unilateral topic changes, etc.) resulted in sizeable variations in how competent a communicator was perceived to be. As listeners, we are apparently attending to and evaluating a host of fleeting, subtle, and habitual features of another's conversational behavior. There are probably differences in the actual behaviors used to manage conversational flow across cultures. As children are first learning these rules, they use less subtle cues, for example, tugging on clothing, raising a hand, and the like. Children are also less skilled

in accomplishing smooth turn taking, as you will have noticed if you have conversed with a young child on the telephone.

Conversational regulators involve several kinds of nonverbal cues. When we want to indicate we are finished speaking and the other person can start, we may increase our eye contact with the other person. This is often accompanied by the vocal cues associated with ending declarative or interrogative statements. If the other person still does not figuratively pick up the conversational ball, we might extend silence or interject a "trailer," for example, "you know..." or "so, ah..." Keeping another from speaking in a conversation means we have to keep long pauses from occurring, decrease eye contact, and perhaps raise the volume if the other tries to speak. When we do not want to take a speaking turn, we might give the other some reinforcing head nods, maintain attentive eye contact, and, of course, refrain from speaking when the other begins to yield. When we do want the floor, we might raise our index finger or enact an audible inspiration of breath with a straightening of the posture as if ready to take over. Rapid nodding may signal the other to hurry up and finish, but, if we have trouble getting in, we may have to talk simultaneously for a few words or engage in stutter starts that, we hope, will be more easily observed cues to signal our desire.

Conversational beginnings and endings also act as regulatory points. When we are greeting others, eye contact indicates that the channels are open. A slight head movement and an *eyebrow flash* of recognition (a barely detectable but distinct up-and-down movement of the eyebrows) may be present. The hands are also used in greetings for salutes, waves, handshakes, handslaps, emblematic signals such as the peace or victory sign, a raised fist, or thumbs-up. Hands may also perform grooming activities (running fingers through one's hair) or be involved in various touching activities such as kissing, embracing, or hitting another on the arm. The mouth may form a smile or an oval shape, as if one were ready to start talking (Krivonos & Knapp, 1975).

Saying good-bye in semiformal interviews was shown, in one study, to elicit many nonverbal behaviors. The most common included the breaking of eye contact more often and for longer periods of time, positioning one's body toward an exit, leaning forward and nodding. Less frequent, but very noticeable, were accenting behaviors that signaled, "This is the termination of our conversation, and I don't want you to miss it!" These accentors included explosive hand and foot movements such as raising the hands and/or feet and bringing them down with enough force to make an audible slap while simultaneously using the hands and feet as leverage to catapult the interactant out of his or her seat. A less direct manifestation was placing hands on thighs or knees in a leveraging position (as if one was preparing to catapult), hoping that the other person picked up the good-bye cue (Knapp, Hart, Friedrich, & Shulman, 1975).

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