

## **NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION**

**Kinesics** – Kinesics is the interpretation of body language such as facial expressions, gestures and postures — or, more formally, non-verbal behaviour related to movement, either of any part of the body or the body as a whole. Body language, Body idiom, Gesture language, Kinesic acts are just some terms used to depict Kinesics. Kinesic acts may substitute language, accompany it or modify it.

The term Kinesics was first used (in 1952) by Ray Birdwhistell, an anthropologist who wished to study how people communicate through posture, gesture, stance, and movement, reflexes etc. ‘Kine’ is the smallest observable unit of body movement.

**Facial expression** – A facial expression can be exceptionally communicative and can ‘stand in’ for verbal communication in some instances. There are 80 muscles in human face. Most facial expressions are subtle than extremes. One can use them in variety of ways. The face seems to be the most obvious component of body language, but it is the most confusing and difficult to understand.



Happiness



Sorrow



Tension

Following are the basic physical descriptions of facial expressions:

The **neutral** expression could result in various expressions, such as pleasure, mask, respect, thoughtfulness and complete attention.

The **relaxed** expression could result in love, pleasure, and submission.

The **tense** expression could result in fear, surprise, determination, contempt and extreme interest.

The **uplifted** expression could result in happiness, anxiety, rage, love, astonishment and attention.

Finally, the **droopy**, in distress, suffering, grief, dismay and shock.

### **Smile:**

Roger G. Axtell observes that **smile** is the ultimate gesture that carries certain welcome characteristics unlike any other single gesture. There are at least 50 types of smile. Primalogist Signe Preuschoft traces the smile back over 30 million years of evolution to a "fear grin" stemming from monkeys and apes who often used barely clenched teeth to portray to predators that they were harmless. Biologists believe the smile has evolved differently among species and especially among humans.

### **Posture:**

As part of our genetic heritage, we are programmed to pay attention to movement. We instantly notice it, whether we want to or not, assessing the movement for any hint of threat to us. If right posture is maintained then a person will instantly start feeling better.

**Head position** is another significant aspect of this. When one wants to feel confident and self-assured then the head level is kept high both vertically and horizontally. One can also use this position when one feels authoritative and serious. Conversely, when one feels friendly, one will tilt head a little to one side or the other.

**Legs** are the furthest point away from brain; consequently they are the toughest bits of our body to consciously control. They tend to move around a lot when we are nervous, stressed or being deceptive. So the best strategy is to keep them as still as possible in formal occasions. Crossing the legs can be disastrous for any business negotiations. Gerald I. Nirenberg and Henry H. Calero in their book "How to Read a Person like a Book" describe a study in which they found, after videotaping 2000 transactions, that no sales were made by people who had their legs crossed.

### **Gestures:**

Gestures are observed actions. By moving parts of body, one expresses both specific and general messages, some voluntary and some spontaneous. Paul Eckman & Wallan Friesen have made the following grouping:

**Emblems** - Substitute for words and phrases

**Illustrators** - Accompany or reinforce verbal messages

**Affect Displays** - Show emotion

**Regulators** - Control the flow and pace of communication

**Adaptors** - Release physical or emotional tension. Various gestures:-

**Evaluation gesture** - A closed hand resting on the cheek, often with the index finger pointing upwards. Hand is on cheek, not used as a head support, shows genuine interest. Index finger points vertically up the cheek & the thumb supports chin, the listener is having negative thoughts.



Figure 66 Evaluation/decision cluster



Figure 67 Evaluation, decision,  
boredom cluster

Doubt or uncertainty



The ear rub



The neck scratch

### **Universal hand gestures:**

<b>Hand gestures</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
Pressing the palms together & resting head on the back of the head	I am tired.
Patting the stomach with the hand	I am hungry
Taking the hand & making as circular motion over the stomach	After eating, I am full
Using the hand & making as circular motion over the stomach	I am thirsty
Rubbing then hands together	I am cold, it is cosy, a sign of
Shaking hands	Greetings
Raising the hand & with the full, open palm waving the hand back &	Farewell
Making a circle with thumb & forefinger	OK
Thumbs upping	Good job, 'keep it up'
Thumb down	Disapproval
Holding the index finger & middle fingers upright	'Victory' or 'peace'

### **Common head gestures:**

<b>Gesture</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
Nodding the head up & down	Yes
Shaking the head side to side	No

Scratching the head	Thinking / confused / sceptical
Direct eye contact	Shows attentiveness
Tilting the head	Listening
Winking with one eye	Sharing a secret / flirting
Eyebrow flash	Flirtatious gesture by men
Rolling the eyes	Incredulity / amazement
Cupping the ear	I can't tell you
Rotating index around ear	Someone has gone crazy
Wrinkling the nose	Disgust or 'What's that smell?'
Spitting	Rude, crude, insulting
Yawning	Tiredness / boredom
Sticking out the tongue	Derision
Holding the nose with thumb & forefinger	Bad / stinking smell
Stroking chin, tapping head, with forefinger	Contemplation 'I am thinking'

### Other typical Gesture and Posture:

Non-verbal behaviour	Interpretation
Brisk, erect walk	Readiness, Aggression
Standing with hands on hips	Boredom
Sitting, legs apart	Open, relaxed
Arms crossed on chest	Defensiveness

Walking with hands in pockets, shoulders	Dejection
Hand to cheek	Evaluation, thinking
Hands clasped behind back	Anger, frustration, apprehension
Locked ankles	Apprehension
Head resting in hands, downcast eyes	Boredom
Rubbing hands	Anticipation
Sitting with hands clasped	Confidence, superiority
Patting / fondling hair	Insecurity / lack of confidence
Open palm	Sincerity, openness
Tilted head	Interest
Stroking chin	Interest
Biting nails	Insecurity, nervousness

### **Effective guidelines for befitting body language**

- Don't cross your arms or legs
- Don't be afraid to take up some space
- Relax your shoulders
- Nod when people are talking to you
- Don't slouch, sit up straight Lean, but not too much Smile & laugh
- Don't touch your face

### **Oculesics**

It is the way eyes are used during a communication exchange. This may include eye contact or an avoidance of eye contact. Looking away contributes to maintaining psychological distance.

Symptoms of abnormalities include;

- Excessive blinking,
- Depressed look,
- Dramatic gaze,
- Guarded gaze,
- Absent gaze etc.

Eye behaviour is usually divided in two parts:

### **Gaze & Mutual gaze**

Gazing can serve following functions:

**Regulatory** – Some regulatory functions of gazing are to signal that communication may take place and to indicate turn taking

**Monitoring** – The monitoring function of gazing serves to show concern for the other person.

**Indicates cognitive activity** – Gazing indicates cognitive activity when the gaze is averted or shifted. This occurs more when the listener is asked to reflect on some question.

**Expressive** – As a component of facial expression, the eye's gaze is a powerful part of emotional expression. Communication through facial expression is marked heavily by the eyes. Following can serve as **effective guideline on eye contact**:

If you have trouble staring someone in the eye, look at something else in their face. When speaking to a group, look at everyone, specially at who are key decision-makers. Look at reactive listeners

Try not to look at the floor, script or anything that causes you to tilt your head away from your listeners. Better not to look at the bad listeners who may distract you

## **Haptics**

Haptics or tactile communication or touch is an important form of communication for many primate species. Primates are social animals. They live in large groups. Touch helps the group form bonds and stays peaceful. Female primates often hold and cuddle their young. Mother tiger nuzzle their babies, chimpanzees groom each other, and bear cubs wrestle with each other. Touch is used to comfort, to establish dominance, and establish bonds. Humans are no exception.



### **Touch: The First Language**

Studies show that, from a very early age, we become sensitive to the specific qualities of touch rather than its mere presence or absence. Mothers are capable of eliciting specific behaviors from their infants using touch (Stack and Arnold 1998; Stock and LePage 1996), and touch can convey messages that are just as specific as those conveyed by other means, such as facial expressions. (Tronick 1995; Stack and Muir 1990, 1992).

The development of an infant's haptic senses and how it relates to the development of the other senses such as vision has been the target of much research. Human babies have

been observed to have enormous difficulty surviving if they do not possess a sense of touch, even if they retain sight and hearing. Babies who can perceive through touch, even without sight and hearing, tend to fare much better.

Touching is treated differently from one country to another. Socially acceptable levels of touching vary from one culture to another.

Recently, researchers have shown that touch communicates distinct emotions such as anger, fear, happiness, sympathy, love, and gratitude. Moreover, the accuracy with which subjects were capable of communicating the emotions was commensurate to facial and vocal displays of emotion (Hertenstein, Verkamp, Kerestes, & Holmes, 2006).

Stoeltje (2003) wrote about how Americans are 'losing touch' with this important communication skill. During a study conducted by University of Miami School of Medicine, Touch Research Institutes, American children were said to be more aggressive than their French counterparts while playing at a playground. It was noted that French women touched their children more often than the American parents.

Touch may be divided into:

Self-touching - Not necessarily communicative, but can indicate how a person is feeling. Touching others - Most communicative.

Variation in the strength of the skin's electric currents seems to be directly related to the emotional state of the person being touched. Skin's use for communication is highly related to subliminal perception.

## **Categories of haptic communication**

1. **Functional/professional** - Researchers found that a person in power is more likely to touch a subordinate, but the subordinate is not free to touch in kind. The initial connection to another person in a professional setting usually starts off with a touch, specifically a handshake. A person's handshake can speak volumes about them and their personality.
2. **Social/polite** - Moving from one haptic category to another can become blurred by culture. There are many areas in the United States where a touch on the forearm is accepted as socially correct and polite, however in the Midwest, this is not always an acceptable behaviour.

Goffman (1963) uses an elevator study to explain an interesting phenomenon. It is uncommon for people to look, talk or touch to the person next to them. While it may be so crowded that they 'touch' another person, they will often maintain an expressionless demeanor so not to affect those around them.

3. **Friendship/warmth** - Touching among family members has been found to affect the behavior of those involved. Various factors are at work within a family setting. As a child grows older, the amount of touching by the parent decreases. Boys distance themselves from their parents at an earlier age than girls.



4. **Love/intimacy** - The primary nonverbal behavior that has the biggest effect on interpersonal relationships is touch. The amount of touching increases as a relationship moves from impersonal to personal.

### **Functions of Non-verbal Communication :**

According to psychologists, people use non-verbal behavior to express their emotional attitudes: the degree of like and dislike we feel towards others, the degree of dominance and submissiveness we feel towards them, and the degree of responsiveness – the amount of positive and negative feeling the other person arouses in us. In general, non-verbal communication helps people accomplish various goals;

to create impressions

to manage interactions better expressing emotions

to send relational message to convey deception

to send messages of power & persuasion.

Hence from the discussion we understand that it is of utmost importance to pay attention to silent messages we send and receive. The fact is – our silent language is a tremendously underestimated element in the way we communicate. The more accurately we learn to understand it and use it, the more effectively we will be able to perform our job.