Reading Body Language in Audiology and Speech Pathology: A Worthwhile Skill?
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Why This Topic?
- I’m a cochlear implant user by day, and a deaf person by night (and Saturday mornings)
- Deaf people are reportedly 100 milliseconds faster than hearing people at recognizing non-language cues (Corina & Grosvald, 2012)
- Got bored at an airport

So we began to ask...
- Can I use this in my professional life?
- Can I use this in my social life?
- Can I use this with students?
- Can I use this with my clients and patients?
- Can I use this in my personal life?

What is Body Language?
An Overview

Mehrabian (1971)
- Body language refers to a number of different forms of nonverbal communication that provides clues about one’s unspoken intent, feelings, or state of mind through physical behavior.
- Caveat: Not an EXACT science...

Morgan (2012)
- Don’t over-interpret body language
- Facial cues don’t tell you everything
- The face may, however, give away the strongest feelings
- Body language signals intent, not meaning
- You’re probably better at reading body language than you think
- To read body language accurately, don’t think about it
- Trust your gut

Just like the spoken word, non-verbal communication is a means of transmitting information:
- Facial expressions
- Gestures
- Touching (haptics)
- Physical movements (kinesics)
- Posture
- Body adornments (clothes, jewelry, tattoos, etc.)
- Voice (tone, timbre, and volume)

Nonverbal behaviors comprise approximately 60-65% of all interpersonal communication and, during lovemaking, can constitute 100% of communication between partners!

Goleman (1995) wrote that those who can effectively read and interpret nonverbal communication, and manage how others perceive them, will enjoy greater success in life than individuals who lack this skill.

Part of the brain that reacts reflectively and instantly, in real time, without thought
- It is the “honest brain”
  - Gives off a true response to events in the environment
- It is responsible for our survival and is always “on”
Three F’s
- Fight
- Flight
- Freeze

Discomfort -> Pacifiers

Law enforcement
- Poker players
- Uncomfortable people

Feet and Legs
- Of all the nonverbals, our legs and feet win the honesty game
  - Conveys both positive and negative signs
- Instead of reading people top-down, try bottom-up

Feet and Legs
- Happy feet
- Impatient feet*
- Shifting feet
- Knee clasp*
- Anti-Gravity feet
- Territorial Imperative*
- Comfortable legs

Torso, Hips, Chest and Shoulders
- Torso lean*
- Ventral fronting and ventral denial*
- Torso shield
- Preening*
- Torso splays
- Torso fronting
- Shoulder raises/turtle effect*
Arms
- Anti-Gravity arms
- Arm restriction/freeze
- Isolated arms/regal arms
- Arms akimbo
  - Thumbs out
  - Thumbs in
- Arms and spread fingers on surface

Hands and Fingers
- Effective/persuasive hands*
- Hidden hands*
- Handshakes*
- Pointing*
- Preening*
- Steepling*
- Hand-wringing*
- Thumbs in/thumbs out*

Face
- Eye blocking*
- Eye gazing*
- Squinting*
  - Hearing aid intensity
  - Struggling with reading or a task
- Lips pursing*
- Lips pucker*
- Face up/face down*

Dissecting the Face
- Tension / Dilation / Concern
  - Raised or tense elevators, squinting, rapid blink rate
- Tension / Dysthymia
  - Tightening of jaw muscles, thinning or excessive chewing
- Concern / Tension / Nervousness
  - Lip tension, disappearing or compressed lips, quivering, palmar
- Disgust
  - Look for side out, down, quivering – jaw shifting
- Anxiety / Concern
  - Furrowing / Freckles / Worry Lines

Example: Otoscopy

6 Universal Facial Expressions
- Happiness
- Sadness
- Fear
- Disgust
- Surprise
- Anger

http://www.cfsb.cornell.edu/neurobio/land/oldstudentprojects/cs490-95to96/hjkim/emotions.html
For "breaking the news" of hearing loss, the audiologist might have:
- Made eye contact first before speaking
- Attended to facial expressions and body language
- Spoken more slowly or more softly
- Added, "I'm sorry"
- Other

Nonverbal Communication in the Classroom

- May West once said "I speak two languages, body and English"
- Nonverbal communication is communication without words.

Nonverbal Communication in the Classroom

- It includes:
  - Facial expressions
  - Eye contact
  - Touching
  - Tone of voice

References

### Nonverbal Communication in the Classroom

- It can also be less obvious
  - Dress
  - Posture
  - Spatial distance

### Why should we be aware of nonverbal communication?

- Nonverbal behaviors that create a sense of immediacy or "enhanced closeness" is positively related to:
  - Teacher competence
  - Character
  - Student engagement and motivation

### Bidirectional Relationship

![Teacher Nonverbal → Student Nonverbal](image1)

### “Face the Facts”

- Smiles
  - Send a warm and open invitation for communication
- Eye contact
  - Communicates openness and honesty
  - Avoiding eye contact may indicate something is wrong

### Why should we be aware of nonverbal communication?

- To become better receivers of students’ messages and
- To ensure we are sending positive signals that reinforce students’ learning
  - while avoiding negative signals that stifle their learning.
Balancing Act

- Vocal intonation includes rhythm, pitch, intensity
  - If your intonation does not match your words then the message carried by the intonation is the one that will be received
  - Speaking too slowly aggravates students; too quickly it’s difficult for them to follow the presentation

Body Talk

- How we walk, stand, sit, what we do with shoulders, arms and legs all communicate meaning
  - These movements can support or reject our spoken words
  - Students slumping in a chair indicate boredom or discouragement

The Environment

- Aesthetic issues can affect student learning
- Personal space between teachers and students is a critical factor in the communication process

Ways to increase immediacy in the classroom

- Monitor nonverbal communication – both yours and your students’
- Learn students’ names and call on them by name
- Use pronouns that are inclusive “we”
- Include unrelated small talk
- Asking students for feedback regarding course requirements/assignments/teaching

Positive Outcomes

- When professors establish immediacy
  - Increase in cognitive learning
  - Higher student evaluations
  - Improved attendance and participation
  - Fosters perceptions of caring and trustworthiness
  - Reduces verbal aggression, student resistance

References

As professionals we need to be sensitive to and aware of the way our clients communicate. Body language accounts for 55% of our communications. Tone, inflection, and sound account for 38%. Words account for only 7%.

Professionals should observe:
- Body language cues
- Paralinguistic cues

Tip 1 - A person exhibits raised eyebrows:
- The person is not feeling threatened.
- They are comfortable with you.
- You have good rapport with this person.
**Tips for Reading Body Language**

- **Tip 2 - A person’s eyes are dilated:**
  - The person is stimulated by the conversation
  - They are in a problem solving mode
  - The person tends to make positive decisions

- **Tip 3 – A person looks away first:**
  - The person is submissive
  - The person is not a decision maker in the family
  - The person does not have a dominant role in the family

- **Tip 4 – A person’s eyes are darting around:**
  - The person is nervous
  - The person is bored
  - Act accordingly

- **Tip 5 – A person shows his palms**
  - The person is being open
  - The person is being honest

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**The Mouth Says Yes, But ...**

- The person crosses his arms
- The person raises his shoulders slightly and leans back in the chair.
- The person’s eyes get noticeably wider
- The person holds his breath as he says
- “It sounds like a good idea to me.”

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**Impact On Clinical Services**

- Clients with ASD
  - Gestures
  - Self Stimulating behaviors
  - Echolalia
What do you see in your clients with ASD

Clients with Aphasia
- Depression
- Boredom
- Agitation
- Aggression

What do you see in your clients with Aphasia?

Impact On Clinical Services

Clients with Hearing Impairment
- Compliance

What do you see in your clients with hearing impairment?

Clients with Language Disorders
- Comprehension monitoring
- Eye contact
Body language is an important part of the communication process. Be aware of your own body language when engaging with other professionals. Be aware of body language messages when interacting with families. Be aware of your clients’ body language and what it can tell you about them.