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TYPES OF VERBAL COMMUNICATION

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Nonverbal Communication

Verbal communication is our most powerful means of exchanging information, yet it is not the only means. Accompanying any act of speech, there are various facial expressions and bodily movements as well as vocal characteristics such as varying degrees of loudness and speed. The value of such nonverbal acts becomes obvious on occasions when we need to confront a person face to face rather than just send a memorandum or a letter. We do not like to talk to a person whose back is turned or who is blocked from view by some object. Except for cases of seduction and certain kinds of scheming, we normally do not like to converse in a dark room; we want to see the person we are talking to.

Our interpretation of what another person says is determined by a number of features. Usually we do not separate verbal and nonverbal acts in our minds, but rather concentrate on the overall effect of what we think the other person is trying to communicate. Yet we have the ability to make such a distinction even if we are not aware of which features actually signal the information. For example, some people can give a compliment or extend an invitation, and we know that they do not really mean what they are saying but rather are just being polite. We may recognize that a mother is trying to convince herself when she says she is happy that her sixteen-year-old daughter is getting married. We can say "You idiot" so that we either insult the other person or express endearment.

All sources of information are not deliberate communicative acts. It is true that we learn something from and base judgments on hair coloring, watery eyes, bruised foreheads, wrinkled necks, and the like; but if we included sources of information such as these as communication, our field of inquiry would have no limits. We would also be dealing more with psychology and anatomy than with language.

Similarly, it is possible to communicate some ideas by merely remaining silent. The old expression "Silence means consent" in many instances holds

true. For example, a child may tell his mother that he is going outside to play, or one friend may tell another to wait for him in the car. In either case a reply is unnecessary unless it is negative. Silence can mean consent, but it can also mean "I understand" without necessarily indicating agreement. Under other circumstances silence may indicate that the intended listener did not hear the speaker. At still other times it can signal rudeness, such as when a question is not responded to. There is usually room for considerable misunderstanding over silence. Although most of the ideas communicated by silence could also be expressed by sentences, we will not be referring to a "language of silence." As a device for communication, silence is not structured in any systematic, precise manner.

Of more interest to us are the facial expressions and various body movements which people use in place of language or along with it. Many of these are involuntary and are apparently instinctive since they are found among people all over the world. Certain facial expressions clearly indicate fright, pain, boredom, ecstasy, and a few other emotions. Even a visitor from a radically different culture would not need an interpreter to explain these expressions. We learn most of our gestures, however, from our cultural environment. People in some countries have been said to "speak with their hands"; that is, they customarily have a great deal of body motion when they are speaking. There is also much variation among people within a given culture, some of them being "poker-faced" and using very few facial motions and others being much more "vivacious." Even in the motions of a single individual there is much variation, depending upon whether he is bored or excited. Most of these gestures and facial expressions, though expressive of emotions, are not referential.

In addition to involuntary facial expressions, there are other motions which are symbolic. These obviously have to be learned. For example, children do not instinctively know what the sound of clapping hands means, but they learn that if it is accompanied by a smile they are being applauded for doing something clever. On the other hand, if one or two claps are accompanied by a stern facial expression, they are being reprimanded. Later they learn that clapping after certain programs indicates pleasure or politeness. On other occasions it may mean agreement with a statement made by a speaker or pleasure at the entrance of a celebrity, or it may be used as an accompaniment to music. In some cultures it may mean that a servant or other subordinate is being called.

Other gestures include those used by a policeman for directing traffic, by a driver for signaling a turn, or by anyone to indicate "Be quiet," "Come here," "Thumbs down," and the like. Other systems, such as scaphophore, are based directly on language and are, therefore, different from the gestures we are discussing.

Nonverbal Communication Used in Place of Language

Probably the most complex forms of nonverbal communication used independently of language are mime, ballet, and interpretive dancing. These art forms can express emotions and relate events that are often quite

lengthy and involved. Facial expressions and bodily motions that at other times accompany language are used, and they are usually exaggerated to prevent misunderstanding. Painting and sculpture, too, often capture the facial expressions and body positions which signal grief, happiness, despair, and the like, communicating without language.

It is sometimes difficult to communicate by means of language because of distance or noise; as a result, people have developed systems of conventional signals that do not depend upon specific words for their interpretation. A ground controller uses such signals to direct airplanes moving to an unloading gate or those landing on an aircraft carrier. A policeman may direct traffic by means of a few conventionalized signals. A more extensive set of motions is used by sports referees and underwater swimmers. There are many systems of conventional signals such as these that have no specific reference to language, unlike some sign languages such as those used by the deaf to spell out words. A person who understands the conventions of a traffic-control officer or a sports referee can follow the directions even if he and the person making the signals do not speak the same language.

In addition to systems of signals, there are isolated ones, such as an upraised hand with the palm out, meaning "Stop." Other hand motions signal "Come here," "Be quiet," "In that direction," "Good-bye," and the like. Motions of the head mean "Yes" or "No." Like the systems of signals, these are conventional and may be completely arbitrary, although many of them are closely related to the idea conveyed, such as a hand motion to the left to indicate that the driver is to move in that direction.

If we consider the messages that can be conveyed by means of signals such as these, whether within a system or isolated, the number is extremely small compared with the message potential of language. A policeman directing traffic or a service station attendant helping someone park on the grease rack has only a few messages that he can convey with his hand motions. A person thumbing a ride can signal only one idea. Moreover, new signals are added to one's repertoire only rarely. Language, on the other hand, adds words readily; some of them, such as *nonbreakfaster*, are immediately understandable by anyone who is fluent in the language, and they may not even be recognized as new. More productively, the rules for forming sentences in any language allow an unlimited number of sentences to be created, almost all of them new to any person. Except for such trivial examples as motions meaning "Be quiet and come here," it is not possible to combine conventionalized nonverbal signals into new messages. Whereas the elements of language constitute an open system that may be extended at will and permits an unlimited number of combinations, the elements of nonverbal signals are part of a closed system that permits only a few combinations.

Eye movements are less conventionalized than most hand signals, but they also convey information. Unless we are trying to catch someone's attention, we stare at him only when he is unaware of our doing so, such as when his back is turned, his eyes are closed, or he is not looking in our direction. If we are caught staring, we rapidly look away and sometimes even apologize. Children as young as six or seven have usually learned this form of social behavior. Another instance of such behavior occurs when

people are walking toward each other. They are free to look so long as they are quite far apart, but when they reach a crucial point, they look at some other object—perhaps a blank wall or the sidewalk—or they approach with unfocused eyes. As they come closer, to the point at which their voices will carry without shouting, they look at each other only if they are planning to speak. If they are not going to speak, they continue not looking until they have passed. Likewise, if people are jammed together in an elevator, subway, or waiting area, they are careful not to look at others who might be aware of them unless they are trying to attract their attention.

This type of eye movement generally reflects politeness and respect for the other person, or at worst simply the impersonal character of modern life. But such eye behavior can also reveal distinctly negative attitudes. By not really looking at people, we can snub them, and if we are afraid unsavory characters are about to ask us for money, we are careful not to see them. The reaction of other people is usually that we have "looked right through them" or "treated them as though they didn't exist." On the other hand, if we stare at people who are within the forbidden distance, we are either being consciously rude or else indicating that we consider them incapable of feeling as animals or statues would be.

If people lock eyes, the meaning is often sexual availability. Other clues, such as clothing, posture, and locale, indicate whether an exchange of money is expected or not. Like many other nonverbal signals, locked eyes have to be interpreted in context. If the eyelids are tensed and narrowed slightly, the meaning may be hostility rather than availability. Also, under certain circumstances people lock eyes to indicate a mutual feeling of amusement, annoyance, or shock over some event that they are both experiencing.

In addition to eye movements which signal politeness, respect, sexual availability, hatred, and mutual feelings, there are those which serve as traffic signals. When people who are meeting are within eight or ten feet of each other, one of them looks in the direction in which he is intending to pass in order to avoid collision. If the other person receives the signal and agrees to abide by it, he moves to the opposite side. Usually people are unaware of how these maneuvers are made even though they may practice them very adroitly many times a day. People who are constantly bumping into others even when there is adequate space for passing usually have not mastered these eye signals, and their collisions are caused more by their failure to follow conventions than by any lack of coordination. Those few people who stick to the center of any sidewalk or hallway, refusing to yield, are obviously destroying the possibility for communication by ignoring any eye signals they may receive.

Within recent years much has been written about the space which birds, animals, and humans feel to be theirs. Whether this is the territory claimed as a home or the space enveloping a person, people communicate information by respecting or violating it. There are, for example, prescribed distances to be maintained for passing in a hallway, standing and watching a fire, or any other occasion for which people come together. When these distances are not observed, people begin feeling crowded even though they are not actually touching. Although theaters and classrooms

are normally equipped with individual seats, it often makes us uncomfortable if a stranger takes the seat next to ours when the room is not crowded and seats have not been assigned. There have been a number of interesting experiments conducted by psychologists in which the researcher sits closer than normal to a person on a park bench or intrudes on his space in some other way. The subject almost invariably becomes disturbed and leaves. Only when crowding is unavoidable do people not interpret it as an attack. In such cases, as in an elevator or in a waiting area, they hug their arms as closely as possible to their bodies and try to shrink. Except for such unavoidable contacts, intrusion on someone's personal space is normally interpreted as an act of either hostility or endearment. In fact, it is felt to be the same as actually touching; and in a sense it is, if we think of this space as an extension of the person's body. By merely coming too close, we can signal endearment or hostility even if we do not go so far as to kiss, caress, shove, or hit the other person. The difference between actually touching and intruding on personal space is one of degree rather than a difference in the nature of the message signaled.

A complete discussion of human nonverbal communication would include descriptions of the facial movements which accompany laughing, frowning, crying, looking puzzled, and the like. Each of these motions signals information and is not dependent upon language. Also, such devices of self-presentation as the nature and condition of clothing, hair styling, cleanliness, and posture convey information about one's social status, occupation, degree of masculinity or femininity, and overall personality. Unlike height, sex, and skin coloring, these characteristics can be altered at will, and through them people are consciously or unconsciously saying something about themselves. For a book such as this one, an extended treatment of such matters would be impractical since our primary concern is language. By giving a brief account of them, however, we are able to place language in perspective, showing how it differs from other means of communication.

Controlling Relationships during Verbal Exchange

Although nonverbal communication is much more restricted than language is in the messages it can signal, it is more pervasive. It often exists without language, yet it also normally accompanies verbal communication. When both are found together, nonverbal signals serve the function of reinforcing verbal communication, providing cues which emphasize ideas or focus on their proper interpretation. Fitting between nonverbal signals which are used to replace language and those which reinforce it are signals in a third group: those which control the relationships between people who are communicating. Among these are the motions which set off certain people as members of a group and exclude others, those which establish certain individuals as dominant and others as subordinate, those which help to determine the formality of the situation, and those which signal the beginning or ending of a conversation.

It would be hard to imagine a more tightly knit conversational group than a football team in a huddle. They form a close circle and even place their arms around one another. In this way they are insuring the inclusion of all members who belong and the exclusion of all others; more importantly, they are able to speak softly enough to prevent outsiders from overhearing. Two people on a date frequently form a similar unit to whisper secrets and endearing phrases. Although less tightly knit, groups of people in theater lobbies or at parties stand in circles which include the participants and exclude all others. Even though they do not actually touch one another, the individuals in these groups stand close enough together that another person cannot enter the circle unless the others widen it and make room for him. If he is not welcome, he has to remain on the outside. After struggling to understand the bits of conversation which reach him, he will probably give up and move to another group. The circle unites the participants and excludes others; in fact, it is usually impossible for someone outside the group to listen to what is being said.

People may form circles while sitting as well as while standing. They do not normally arrange their chairs in a perfectly round pattern, but they compensate for this by adjusting their body positions. In addition, they may cross their legs so as to lock in the members of the group and keep others out. The positioning of bodies is especially apparent at a small square table if three people are talking and an intruder sits in the fourth chair. The two sitting on each side of him will angle their bodies facing the other member of their group. They may even use their arms to shut him out, for example, placing the elbow of the arm nearest the intruder on the table and laying that arm flat or else propping up the head with it.

Other motions serve the function of establishing the relative status of the members of a group. In many countries there is a belief in the equality of all people, and there is good reason to try to carry out this belief in matters of law, courtesy, humanitarianism, and the like. In most of their relations, however, and especially in verbal exchanges, people usually establish a ranking of dominance and subordination. Such ordering is commonplace among most animal species, and it becomes obvious among humans with their clubs, military organizations, and groups in which certain members are the leaders. A pecking order usually exists also among people gathered to talk even though they may not be conscious of it. Since one sign of dominance is being physically higher than others, like a monarch on a dais, a person unsure of his status may sit up as straight as possible or even stand while the others are sitting. Thus we find some people kneeling, bowing, curtsying, or even prostrating themselves before others. Two people arguing may even look like two roosters as they stretch their necks in an attempt to rise above the other. Usually the leader is the one who is first to sit down, rise, light a cigarette, or cross his legs.

Status signals are much less rigid than are the principles governing language. For example, a person who is secure in his position as the dominant member of the group may slouch down in his chair or lie on the floor. He may even talk less than the others. These actions, of course, are akin to inverted mobbism. He is going to opposite extremes to show that he does not have to depend on the conventional signals for his position. Another

example can be seen in some family units with the father occupying the largest, most comfortable chair and frequently being asked for advice or decisions. In reality the small, reticent, timid-looking wife may be tyrannically wielding the whip. She is the one who is actually making the decisions and whom the others are following in sitting down, crossing their legs, and the like. In still other situations a person who does not rise when a waiter, employee, or other person enters is maintaining his superior position even though he is physically lower than the other person. Since he does not move from his chair, no one could believe that he is offering it to the other person.

An especially revealing signal of rank is eye contact. The dominant person will give a bold, unwavering look, whereas the very shy subordinate will hardly look another person in the eye. In some cultures children and servants are taught to show respect by not looking directly at their superiors. Sometimes children make a game of seeing who can outstare an opponent. In this situation the dominant one wins, although the children normally do not interpret the results in this manner. As with other actions, once the relative status is firmly established, the dominant person may no longer feel the need for controlling the situation with his eyes and may scarcely look at the other one.

Invading the personal space of others and even touching them can be a signal of rank even more noticeable than eye movements. Teachers often feel free to pat children on their shoulders, backs, or heads, but they would be offended if the actions were reciprocated. Some women, especially those of less than average height, are annoyed by people who feel free to pat them on the top of the head. Women secretaries have complained that some male bosses frequently touch them even when no sexual advances are intended. If they ever patted back, the action would definitely be looked upon as a brazen attack and as petting rather than patting. After all, there are differences in salary and employment status. There may be additional ones in age and education. For some people sexual differences are an equally strong source of inequality.

In one American college the Dean of Women obtained the reputation of being a martinet. Girls who were caught cheating, stealing, or appearing in public with their hair in curlers were unfailingly summoned to her office. They dreaded these confrontations, primarily because of the seating arrangement. What the Dean apparently did was sit on the periphery of the personal space boundary and on crucial words lean forward and enter the personal territory. Although she did not actually touch the girls, they had the sensation of being repeatedly jabbed. Strong reprimands are frequently delivered in this fashion, whether by teachers, parents, or sergeants in basic training units. An especially good illustration can be seen if one shakes his index finger at a person from a distance of six feet and then moves closer to a distance of six inches and shakes it. The actions are usually more unpleasant than the actual words that accompany them.

Closely connected to the property of dominance in a relationship is that of formality. The stronger the dominant-subordinate pattern is, the greater the degree of formality. It would be hard to imagine a more formal situation than that of a monarch on a throne giving an audience to a

kneeling subject. At the opposite end of the scale, two people who consider themselves approximately equal in rank can engage in very informal conversations.

In most classrooms the teacher is the dominant member; he or she, therefore, determines the degree of formality that will exist. For large classes there is always considerable formality: the teacher stands on a platform, separated from the class by a lectern and physical space; he or she is the only one allowed to speak, and may even use a microphone. Because of the size of the group, there is little opportunity for reducing formality; any approaches to informality have to come from the nature of the lecture itself. For smaller groups the teacher can choose how formal or informal the class will be. By standing behind a lectern and never moving, the teacher establishes dominance over the class both by distance and height, and ensures a highly formal situation. The distinction of height can be maintained while lessening that of distance if the teacher walks around in front of the class. Both distance and height can be reduced if he or she stands in front of the teacher's desk and leans back or even sits on it. Sitting behind the desk places the teacher on the same height as the students (provided that the desk is not on a platform), but it provides a maximum of distance. The most informal arrangement occurs when the teacher sits in the same kind of chair or desk as the students do and is no farther from them than they are from one another. This is the typical seminar arrangement, in which everyone is seated around a table or in student desks arranged in a circle.

In an interview or conference varying degrees of formality can be provided, depending upon how unequal the participants are (or perceive themselves to be). Two people are at the greatest distance if they talk across a large desk; the distance is lessened if the interviewee sits at the side of the desk. In some offices there are easy chairs so that people can move away from the desk and sit in a more informal setting. Posture, too, is adjusted according to the formality of the situation. On the most formal occasions people sit stiffly on the edge of a chair, in the position that was cultivated by tightly corseted women in the past. For less formal situations they may sit back in a relaxed position. Or they may sit on the base of their spine with their legs sprawled out or even slung over an arm of the chair.

The dominant person not only determines the degree of formality of a conversation; that person also terminates the conversation. He may lean forward in his chair, start shuffling papers, look at his watch, or even rise. In some situations he may turn and start talking to someone else.

It should be emphasized that nonverbal acts are not the only devices which determine relationships. Language itself varies according to the formality of the situation and the relative status of the individuals involved. In extremely formal situations between people of radically different social status, there are characteristic honorifics such as *sir*, *your majesty*, *your honor*, and the like which are seldom found elsewhere. These words, along with a type of language which is formal in other characteristics such as its avoidance of slang, coexist with spatial distance and differences in height. At the opposite end of the scale, as people are sitting at the same height

and lounging in relaxed postures, they are calling each other by their first names, omitting honorifics, using a great deal of slang or shop talk, and generally avoiding sentence structures, words, and pronunciations which belong to formal speech. We shall return to this topic in Chapter 15 after we have learned enough about the various aspects of language to enable us to discuss contextual styles systematically.

Nonverbal Signals That Accompany Language

At the beginning of this chapter we spoke of the close interrelationship between verbal and nonverbal communication. It is because nonverbal signals are only partially included in writing that we often feel we do not know what a person really thinks about a subject unless we confront him face to face. As an example, we can consider "You stinker!" or "You silly ass!" There is no way to punctuate either expression to show whether the writer felt anger or amusement. When spoken, expressions such as these are normally unambiguous; in fact, the listener even knows how angry or how amused the speaker is. Nonverbal signals provide part of the actual content of the message. They can also emphasize the verbal aspect of communication: "We were *really* impressed." Or they can contradict the verbal act, as when a person describes something as "good" or "interesting" and it is obvious that he does not mean it. Whenever verbal and nonverbal signals contradict each other, we assume that the nonverbal clues are the more reliable and accept them as giving the real meaning. It is much easier to give misinformation verbally than nonverbally. For example, "Isn't this exciting" and "Isn't this boring" are equally easy to say in a neutral tone of voice, but it takes considerable effort to sound convincing for either sentence unless the speaker is actually experiencing the emotion. Most people find it easier to lie when they are writing than when they are speaking, even though they may use the same words and sentence structures in both instances.

Nonverbal signals which accompany language are usually classified under two headings: paralinguage and kinesics. Paralinguistic signals are those which are popularly called tone of voice; kinesic signals are the various motions made by the head, hands, and other parts of the body. Although both kinds of signals are an indispensable accompaniment to language, research on this aspect of communication has been scant. There is currently no scholarly framework within which nonverbal signals can be discussed. As a result, most of what follows is suggestive rather than explicit and anecdotal rather than systematic or explanatory.

All spoken sentences are uttered with characteristic patterns of stress and pitch. At one time it was thought that stress is mainly dependent upon the degree of loudness and force with which a person speaks, but recent studies have shown that it is more intimately connected with pitch than was originally thought; we will, therefore, not try to separate the two. With normal intonation a person in saying "He went to town" will have heavier stress on *town* than on any other word. Accompanying this heavy stress is

a rise in the pitch level, followed by a lowering of pitch and a fading of the voice. If we want to express disbelief, anger, or other emotion over the fact that town is the place he went, we may increase both the level of stress and the height of pitch on *town*. In so doing, we are not using distinct paralinguistic signals but rather those which are normally present, only in a different degree. We can draw an analogy between stress and pitch in speech and the volume on a radio. We usually speak of a radio as being merely "too loud," "normal," or "too soft," although we can alter the loudness by continuous degrees as we turn a knob; there are not just three states. Similarly, we often speak of "normal stress" and "emphatic stress" when there is an unbroken range. We signal our degree of anger, amazement, and other emotions by altering our degree of stress and pitch. This is also the means by which we show contrast: "I didn't say that she was passionate; I said she was *compassionate*!"

For another example we can look at the duration of time we hold a vowel. In normal speaking, the vowel in *bed* is longer than the one in *bet*, as we can easily discover by saying "I'm going to bet" and then "I'm going to bed." In English a vowel before a [d] is held longer than one before a [t]. If a person wishes to emphasize *bed*, he will increase this vocalic duration while he is increasing the pitch and stress levels. For example, if he is asked, "Are you going to the party?" he may respond, "No, I'm going to *bed*." Increased duration can have varying meanings, depending upon the context. A slightly different meaning from that found in "I'm going to *bed*" can be found in "They *lied*" when the vowel in *lied* is prolonged. As with stress and pitch, vocalic length is a feature which is found normally in speech; it can be intensified to express a range of emotions.

Other features such as overall volume, tempo, and tenseness of the speech-producing apparatus can likewise be increased or decreased to provide information. The lack of an adequate framework for discussing such paralinguistic features becomes obvious when we find playwrights giving such cryptic directions as "angrily" or "with amazement." Most of the time they give no instructions about nonverbal signals, depending upon the actors to work out their own. This reticence gives the actors much freedom of interpretation. For example, Hedda Gabler has been played both as a cold, outwardly passionless, but firm woman and as one who is loud, vulgar, and outgoing.

A good example of the wide range of meanings which one can achieve by means of paralinguistic features is given by Roman Jakobson (1960:354).¹ He reports that an actor at Stanislavskij's Moscow Theater at his audition had to make forty different messages from the phrase *segodnja vecherom*, "this evening." At a later time Jakobson asked him to repeat the exercise for a controlled experiment. The actor used the same phrase and wrote down fifty different situations in which it might be used. He then read the phrase fifty times into a tape recorder, each reading reflecting one of his

¹Following the style found in virtually all current publications in linguistics, we refer to a work by the author, date of publication, and page number. Hence, *Jakobson (1960:354)* is a citation from a work by Jakobson which was published in 1960. The page cited is 354. Full references are to be found in the bibliography at the end of this book.

situations. The recording was then played to a number of native speakers of Russian, who were able to give the correct situation for most of the utterances. Even a speaker of English who has no special talent for acting can usually say "Hello" or some similar word or phrase in at least a dozen distinctive ways, clearly indicating surprise, disgust, amusement, and so forth. Experiments such as these clearly show that the differences in meaning are brought about by paralanguage, not by kinesic signals or verbal language.

Our desire to hear a person express his or her ideas rather than just read a written account of them reflects our dependence upon paralanguage in ascertaining the speaker's full meaning. The fact that we also want to see the person who is speaking shows that we need kinesic signals as well. We are alert to various motions of the mouth, nose, eyes and eyebrows, head, hands, arms, and other parts of the body. We also learn that all of these motions do not necessarily have any bearing on the message that is being transmitted. After all, we do squint our eyes because of the sun, scratch our head because it itches, or shift our position because we are uncomfortable. In addition, most people make many movements which do not signify anything. They make these same movements even when they are not talking or listening. It is rare for a person who is not paralyzed to remain totally motionless for extended periods of time. We learn to disregard movements such as these and those which result from physical causes not related to the message.

The eyes reflect a great deal of a person's attitude toward the message that he is uttering or listening to. If his pupils are dilated and his eyes are sparkling and focused on an object or person, he is extremely interested in the subject being discussed. He further shows his interest or lack of it by the direction in which he looks. We learn to associate truthfulness, honesty, and sincerity with an unabashed look at the other person; and we associate embarrassment, discomfort, and lying with avoiding the other person's eyes. We realize how much we notice the eyes when we talk to people who are wearing dark glasses, especially if they keep them on indoors.

Unless people are engaged in some task which they have to watch closely, they look intermittently at each other. The speaker reflects his true attitude toward his subject by his eyes. When he pauses he also indicates whether he is willing to be interrupted or not. If he looks directly at the listener during a pause, he is willing to yield; if he looks away, he is merely pausing and does not wish to be interrupted. Much of his looking at the other person is for the purpose of receiving feedback to his statements. A person who is listening normally looks at the other person about twice as much as he does when he is speaking. He is, in effect, directing the speaker, signaling him that he is bored or interested, that he is getting the point more rapidly than the speaker is talking or that he is having trouble understanding, that he agrees or disagrees, and so forth. Although there is much variation among people as to the amount of time they look at people with whom they are talking, it rarely interferes with our ability to use this device for inferring information.

The eyes by themselves are actually quite limited in the amount of information they can give. Although it may appear to do so, this statement

does not contradict the evidence we presented in the last two paragraphs. It is true that authors of medical textbooks that contain pictures often find a wide black line across the eyes of a patient sufficient for concealing his identity. On the other hand, a mask two inches in width can also hide a person's identity, despite holes that reveal the eyes. Even more expressive than the eyeballs is the surrounding area. To show amazement, a person moves his eyelids so that they are as wide apart as possible; to limit the focus for concentration or firmness, he narrows them to a slit. Although we speak of opening and squinting the eyes, it is actually the lids which we move. In addition, the brows and forehead do not remain motionless, but contribute to our overall impression of the "language" of the eyes.

The rest of the face is also important in communication. To a lesser degree, a person uses his nose to signal information, dilating it or "crinkling" it up. And he uses his mouth to smile, frown, gawk, smirk, and the like. The entire head is nodded or shaken to indicate agreement, disagreement, or astonishment. It can be cocked to one side. It is the combination of these motions with those of the eyes that a person looks for in someone with whom he is talking.

It is not necessary for us to go into detail about the motions of the shoulders, arms, hands, and legs, since the use of kinesic signals has been adequately suggested in the preceding paragraphs. A number of figures of speech have their origin in paralanguage and kinesic signals: *Don't get in a huff*, *Grit your teeth*, *Keep a stiff upper lip*, *Don't shrug it off*, *Don't sweat it*, *Chin up*, and the like.

Some people have speculated that nonverbal communication preceded language in man's evolution. We have absolutely no way to test this idea since all people, including the most primitive savages, have fully developed languages. Nor are there any reliable records of ancient people who relied exclusively upon gestures and grunts for communication. At an earlier time when linguists were less particular about evidence, there were quite a few fanciful theories invented for the way man developed language out of his already existing nonverbal communication system. These theories were eventually given the delightful names of *bow-wow*, *ding-dong*, *yo-he-ho*, *woo-woo*, and so forth, depending upon whether language was thought of as beginning with attempts to imitate sounds in nature, with automatic, natural responses to stimuli, with sounds for cooperative work such as tugging, or with noises for making love.² Since guesswork such as this is no longer considered scholarly, we will not dwell on it.

It is impossible to show how man developed language out of a prior nonverbal communication system, or even whether he in fact did, but it is possible to compare the two means of communication as they exist today. For effective exchanges of information to any extensive degree, both verbal and nonverbal signals are indispensable. When either is missing, the loss is noticed. Even writing does not use verbal signals exclusively; it indicates some nonverbal actions by means of punctuation and varying types such as boldface and italics. Trying to decide which kinds of signals are the more im-

² An interesting discussion of these earlier theories can be found in Chapter 21 of Jespersen (1964).

portant may be like trying to determine which side of a coin is the more valuable. We would be severely restricted if we had to rely exclusively upon either verbal or nonverbal signals.

Suggested Reading

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1. Greetings: It is definitely interesting to look at the cross-culturally different greeting styles of various countries, such as India, Bantus, China, Malaysia, Latin America, Eskimo, and European countries (fig 10).

- a) Indian greeting style of lifting one's hands to the sky,
- b) Bantus, (African) style of lifting each other's hands up the sky, and moving as if making some directions,
- c) Chinese style of holding one's hands tight,
- d) European, Latin American style of touching one's hat,
- e) Malaysian style of crossing one's arms around one's shoulders,
- f) Again European style of taking one's hat off and slightly bow,
- g) Eskimo style of touching each other's shoulders with hands,
- h-i) Arabic, Turkish, Latin American style of holding each other tight.

In the bottom figure, it is especially interesting to have a close look at two men hugging each other. They hold each other tight in order to face both sides, a common greeting, which could only be seen in Latin American, Arabic and Turkish culture.

