

4

The Nonverbal Message

Chapter Objectives

After reading this chapter, you should be able to:

1. Describe four categories of communication, distinguishing between verbal and nonverbal as well as vocal and nonvocal, and give an example of each.
2. Discuss the kinds of information conveyed by nonverbal and verbal messages and three ways in which they are related.
3. Discuss the concepts of personal space and interpersonal distance.
4. Explain how we communicate through our use of time and how timing can interfere with intercultural communication.
5. Identify the major visual cues given by facial expression and head and body movements, and discuss the kinds of messages they convey.
6. Describe how one's choice of physical objects, including clothing, communicates messages to others.
7. Explain the concept of paralinguistics and identify four kinds of vocal cues, giving an example of each.
8. Discuss deception cues and recent research findings on accuracy in judging deception and the mutual influence of deceivers and detectors.

In *Dinner with Friends*, a play about two married couples, Karen and Gabe are shocked to learn that their long-time friends, Beth and Tom, are getting a divorce. When Gabe tries to intervene and bring the two together again, he takes Tom aside and asks if their problem is about sex. Tom tells him it's not that. "So you're still making love, huh," says Gabe:

Tom: I wouldn't exactly call it making love . . . Beth really wouldn't touch me much anymore.

Gabe: What do you mean?

Tom: I mean the way someone who loved you might casually slip a hand through your arm or onto your shoulder or something . . . I did an experiment. I decided I wasn't going to touch her and see how long it would take before she touched me. I'm not talking about sex now; I'm talking about skin-to-skin contact. A simple good night kiss, holding hands. She wouldn't touch me, Gabe. At all. I gave it a week. I couldn't stand it. I broke down and cried. (Margulies, 2000, p. 38–39)

Source: Excerpts from the play *Dinner with Friends* by Donald Margulies, Copyright © 2000 by the author. Published by Theatre Communications Group. Used by permission.

Through touch we sustain and intensify our sense of connection with others. How and when we use touch—or avoid it—is just one of the questions we will be examining in this chapter as we look at the broad spectrum of nonverbal communication behaviors.

We begin by considering the relative weight people give to verbal and nonverbal messages. Thus, we will look at how nonverbal messages are interpreted, what types of information we receive through them, and how they interact with verbal messages.

INTERPRETING NONVERBAL MESSAGES

The literal definition of nonverbal communication, communication without words, is something of an oversimplification, because written words are considered “verbal” although they lack the element of sound. Stewart and D’Angelo (1980) propose that if we distinguish verbal from nonverbal and vocal from nonvocal, we have four categories or types of communication. **Verbal/vocal communication** refers to *communication through the spoken word*. For example, Carolyn and her father discuss the new car Carolyn wants to buy and her plans for getting together the money. In **verbal/nonvocal communication**, *words are involved but no speaking takes place*: If she writes a letter to her father about the car, her communication is verbal but nonvocal. Or suppose that after she talks about the car, she asks her father for a loan and her father simply groans. Such *groans, or vocalizations, constitute a form of nonverbal/vocal communication*. A fourth kind of communication, **nonverbal/nonvocal communication**, *involves only gestures and appearance*—imagine Carolyn’s father looking angry or pleased—or perhaps simply puzzled. Seen in these terms, **nonverbal communication conveys nonlinguistic messages**.

Such messages take any number of forms. You raise your hand to vote yes at a committee meeting, hail a cab, exchange signals with someone on your basketball team. You sit on the edge of your seat in a dull class and keep twisting a lock of your hair. You touch the arm of a friend lightly to reassure him. You buy a red sports car because you think it's more your kind of car than a brown sedan. In this chapter, we will be looking at nonverbal messages of all kinds, and one of the first issues we will explore is the division often made between meanings conveyed by nonverbal and verbal communication.

The Verbal/Nonverbal Split in Meaning

Nonverbal communication—indeed the entire communication process—must be viewed as a whole that is greater than the sum of its parts. Outside the laboratory we do not depend on isolated cues, or *hints*. In face-to-face communication, all cues, both verbal and nonverbal, are available to us. Even in communicating online, we have access to some though limited nonverbal cues. Although some scholars believed that as much as 93 percent of all social meaning in face-to-face communication is conveyed through nonverbal cues (Mehrabian, 1972), recent surveys suggest that Birdwhistell's estimate (1970) of 65 percent is the more accurate. There are many times when we give greater credence to nonverbal cues. These include when we judge interpersonal style; when we respond to questions requiring interpretation; when we evaluate a person's genuine emotions, ideas, and attitudes from “inconsistent expressions”; and when we judge credibility and leadership qualities (Burgoon et al., 1996, p. 137).

As we've seen in Chapter 2, nonverbal cues also have greater influence when it comes to forming first impressions. In addition, we give greater weight to nonverbal over verbal cues when they are contradictory. Keep in mind, however, that for children, verbal cues have greater importance. Often children make their judgments in terms of what is said to them—literally—although to adults this often seems naive (Burgoon et al., 1996, pp. 136–142). The ability to interpret nonverbal cues seems to develop over a considerable period of time.

Communication scholars agree that in most messages we get information from several nonverbal channels at once:

Consistent multichanneled messages communicate sincerity, honesty, and believability because each channel provides additional weight to the overall message. Also, it is hard to lie in ten channels, whereas verbal lies are relatively easy to achieve . . . However, this same multichanneled system has the capacity to send simultaneously contradictory messages such as approach and avoidance, ecstasy and guilt, joy and sorrow, or love and hate. (Andersen, 1999, p. 22)

Nonverbal Information

We learn most about the meaning of nonverbal messages by studying them in relationship to verbal messages. Essentially, a nonverbal message functions in one of three ways: It replaces, reinforces, or contradicts a verbal message.

A nonverbal message that substitutes for a verbal one is often easy to interpret. Our culture provides us with gestures and expressions that are the equivalents of certain brief verbal messages: “Yes,” “No,” “Hello,” “Goodbye,” “I don’t know,” and so on. Likes and dislikes can also be expressed without words—smiling, clapping, smirking, frowning, and so on.

When a nonverbal message reinforces a verbal message, meaning is conveyed quickly and easily, and with increased comprehension. Sometimes a single cue such as a hand movement or a long pause gives special emphasis to one part of a message so that we are able to discern what the speaker feels is most important.

Nonverbal cues predominate by sheer number. In general, if as receivers we are caught between two discrepant messages, we are more inclined to believe the nonverbal message. One reason for this is that it is thought that nonverbal cues give information about our intentions and emotional responses. Thus, in business many people prefer face-to-face communication—whether it be meeting for lunch or in the formal setting of an office—to a fax, e-mail, letter, or telephone call when solving problems or negotiating critical decisions. In negotiation, much is learned from “feeling your way,” watching the other person’s facial expression and gestures so that you can adapt your own responses. (The use of teleconferencing, which provides a wealth of nonverbal cues, is also on the increase.)

Another reason the nonverbal message seems to have greater impact is the popular belief that body movements, facial expressions, vocal qualities, and so on cannot be simulated with authenticity by the average person. Even children are quick to sense gestures or expressions that are not spontaneous.

Nonverbal channels convey primarily relational messages, messages about the feeling/emotional level of our communication, rather than the thoughts (best communicated by verbal communication); also, nonverbal messages are ambiguous for the most part, except perhaps for certain gestures (Ekman et al., 1984). Bernard Goetz, the New Yorker who shot four teenagers on the subway, claimed that he did so because their behavior was threatening; he acted, he said, in self-defense. Yet there was no consensus among the other passengers as to whether the injured teens were menacing. Incidents such as this have increased dramatically—particularly with the escalation of racial tensions in many of our cities.

We all have some sensitivity to nonverbal cues, or we would not be able to communicate with the ease we do. Still, there seem to be differences among people in how skilled they are in interpreting what they experience. Through tests such as the popular Profile of Nonverbal Sensitivity Test—the PONS—researchers have confirmed that some people do have greater sensitivities to nonverbal cues, but that this does not necessarily correlate with intelligence. Then too, we are not speaking about a single skill: just because you are especially perceptive in judging body movements and facial expressions doesn’t mean that you are an astute judge of vocal cues. We know that nonverbal sensitivity does increase with age, that women tend to judge (nondeceptive) facial expressions more accurately than men, and that though there are those who have “special sensitivities” to certain people, “especially those with whom they have a special relationship . . . they may have special insensitivities to such people as well” (DePaulo and Friedman, 1998, p. 9).

Most of our problems in interpreting meaning arise when we receive a nonverbal message that contradicts a verbal message. Suppose, for example, that a supervisor always cautions her employees not to postpone discussing problem areas in their work. “Don’t wait till it’s too late to remedy the situation. I want you to come and tell me when you run into problems,” she repeats. Yet as one of the assistant managers enters her office, she looks up annoyed and gives him an icy stare. Then, as the employee starts to back out of her office, the supervisor says, “Well, don’t stand there looking so frightened. Tell me what’s on your mind.”

Birdwhistell (1970) uses the term **kinesic slips** for mixed messages—*contradictory verbal and nonverbal messages*. Imagine this conversation between a married couple who have just had a bitter quarrel. The wife asks her husband, “Honey, are you still angry?” “No,” he replies, “it’s alright.” “But you sound as though you’re still angry,” she insists. “I’m telling you I’m not angry!” he answers. His words give one message, his voice and frowning face another. He may not even be aware of the second. Which message is his wife likely to believe?

Verbal/Nonverbal Interaction

For purposes of analysis we speak of verbal and nonverbal messages as distinct, yet in daily life we are rarely able to separate their effects. For example, what we say is qualified, modified, by how we say it—tone of voice, facial expression, eye contact, and so on—as well as by the almost instantaneous verbal and nonverbal responses of others. And this interaction is ongoing. We depend on it and are continually modifying our responses.

Consider the counterpoint of the verbal and nonverbal responses in this scene from Jhumpa Lahiri’s story “A Temporary Matter.” A young husband and his wife, who had recently had a stillborn child, are at home. They have just finished a candlelit dinner, which he prepared. Shoba, the wife, blows out the candle and turns on the light switch, then sits down once more:

She set her plate aside and clasped her hands on the table. “I want you to see my face when I tell you this,” she said gently.

His heart began to pound. The day she told him she was pregnant, she had used the very same words, saying them in the same gentle way, turning off the basketball game he’d been watching on television. He hadn’t been prepared then. Now he was.

Only he didn’t want her to be pregnant again. He didn’t want to have to pretend to be happy.

“I’ve been looking for an apartment and I’ve found one,” she said, narrowing her eyes on something, it seemed, behind his left shoulder. It was nobody’s fault, she continued. They’d been through enough. She needed some time alone. She had saved up money for a security deposit . . . She had signed the lease that night before coming home.

She wouldn’t look at him, but he stared at her. It was obvious that she’d rehearsed the lines. All the time she’d been looking for an apartment . . . (1999, p. 21)

In the remainder of this chapter, we shall see how through their nonverbal messages people give us many cues, or intimations, about their emotions, their intentions, their personalities, and even their social status. Thus, we shall look at several kinds of cues—spatial, temporal, visual, and vocal. In terms of our model, then, we are speaking about all nonverbal messages—both intentional and unintentional.

SPATIAL AND TEMPORAL CUES

Only when we interact with people of other cultures do we begin to realize that some of our most cherished ideas about what is appropriate conduct are norms, or rules, whether stated or unstated, about behavior; that is, they are relative, not absolute, values. Indirectly, our culture teaches us to communicate in many ways—through our voices, our gestures, and even our style of dressing. Yet each of us interprets and expresses these conventions somewhat differently.

Culture has an even more subtle and pervasive influence on nonverbal communication, however. Each culture continually provides its members with input about how the world is structured. (We saw this with respect to visual perception when we discussed the Müller-Lyer illusion in Chapter 2.) Slowly we develop preconceptions about the world. It is the cues derived from these preconceptions that we take most for granted and that imperceptibly set the limits for our style of communication. Our cues about space and time are among those most significantly influenced by culture and sometimes the source of many difficulties in intercultural communication.

Space

Personal Space

Personal space centers on the body and can be thought of as *a person's portable territory, which each individual carries along wherever he or she may go*. Robert Sommer, a psychologist at the University of California-Davis, refers to it as “*an area with invisible boundaries surrounding a person's body into which intruders may not come*” (1969, p. 26; italics added):

. . . personal space is carried around while territory is relatively stationary. The animal or man will usually mark the boundaries of his territory so that they are visible to others, but the boundaries of his personal space are invisible. Personal space has the body at its center, while territory does not. (p. 248)

In research in libraries and parks, Sommer took on the role of intruder, systematically violating the personal space of others and observing the resulting tensions and anxieties. Much research on personal space focuses on the relationship between spatial arrangements (architectural elements, interior design, seating, and

so on) and human feelings and interaction. For instance, it seems that college students begin to identify a particular seat in the classroom as “their chair” by as early as the second class period. Although you probably would not ask another student to give up what you considered to be your chair if you arrived a little late, you might feel annoyed to see someone else sitting in it. This feeling is somewhat reminiscent of the belief that there is a home court advantage for basketball teams.

Burgoon et al. (1996) explain that we are more confident when we are within our own surroundings:

To allow yourself to be summoned voluntarily to someone else’s home turf is a show of weakness. Inexperienced diplomats and politicians learn this only after having made too many concessions to adversaries or having lost the respect of allies. The recognized territorial advantage is the reason for insisting on a neutral locale for summit meetings and other serious talks. (p. 307)

In the study halls of college libraries, students tend to protect privacy by sitting as far away from each other as possible. One way of communicating this need is by occupying a corner position. Or students sprawl out, resting their legs on a nearby chair. If they get up from the table, they may “reserve” the place by spreading out books and papers or leaving clothing draped over the chair (Sommer, 1969, pp. 46–47). How far you go in defending your personal space will depend, of course, on both your personality and your communication style. If you sit too close to me in the library, I may get up and move. But reverse our roles and you may glare at me and even spread out your notebooks and papers so that they take up a good part of the table.

Other research finds that personality variables such as need for affiliation influence the size of one’s personal space (Rosenfeld, 1965). In his study of prison inmates who had committed violent crimes, Kinzel (1969) observed that these men had a personal space, or “body buffer zone,” twice as large as that of non-violent prisoners. Members of the violent group felt threatened when a person came close to them, as if the person were an intruder who was “looming up” or “rushing in” at them. Recently, it’s even been suggested that “air rage” is related to a perceived invasion of personal space.

Interpersonal Distance

Students of nonverbal communication are indebted to the anthropologist Edward Hall for his cross-cultural studies of space as well as time. Hall has given the name **proxemics** to *the study of how human beings communicate through their use of space*. If you were to enter a restaurant with only one customer in it, chances are that you would not sit down right next to him or her. Hall explains that though this behavior seems natural to a North American, an Arab might have a very different notion of appropriate distance between strangers.

Social scientists make use of the Scale of Social Distance, an instrument that uses the term “distance” figuratively, to indicate degree of liking or preference.

Hall (1959) goes a step further and speaks of measurable distances between people—1½ inches, 1 foot, 3 feet, and so on. In fact, he offers a four-part classification of distances between people. There is nothing arbitrary about this classification, as he explains:

It is in the nature of animals, including man, to exhibit behavior which we call territoriality. In so doing, they use the senses to distinguish between one space or distance and another. The specific distance chosen depends on the transaction, the relationship of the interacting individuals, how they feel, and what they are doing. (p. 128)

Hall describes human relationships in terms of four kinds of distance: intimate, personal, social, and public. Each distance zone is further differentiated by a close phase and a far phase within which different behaviors occur. Here we look briefly at four distances and Hall's findings about what they mean to most North Americans.

Intimate Distance At intimate distance, *eighteen inches or less*, the presence of another person “is unmistakable and may at times be overwhelming because of the greatly stepped-up sensory inputs” (Hall, 1959, p. 116). In its close phase (6 inches or less) intimate distance lends itself primarily to nonverbal communication. This is a distance usually reserved for very close friends and family. Subjects discussed are usually top secret. The far phase (6 to 18 inches) is often used for discussing confidential matters, with the voice usually kept to a whisper. Such close proximity is considered improper for public places, though dormitories seem to be exceptions to the rule. In general, Americans try hard to avoid close contact with one another on buses and other public vehicles.

Personal Distance Personal distance, from *1½ to 4 feet*, can be thought of as “a small protective sphere or bubble that an organism maintains between itself and others” (Hall, 1959, p. 119). Topics discussed would still be personal. The close phase (1½ to 2½ feet) is still a distance reserved for very close relationships; the far phase (2½ to 4 feet) is a comfortable distance for conversing with friends (see Table 4.1).

Social Distance Social distance, ranging from *4 to 12 feet*, is a psychological distance, “one at which the animal apparently begins to feel anxious when he exceeds its limits. We can think of it as a hidden band that contains the group.” The close phase (4 to 7 feet) is suitable for conversations at social gatherings and business discussions. The far phase (7 to 12 feet) is appropriate for meetings in a business office. People who are in the room but outside the 7-foot boundary can be ignored without being offended.

Those who violate the 7-foot boundary tend to be surprised if we do not acknowledge their presence, unless we are very busy. Humans have extended social

distance by means of the telephone, radio, television, fax, computer (e-mail), as well as teleconferencing and other technologies.

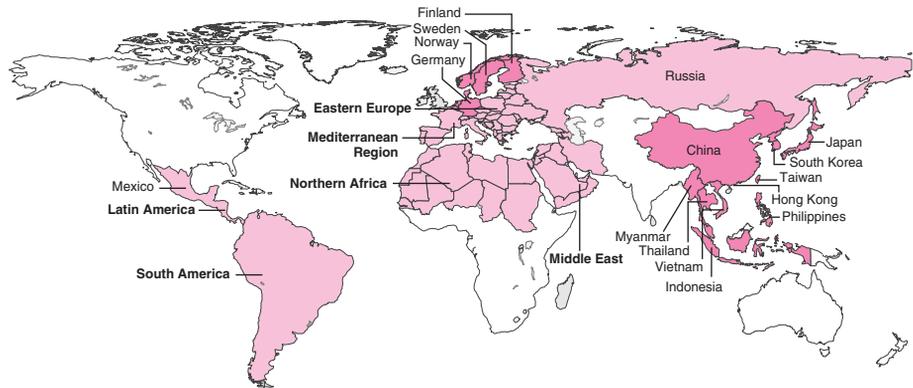
Public Distance Public distance, *12 feet or more of space*, is the largest of the zones and it exists only in human relationships. In fact, the public relationships and manners of Americans and Europeans are considerably different from those of other cultures. At the close phase (12 to 25 feet), a more formal style of language and a louder voice are required. At the far phase (25 feet or more), further accommodations to distance are usually made: Experienced public speakers exaggerate body movements, gestures, enunciation, and volume while reducing their rate of speech. Table 4.1 is a brief summary of how message content and vocal shift vary with distance between communicators.

High- and Low-Contact Cultures Within a culture as diverse as the United States, various co-cultures may develop their own proxemic norms. (A *co-culture* is a group having sufficient distinctive traits to distinguish it from other members of the same dominant culture.) One study (Albas, 1991) found that even for members of the same ethnic group, the comfortable distance they choose for interacting—in this case, during an interview—is negotiable. At the beginning of the interview, the distance was 12.3 inches, but by the end of the interview, it was 23.4 inches.

Table 4.1 Social Distance Zones

Distance	Description of Distance	Vocal Characteristics	Message Content
0–6 inches	Intimate (close phase)	Soft whisper	Top secret
6–18 inches	Intimate (far phase)	Audible whisper	Very confidential
1½–2½ feet	Personal (close phase)	Soft voice	Personal subject matter
2½–4 feet	Personal (far phase)	Slightly lowered voice	Personal subject matter
4–7 feet	Social (close phase)	Full voice	Nonpersonal information
7–12 feet	Social (far phase)	Full voice with slight over-loudness	Public information for others to hear
12–25 feet	Public (close phase)	Loud voice talking to a group	Public information for others to hear
25 feet or more	Public (far phase)	Loudest voice	Hailing, departures

Source: From *The Silent Language* by Edward T. Hall, Copyright ©1959, 1981 by Edward T. Hall. Used by permission of Doubleday, a division of Random House, Inc.

Figure 4.1 A Range of Selected High- and Low-Contact Cultures

■ Low-Contact Cultures

Myanmar	Taiwan
(formerly Burma)	Thailand
China	Vietnam
Hong Kong	Norway
Japan	Sweden
South Korea	Finland
Philippines	Germany

■ High-Contact Cultures

Mediterranean region, including: France Greece Israel Italy Portugal Spain	Northern Africa Eastern Europe (including Russia) Indonesia Middle East Latin America (including Mexico) South America
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Source: Adapted from *Nonverbal Communication: Forms and Functions* by Peter A. Andersen, 1999. Reproduced with permission of The McGraw-Hill Companies.

In research on intercultural communication, the distinction is often made between high-contact and low-contact cultures. Members of **high-contact cultures** *touch each other more often, sit or stand closer to each other, make more eye contact, and speak louder*. Members of **low-contact cultures** *touch each other less often, maintain more interpersonal distance, and are more indirect in facing each other and in their eye contact. They also tend to use a lower, softer tone of voice*. French, Italian, Latin American, Russian, Arab, and African cultures are some high-contact cultures; German, Danish, and East Asian cultures include those seen as low-contact. Moderate-contact cultures include the United States, New Zealand, Australia, and Canada (Ting-Toomey, 1999, p. 129). See the map in Figure 4.1 for a look at some selected high- and low-contact cultures.

One well-known study looked at the use of interpersonal distance by Venezuelans (high contact), North Americans (moderate contact), and Japanese (low contact). Researchers found that in speaking their own language, Venezuelans sit closest to each other, North Americans maintain an intermediate distance, and Japanese sit farthest from each other. When they use English rather than their native language, people maintain interpersonal distances closer to North American norms, so it seems that when we speak a foreign language, we tend to approximate

the distance norms of that culture (cited in Gudykunst and Kim, 1992, p. 178). And though there is a tendency to generalize about distance norms within Europe, it seems that people from northern European cultures—people from Sweden and Scotland, for example—require greater interpersonal distance than people from Mediterranean countries such as Italy and Greece.

Researchers are not saying that we calculate these differences while communicating. On the contrary, our sense of what distance is natural for a given interaction is so deeply ingrained in us by our culture that we automatically make spatial adjustments and interpret spatial cues. Latin Americans, Arabs, and the French, for example, stand so close to each other that if they exercise their own distance norms while conversing with a North American, they may arouse hostile or sexual feelings. If you want to test this concept, the next time you converse with someone, keep inching toward him or her. See how close you can get before the other party starts backing away.

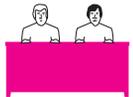
Orientation Your **orientation**—that is, *the angle of your body as you interact with another person*, may also reflect the nature of the relationship between the two of you. For example, some studies of British and North American seating patterns have shown that a 90-degree-angle orientation facilitates conversation, face-to-face orientations tend toward competitive behaviors, and side-by-side orientations are more often viewed as showing cooperation (Hargie et al., 1987, p. 27). In Figure 4.2 we see several preferences in orientation for sitting at a table. Notice how often situation determines choice of orientation.

Time

A study of 36 cities across the United States finds many differences in the pace or tempo of life: researchers used four measures—the walking speed of pedestrians, work speed, concern with clock time (e.g., whether people wore watches), and talking speed. The fastest city was—No, not New York—but Boston, with New York ranking third, and the Northeast generally the most fast-paced, and California the slowest—with Los Angeles ranked last. California in general was the slowest-paced region. “The fastest overall times were in the northeast, followed by the midwest, the south and then the west” (Levine, 1997, pp. 146–151.)

When we study *how human beings communicate through their use of time*, we are concerned with **chronemics**. Have you ever received a phone call at three in the morning? You probably thought that it was a very important call, a wrong number, or a prank. How far in advance can a first date be arranged? Must it be several days ahead, or can one call 30 minutes before? What about e-mail? How soon do you expect a reply from a friend? In each case, timing leads to certain expectations that influence the face-to-face communication that subsequently occurs. Being very late for a job interview can have a disastrous effect, not just a dramatic one. Much of the verbal communication that ensues may be spent explaining away the nonverbal message that has already been conveyed.

Figure 4.2 Seating Preferences at a Rectangular Table

Type of interaction	Position of participants	Suggested situations
Conversation		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Counseling interview • Employer interviewing an employee • Some progressive job interviews
Cooperation		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Friends meeting in a pub • Teacher helping a pupil in his work • Staff cooperating on the same project
Competition		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some job interviews • Principal interviewing pupil • Playing games such as chess, poker, etc.
Coaction		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strangers in a public eating place • Unfamiliar students working at same library table • Strangers sharing a seat on the train

Source: Adapted from *Social Skills in Interpersonal Communication* by Hargie et al., 1987. Reprinted by permission of Routledge Publishers.

Conceptions of what is “early” or “late” vary from culture to culture. Americans tend to be “busy” people. We like schedules and agendas. We value doing things “on time.” So it is sometimes jarring to see ourselves as others see us. For example, *In the Time of the Butterflies*, a novel by Julia Alvarez, is set in the Dominican Republic. A woman from the United States phones to set up an appointment to meet Dedé:

“So if I’m coming from Santiago I drive on past Salcedo?” the woman asks.
 “*Exactamente*. And then where you see a great big anacahuita tree, you turn left.”
 “A . . . great . . . big . . . tree . . .,” the woman repeats. She is writing all this down!

“I turn left. What’s the name of the street?”

“It’s just the road by the anacahuita tree. We don’t name them,” Dedé says, driven to doodling to contain her impatience . . .

The voice laughs, embarrassed. “Of course. You must think I’m so outside of things.” *Tan afuera de la cosa.*

Dedé bites her lip. “Not at all,” she lies. “I’ll see you this afternoon then.”

“About what time?” the voice wants to know.

Oh yes. The gringos need a time. But there isn’t a clock time for this kind of just-right moment. “Any time after three or three-thirty, four-ish.”

“Dominican time, eh?” The woman laughs.

“*¡Exactamente!*” Finally, the woman is getting the hang of how things are done here . . . (1994, p. 4)

Hall (1984; 1999) distinguishes between monochronic and polychronic conceptions of time. **Monochronic time** is time thought of as *linear and segmented*. In cultures with monochronic time, people perceive time as “almost tangible,” speaking of it, says Hall, as if it were money (time gets “saved,” “spent,” “wasted,” “lost”). People like to do one thing at a time, and their preference is for precise scheduling. Making appointments and deadlines is highly valued. In cultures with a **polychronic** conception of **time**, on the other hand, *many things are going on at once*. Nor is there great surprise when delays or interruptions occur. Indeed, they seem to be expected, and people take them in stride.

In illustrating these differences, Condon (1991) compares North Americans with Mexicans. North Americans, whose culture is monochronic, are seen—even by members of other monochronic cultures—as far too governed by schedules. Mexican culture, on the other hand, is polychronic. When members of monochronic and polychronic cultures meet, the result can be misunderstanding:

North Americans express special irritation when Mexicans seem to give them less than their undivided attention. When a young woman bank teller, awaiting her superior’s approval for a check to be cashed, files her nails and talks on the phone with her boyfriend, or when one’s taxi driver stops en route to pick up a friend who seems to be going in the same direction, North Americans interpret such behavior as showing a lack of respect and a lack of “professionalism,” but the reason may lie more in the culturally different treatment of time. (p. 111)

Thus, explains Condon, “it is not so much that putting things off until mañana is valued, as some Mexican stereotypes would have it, but that human activities are not expected to proceed like clock-work” (p. 111).

It has been said that for the American businessperson discussion is simply “a means to an end: the deal.” Moreover, it’s a sign of good faith to agree on major issues, assuming that details will be worked out later on. But like the Latin American, the Greek businessperson engages in what seems to us prolonged discussion

and is excessively preoccupied with details. For the Greek, these concerns usually signify goodwill (Hall and Whyte, in Smith, 1966, p. 568; see also Storace, 1997).

Do you think of yourself as monochronic or polychronic? Some of the differences between monochronic people and polychronic people are listed in Table 4.2. Hall believes that these approaches to time are learned. And if his distinction is a valid one, the culture your family is from probably influenced your own use of time.

VISUAL CUES

The second category of nonverbal cues we will discuss is extremely broad, ranging from facial expressions and body movements to the clothing we wear and the objects we display. Let's begin with an anecdote.

At the end of the nineteenth century, a German horse named Hans was reported to know how to add. If you asked him to add 2 and 6, for example, he pawed the ground eight times. The curious thing was that Hans could do sums only in the presence of human beings. His mysterious talent was later explained rather simply: When he unwittingly reached the answer, he saw his audience relax, and he stopped pawing.

Table 4.2 Some Differences between Monochronic and Polychronic People

Monochronic People	Polychronic People
do one thing at a time	do many things at once
concentrate on the job	are highly distractible and subject to interruptions
take time commitments (deadlines, schedules) seriously	consider time commitments an objective to be achieved if possible
are low-context and need information	are high-context and already have information
are committed to the job	are committed to people and human relationships
adhere religiously to plans	change plans often and easily
are concerned about not disturbing others; follow rules of privacy and consideration	are more concerned with those who are closely related (family, friends, close business associates) than with privacy
show great respect for private property	borrow and lend things often and easily
seldom emphasize promptness	base promptness on the relationship
are accustomed to short-term relationships	have strong tendencies to build lifelong relationships

Source: From *Understanding Cultural Differences* by Edward T. Hall and Mildred R. Hall, Intercultural Press. Reprinted by permission of the author.

The people who came to see Hans perform would have been shocked to learn that they were, by their body movements, transmitting the correct answers visually. Yet they were probably leaning forward eagerly to take in every aspect of the spectacle before them, for we all know how much we gain by seeing a performer, a lecturer, or any person we are speaking to. In fact, members of discussion groups interact more frequently when seated facing each other rather than side by side. In other words, the greater our visibility, the greater our potential for communicating. And, as we saw in Chapter 1, the greater the number of channels the sender uses, the more information is received.

Visual cues add to the information transmitted through other channels and at times stand alone. Specific motions of the head, for example, give the equivalents of certain brief verbal messages such as yes and no, and these movements may vary from culture to culture. Even head orientation, the direction in which we turn our heads, communicates something. Mehrabian (1967) found that a person who gives more head orientation while speaking conveys more positive feeling. A study of how “warmth” and “coldness” are conveyed during an interview supports this conclusion: “Leaning toward the subject, smiling, and looking directly at him enabled the subject to judge the experimenter as warm. Conversely, looking away from the subject, leaning away from him, not smiling, and intermittently drumming the fingers on the table impressed the subject as coldness” (Reece and Whitman, 1962, p. 250).

A summary of research in Table 4.3 indicates which cues are usually associated with warm or cold people. Notice that the nonverbal cues described include facial expression, eye contact, and body movements. We shall be discussing each of these sources of information. Remember though that when you look at another person, you get a total impression: We separate various cues here only to examine the kind of information that each conveys. These are nonverbal cues associated with North Americans; other cultures would be described by other lists.

A pioneering figure in research on nonverbal communication, Ray Birdwhistell, believes that the entire communication context must be observed in all its complexity and that it is productive to isolate individual variables only if they can be integrated into “the general communicative stream, including verbal behavior” (Weitz, 1979). It was Birdwhistell (1952) who introduced the term *kinesics* to refer to *the study of body movements in communication*. “Body movements” is used in a broad sense and refers also to movements of the head and face. Birdwhistell has estimated that there are over 700,000 possible physical signs that can be transmitted via body movement. The first group of visual cues we will be looking at has to do with facial expression.

Facial Expression

The human face is so mobile that it can effortlessly register boredom, surprise, affection, and disapproval one after another in a few seconds. *We constantly read expressions from people’s faces*. In fact, **facial cues** are the single most important source of nonverbal communication. Comments such as “If looks could kill” and

Table 4.3 Behaviors Rated as Warm and Cold

Warm Behaviors	Cold Behaviors
Looks into his eyes	Gives a cold stare
Touches his hand	Sneers
Moves toward him	Gives a fake yawn
Smiles frequently	Frowns
Works her eyes from his head to his toes	Moves away from him
Has a happy face	Looks at the ceiling
Smiles with mouth open	Picks her teeth
Grins	Shakes her head negatively
Sits directly facing him	Cleans her fingernails
Nods head affirmatively	Looks away
Puckers her lips	Pouts
Licks her lips	Chain smokes
Raises her eyebrows	Cracks her fingers
Has eyes wide open	Looks around the room
Uses expressive hand gestures while speaking	Picks her hands
Gives fast glances	Plays with her hair's split ends
Stretches	Smells her hair

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“It was all over her face” bear witness to the significance we give to facial expression.

According to one study, we tend to describe faces in terms of a general evaluative dimension (good or bad, beautiful or ugly, kind or cruel, and so on) and a dynamism dimension (active or passive, inert or mobile, interesting or boring). And apparently some people are much more adept than others at interpreting facial cues.

So we like a face or we don't; we think it's animated or relatively inert. These are general impressions. But what do we see that makes us judge someone to be sad or happy or frightened or angry? Isolating which facial cues specify particular emotions is more difficult than simply judging a face.

The study of facial cues as expressions of specific emotions has a long history. One of the most eminent scientists to examine this subject was Charles Darwin. Darwin tried to find out whether the facial behaviors associated with particular emotions are universal. One method he used was to ask subjects to identify specific emotions from still photographs of people's faces. In 1872, Darwin published some of his conclusions and speculations about the expression of emotions in man and animals. He felt that most of a human being's expressive actions, like those of other animals, are instinctive, not learned behaviors. For example, “We may see children, only two or three years old, and even those born blind, blushing from shame” (Darwin, in Loewenberg, 1959, p. 398).

Darwin's argument was given further support by several studies done more than half a century later. Ekman and Friesen (1971) asked members of a preliterate New Guinea culture to judge emotions from the facial expressions of Westerners. The subjects had had virtually no exposure to Western culture. Yet they made the same identifications that Westerners made, with one exception: They were not able to differentiate between fear and surprise. The researchers concluded that, at least in some respects, expressive facial behavior is constant across cultures. They acknowledged that cultural differences exist but argued that the differences are reflected "in the circumstances which elicit an emotion, in the action consequences of an emotion and in the display rules which govern the management of facial behavior in particular social settings" (p. 129).

According to anthropologist Melvin Konner (1987), smiling seems to be a human social display that is universal. For example, Eibl-Eibesfeldt's films from many remote parts of the world show smiling as a "consistent feature of greeting, often in combination with raising of the eyebrows" (p. 42). How our smiles are interpreted, however, will depend on many variables including physical attractiveness. Forgas (1987) found that the communicator's physical attractiveness can influence how cues of facial expression are interpreted: Smiles by unattractive subjects tend to be interpreted as reflecting submissiveness and lack of self-confidence; smiles by attractive subjects tend to be perceived as showing extraversion and self-confidence.

Research on more than 30 different cultures suggests that there is a high level of agreement in judging emotions from photographs of people's facial expressions. Most interesting, though, is the finding that there are cultural differences in the degree to which such expressions are recognized and also in how their intensity is rated. Happiness, fear, and surprise seem to be more universally recognized but judging contempt and disgust vary more from one culture to another (Biehl et al., 1997).

Other experts on nonverbal communication, including Ray Birdwhistell and Weston La Barre, have challenged the view that facial cues are universal. They believe that the cues are culture-specific. Today, there is a great deal of ongoing research and debate about the universality and functions of facial expressions in communicating (Kappas, 1997; Carroll and Russell, 1997). Earlier, Motley and Camden (1988) found that in interpersonal communication settings, spontaneous facial expressions of emotion are far more difficult to identify than the posed expressions traditionally used in formal studies. "If we depend upon facial expression alone," they say, "we can 'read a person like a book' only if the person intends to be read" (p. 19).

There is also a growing body of research about emotional contagion (Andersen and Guerrero, 1998) and how perceiving an emotional expression—a smile, for example—might cause us to mimic that expression and thereby experience that state of feeling. The implication is that we "catch" another person's emotions, through feedback from either the face or the body (Doherty, 1997). Generally, our accuracy in identifying emotions seems to increase with the number of cues we receive.

Almost every movie critic who talks about Julia Roberts eventually gets around to her broad and appealing smile. We are often attracted to people by their smile and usually think of a smile as the most natural of expressions—recognizable from culture to culture. Yet there are many kinds of smiles, including masking smiles, smiles meant to conceal. And it turns out that a natural smile is regulated by different facial muscles so that conscious smiles are slightly asymmetrical (Bates, 2001, p. 93).

And yet people are often advised to smile. One of the tips recently offered by a public speaking coach to executives trying to overcome fear of speaking before an audience was “Recall the last thing that made you laugh. You will smile and seem relaxed” (Ligos, 2001). Notice the word “seem.”

Some theorists believe that most nonverbal communication is spontaneous and unregulated. But others argue that though we may not be conscious of it, we often attempt to regulate our nonverbal behavior in social situations—that we manage how we present ourselves to others (DePaulo and Friedman, 1998).

Do you think you can tell the difference between spontaneous and controlled facial expressions and other nonverbal cues? Do you think they are necessary in most social situations? Are we conscious if we use them?

Oculesics

“In the right context, even a glance held a fraction longer than normal may be perceived as an act of intimacy. The glance penetrates the private psychological space of the other, and also reveals one’s own” (Bates, 2001, p. 113). Prolonged eye contact, of course, can also be seen as aggressive. The many rules implicit in our culture about looking at others are a tacit admission that eye contact is perhaps the single most important facial cue we use in communicating. *The study of the role of eye behaviors such as eye contact, eye movements, and pupil dilation in communicating* is called **oculesics**.

Although the face has been called “the major nonverbal liar” (Ekman and Friesen, 1984), cues given in eye contact seem to reveal a good deal about personality and intention. Hence, the belief that “The eyes are the windows of the soul.” Apparently, we have greater control of the muscles in the lower part of our face than we do of the muscles around our eyes. (There are exceptions, of course. Machiavellian individuals and con artists are able to sustain good eye contact even when telling lies.) It has even been suggested that “the lower face may follow culturally transmitted display rules while the eyes may reveal the spontaneous or naked response” (Libby and Yaklevich, 1973, p. 203).

At present most of the research on eye behaviors has to do with eye contact. One study estimates that in group communication we spend 30 to 60 percent of our time in eye contact with others (10 to 30 percent of the looks last only about a second). Four unstated rules about eye contact are:

1. A looker may invite interaction by staring at another person who is on the other side of a room. The target's studied return of the gaze is generally interpreted as acceptance of the invitation, while averting the eyes is a rejection of the looker's request.
2. There is more mutual eye contact between friends than others, and a looker's frank gaze is widely interpreted as positive regard.
3. Persons who seek eye contact while speaking are regarded not only as exceptionally well-disposed by their target, but also as more believable and earnest.
4. If the usual short, intermittent gazes during conversation are replaced by gazes of longer duration, the target interprets this as meaning that the task is less important than the personal relation between the two persons. (Argyle, 1985)

The second rule is corroborated by other researchers: Frequent eye contact does seem to be a sign of affection or interest. For example, flirting will often begin "with a quick upward glance, followed by averting the gaze and then another bout of eye contact, and a friendly smile" (Bates, 2001, p. 113). "Eye contact," writes Andersen, "does more than signal availability: it is an invitation to communicate" (1999, p. 191).

Personality also affects the amount of eye contact people give. For example, people high in their need to give help and comfort maintain more eye contact than people rated low on this need (Libby and Yaklevich, 1973). Eye contact with friends can also help us to cope with stressful events (Winstead et al., 1992).

Even in public communication frequency of eye contact affects the message sender. When an audience gives negative feedback (including poor eye contact), a speaker tends to lose fluency and to do poorly in presenting his or her message. In turn, audiences prefer a speaker who gives good eye contact. Researchers report that the best nonverbal predictor of perceived social support and coping is eye contact.

Why is eye contact so rewarding to others? Perhaps it is because the eyes are considered such a valuable source of information. Chinese jade dealers watch the eyes of their prospective customers for interest in a particular stone because the pupils enlarge with increased interest; similarly, magicians are able to tell what card a person is thinking about by studying his or her eyes. Hess's studies (1965; 1975) confirm that the size of your pupils is a sensitive index of your interest in what you're looking at. And apparently in dating your unconscious awareness that the other person's pupils are dilated can increase your attraction to that person.

There are several popular beliefs about what can be learned from watching someone's eyes. For example, two people who exchange knowing glances at a party seem able to communicate without words. Being able to look another person in the eye traditionally implies that you are being truthful and that your intentions are not to be questioned. Conversely, the person who averts his or her eyes is thought to be hiding something. In the Mediterranean, belief in the power of eyes is seen, for example, in the eye painted on Greek boats and the glass eyeball worn as a charm (sometimes on a key chain or bracelet) that is thought to protect the wearer against the curse of "the evil eye."

Norms governing eye behaviors and the interpretation of the implicit nonverbal message may be extremely clear in other cultures. For example, in the black township of Soweto in South Africa, a mother whose son had been killed in a violent confrontation with the police swore never again to avert her eyes or to bow her head in front of white people. In her culture, this was a major act of defiance. (See Chapter 10 on intercultural aspects of eye behaviors.)

Knapp and Hall (2002) summarize current research by identifying several functions of eye contact:

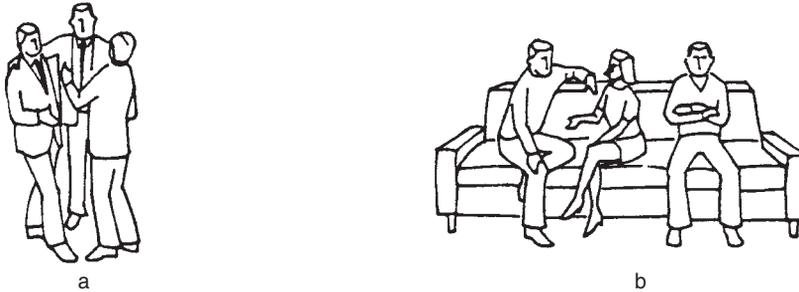
1. Regulating the flow of communication—opening the channels of communicating and assisting in the turn-taking process
2. Monitoring feedback
3. Expressing emotions
4. Communicating the nature of the interpersonal relationship, for example, variations due to status, liking, and disliking. (p. 369)

Body Movements

If during a party you were asked to record and classify all the body movements of two people in conversation during a five-minute period, you would probably think this an impossible task. Nothing short of a film captures the rapid, often subtle changes of the body. Much of what we know about kinesics has come to us indirectly, from such disciplines as anthropology and even psychiatry.

Do you think of yourself as a flirt—or do you know one? What are the nonverbal behaviors by which flirting is signaled? The classic work of Schefflen (1965) grew out of his filming and analysis of patterns of "quasi-courtship" that he noticed between males and females during psychotherapy as well as at conferences and business meetings. After studying films, he was able to classify typical behaviors. Some were simply movements to establish greater rapport and closeness between participants; others were signs of nonverbal flirting. For example, how we position our arms and legs transmits cues about who we include and exclude, as in Figure 4.3: (a) "We're not open to others" and (b) "I'm with you—not him" (Knapp and Hall, 2002, p. 429).

Signs of **courtship readiness** included **preening** by playing with the hair, pulling at stockings, adjusting the tie, and so on.

Figure 4.3 Positional Cues

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Positioning was another source of cues about interpersonal attraction. For example, two people might face each other and lean forward eagerly. Sometimes they sat with the upper half of their torsos turned in an open position so that a third person might enter the conversation but with their legs forming a circle and thus excluding the intruder.

Actions of appeal included flirtatious glances and head cocking. Women signaled sexual invitation by crossing the legs, exposing the thigh, exhibiting the palm of the hand, and protruding the breast. Here is an example of these behaviors in context:

At the beginning of the sequence . . . the therapist . . . turns to watch an attractive research technician walk across the room. The patient [female] begins to preen . . . The therapist turns back to the patient and also preens, but he then disclaims courtship by an ostentatious look of boredom and a yawn . . . Immediately afterward, the patient tells him she is interested in an attractive male aide. (p. 252)

To find out how people choose a mate, Steven Gangestad, an evolutionary psychologist, has studied the universality of flirting behaviors: In all cultures there seems to be a set of gestures we use to express sexual interest and signal sexual interest. Some researchers including David Givens, an anthropologist, and Timothy Perper, a social psychologist, have studied flirting in cocktail lounges and bars: It seems that “if all went well, a couple would invariably progress from touching themselves to touching each other” (Rodgers, 1999, p. 39). One study (Simpson et al., 1993) found that, though the sets of nonverbal behaviors were different for men and women, there was a clear-cut pattern. Men who were flirting smiled and laughed more often, showed more flirtatious glances, and looked downward less frequently than men who were not flirting. In flirting women, body movements seemed to be more pronounced; women tended to cant their heads during conversation and to lean forward; of course, by leaning forward you maximize other cues from your face and head. Although earlier researchers have connected head canting with communicating submissiveness, this seems not to be the case here.

Women who canted their heads were actually rated not only as more engaging but slightly more dominant (p. 456). Future research may explain these discrepancies.

According to the findings of Ekman (1965b), cues from the head and face suggest what emotion is being experienced whereas the body gives off cues about how intense that emotion is. The hands, however, can give us the same information we receive from the head and face.

Hand Gestures

Anthropologists distinguish humankind from other animals by their use of language and their superior manual dexterity. Flexible hands enable human beings to use tools and to draw on a wide range of gestures in communicating. As a mode of nonverbal communication, **hand gestures rank second in importance only to facial cues.**

On a television documentary series examining various American ethnic groups (Berger 1998), Nick Stellino, who is of Italian descent, described how family members used hand gestures when they talk to each other:

Each family member adopted and honed his or her own singular flourish: Mr. Stellino himself liked to jab at the sky, while his father favored a to-and-fro motion with hands in front of chest, and his brother Mario adopted a dramatic shoulder-rolling arm movement. The gestures were like signatures, within which could be found clues to the speaker's personality . . . Mr. Stellino embraces that old ethnic saw that Italians "speak with their hands" and shows us that in all those flying hands, there is a depth of feeling and a flair for individual expression that is to be envied, not mocked. (p. AR 25)

It is not only broad, expansive gestures that communicate mood. Less animated people often communicate inadvertently by means of their hands. The rather reserved husband of a lawyer we know repeatedly drums his fingers on a table or chair whenever his wife speaks about her practice. This behavior is the only sign of his impatience with her deep involvement in her profession.

Hand gestures sometimes substitute for verbal communication. Deaf-mutes use a system of hand signals so comprehensive that it literally replaces spoken language. The signals themselves are arbitrary. Many of our hand movements are culturally determined. Thus, the same gestures can convey different things to members of different cultures, and, over time, gestures change even within the same culture.

To an American, for example, making a circle with one's thumb and forefinger and extending the other fingers means "okay," but to a Brazilian it is an obscene sign of contempt. Apparently, American visitors and even statesmen unwittingly offend their Brazilian hosts with this gesture.

Desmond Morris and his colleagues in England (1979) have identified what they call twenty key gestures used in Europe. They are shown in Figure 4.4 and listed below.

Figure 4.4 Key Gestures



Source: From *Gestures* by Desmond Morris, P. Collett, P. Marsh, and M. O'Shaughnessy, 1979. Reprinted by permission of Desmond Morris.

- | | |
|----------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. The fingertips kiss | 11. The horizontal horn-sign |
| 2. The fingers cross | 12. The fig |
| 3. The nose thumb | 13. The head toss |
| 4. The hand purse | 14. The chin flick |
| 5. The cheek screw | 15. The cheek stroke |
| 6. The eyelid pull | 16. The thumb up |
| 7. The forearm jerk | 17. The teeth flick |
| 8. The flat-hand flick | 18. The ear touch |
| 9. The ring | 19. The nose tap |
| 10. The vertical horn-sign | 20. The palm-back V-sign |

Some of these, such as the nose thumb, the forearm jerk, the ring, and the palm-back V-sign, are quite familiar to us. Others, however, such as the cheek screw, the horizontal horn-sign, the chin flick, and the fig are almost completely unknown in the United States. They found that different meanings were assigned in different countries. The fig (no. 12), for example, is interpreted in many different ways including as sexual comment, sexual insult, or protection. Similarly, the nose tap (no. 19) has several interpretations—among them, complicity, be alert, you are being nosey, I'm alert, he is clever, and awareness that a threat is present.

Haptics

Touch is one of our most important means of communicating nonverbally. **Haptics**, *the study of how we use touch to communicate*, has been receiving increasing attention among communication scholars.

We know that touch is essential for psychological and physical development in children and emotional well-being in adults. In our culture, being able to touch other human beings seems to be linked with high self-esteem and sociability. And our experience of intimacy, connectedness with others and satisfaction in relationships is intensified by being touched (Prager, 2000). Recall the play *Dinner with Friends*, in which one of the characters describes how he finally decided to divorce his wife: He notices that during an entire week she has never touched him once.

In addition to conveying nurturance and caring, touch is also used to signify a professional relationship (being touched by a barber, for example); a social relationship (handshakes); friendship (for example, touching the upper arm); intimacy (hugs, for instance); and sexual arousal (for example, certain types of kisses). In each instance, touch is a bonding gesture (Heslin and Alper, 1983).

We also use touch to persuade or influence other people; in fact, touching increases self-disclosure and compliant behavior. The influence of touching on compliance has been demonstrated in several fascinating studies. For example, subjects touched lightly on the arm were more likely to sign a petition than those who were not touched (Willis and Hamm, 1980). Besides the need for touch to

establish and develop our relationships with others, some touch appears to have unambiguous symbolic content or meaning. Further, the codes of interpersonal touch encompass a great range of meanings, so we use touch to convey many different things, some far more ambiguous than others.

Research by (Jones 1999; Jones and Yarbrough, 1985) identifies seven types of touches:

Positive affect touches include touches of support, appreciation, inclusion, affection, physical attraction, and sexual interest.

Playful touches show playful affection or playful aggression.

Control touches gain compliance or attention or emphasize a response.

Ritualistic touches are more formal touches that signal greeting or departure.

Hybrid touches are those of greeting or departure that express affection.

Task-related touches might accompany a task (helping someone put on a coat, e.g.) or be used along with a comment (“I like your coat,” said while touching the coat).

Accidental touches are perceived as unintentional—e.g., brushing past someone on the street. (Adapted from Jones, 1999, pp. 196–200)

Touch is involving; it is an approach form of behavior. On the other hand, **touch avoidance**, is “a negative attitude toward touch that also affects [your] proxemic behavior and other types of nonverbal communication” (Andersen, 1999, p. 173). Touch avoidance is not about how much you touch others but your feelings and attitude about touching and being touched; and it can be thought of as reflecting your general level of intimacy. Touch avoidance is also a good predictor of how much interpersonal distance we maintain, particularly when the other person is female—so in this instance we see two nonverbal codes or messages interacting (Anderson and Sull, 1985).

In discussing proxemics, we examined the distinction between high- and low-contact cultures. Hall identifies the United States and Northern European cultures as low-contact cultures, but a recent study of patterns of touch (McDaniel and Andersen, 1998) finds that there is a broad range of touching behaviors in members of most cultures. The exception is to be seen in Asian countries, especially in Northeast Asia. Like many others, the authors cite Confucianism as a possible influence on the “East Asian reluctance toward interpersonal touch” (p. 70). Other variables affect patterns of touching—among them the degree of familiarity between people; their status; and, of course, the communication context itself.

Physical Appearance and the Use of Objects

During inaugural week of 2001, President Bush hosted a ball where the dress code included gowns for women and black tie and boots for men—a clear affirmation

of Texas and regional identity. Later in the year, at an international meeting in Shanghai, President Bush and other world leaders were photographed along with China's leader Jiang Zemin: All were wearing elegant silk traditional-style Chinese jackets—suggesting rapport and mutual respect.

The study of how we select and make use of physical objects in our nonverbal communication is referred to as **objectics**. Objectics is concerned with every kind of physical object—from the clothing you wear to the furniture you choose to the car you drive. For example, whether you intend to or not, you often project a personal style through how you dress. Clothes may not make the person, but dress, grooming, and general physical appearance are often the basis of first and relatively long-lasting impressions. And even glasses affect the way the wearer is perceived by others.

Uniforms tell us a great deal about rank and status. In several studies, people received greater help or compliance with their requests (e.g., signing a petition) when they were formally or neatly dressed than they did when their dress was casual or careless (Kleinke, 1986, pp. 77–78). And one study of beards suggests that women find a bearded man more appealing, that he has “more status in the eyes of other men,” and that his beard may even create more social distance between him and another unbearded male (Freedman, 1969, p. 38). The popularity of beards seems to be cyclical (Kleinke, 1986, p. 78).

How formally you dress can be another sensitive indicator. Most people tend to comply with office dress codes, which until recently were extremely casual. Now the percentage of companies that allow casual dress has declined somewhat as some firms are beginning to have misgivings. For example, in a recent survey of law firms that allowed casual dress in the office, 45 percent linked these relaxed standards with lateness and absenteeism, and 25 percent linked more casual dress with increased office flirting. There seems to be a return to more formal dress not only for job interviews but in the workplace, at least for meetings with bosses and clients (Parnes, 2001). “Credibility,” says one young lawyer, “is a suit. Since I am a lawyer, I depend on the audience, and I know the audience would prefer I wear a suit and tie. So if I’m meeting with clients, I wear a suit” (p. G1).

The clothing you wear often communicates your compliance or noncompliance with traditional values. And being overdressed for a social function can suggest a lack of sophistication. Interestingly, it's people with higher status who usually have the option of dressing up or down (Andersen, 1999).

Even your choice of color can may be interpreted as communicating something about you. For example, the novelist Sandra Cisneros created an uproar in a historic district of San Antonio when she painted her house purple (Rimer, 1998). At times, your choice of accessories or equipment suggests a desire to communicate status or power—for example, through a Rolex watch or expensive leather goods or a state-of-the-art laptop. Objects can also come to have symbolic value. Following the terrorist attacks on New York and Washington, many people displayed American flags on their cars, and we heard of one Sikh who started wearing a turban that was red, white, and blue. Similarly, a small pink triangle on an envelope conveys support for gay rights and wearing a red ribbon may draw

attention to AIDS awareness. A nose ring may signal something about the wearer's unconventionality. In general, cosmetics, jewelry, and tattoos or decals—seen even on high-fashion models—often evoke strong responses from others.

Whether or not your intention is to communicate, the way you choose and display physical objects is taken by others as a source of information about you. It should go without saying that such information is not always accurate.

We have discussed a great many visual cues individually, but remember that as a communicator you are also taking in and interpreting cues about space and time as well as vocal cues, which we will look at in some detail.

VOCAL CUES

When they are online, many people also add nonverbal cues to their text-based messages (Hancock and Dunham, 2001; Jacobson, 1999). When they want to create an impression or express feelings, or convey variations in tone or volume, they use capital and lowercase letters differently, typing errors, exclamation points, and other punctuation marks and emoticons (sometimes called smileys) along with their verbal messages. For example:

:) smiling	:'(crying
;) winking	:D laughing
:(frowning	:P sticking out tongue

You can see the effect more clearly if you turn your head to the left.

Early in this chapter, we spoke about communication that was verbal/vocal—that is, both verbal and vocal. One difference between the verbal and the vocal message is the difference between what is said and how it is said.

Take the sentence, “I hate you.” Imagine these words being said to show anger or in a much different way to sound seductive. The simple sentence “I’m glad to meet you” can sound cold and insincere despite its verbal message. Or suppose you go to a friend’s apartment and she opens the door and says, “Oh, it’s you.” It is the vocal cues, perhaps in combination with several visual cues, that tell you whether she is really pleased to see you, indifferent, or even disappointed. Of course, if she simply groans when she opens the door, this is an example of nonverbal/vocal communication.

The study of vocal phenomena, **paralinguistics** or **paralanguage**, *refers to something beyond or in addition to language itself*. Paralanguage has two components: **voice qualities**, such as *pitch, range, resonance, lip control, and articulation control*; and **vocalizations**, or *noises without linguistic structure, such as crying, laughing, and grunting* (Trager, 1958). So using paralinguistic cues online such as those mentioned above is another attempt to go beyond communicating simply by verbal means.

Several distinct emotions can be accurately identified solely on the basis of vocal cues, but the more similar the emotions—admiration and affection, for example—the greater our difficulty in identifying them.

Much research on vocal characteristics and emotions parallels the studies of facial expressions. Mehrabian (1968) found that people are easily able to judge the degree of liking communicated vocally. One team of researchers identified four categories of emotion: positive feeling, dislike, sadness, and apprehension or fear. The results confirm that “voice sounds alone, independent of semantic components of vocal messages, carry important clues to the emotional state of a speaker” (Soskin and Kauffman, 1961, p. 78; Knapp and Hall, 2002, p. 410). People can detect aggressiveness from a tape recording of a speaker’s message, though not from a written transcript, and can judge intensity of emotion from vocal characteristics. We cannot assume, though, that vocal cues are similar across cultures.

A common problem in interpreting vocal cues is misunderstanding sarcasm. This is especially true for children and people with poor listening and/or intellectual skills.

Vocal cues are sometimes the basis for our inferences about personality traits. If people increase the loudness, pitch, timbre, and rate of their speech, we think of them as more active and dynamic. If they use more intonation, higher speech rates, more volume, and greater fluency in their speech, we find them more persuasive (Knapp and Hall, 2002, p. 410). In computer-mediated communication, even limited paralinguistic cues such as those illustrated above can influence how people form impressions of others; this is true, for example, in online communities (Jacobson, 1999).

It’s interesting that judgments about status can be made quite rapidly (for example, after listening to a sample of a person’s speech for only 10 or 15 seconds). Apparently, we can make such inferences with a high degree of accuracy.

Despite wide agreement about certain relationships between voice qualities and personality traits, no conclusive evidence supports such inferences. They seem to derive from vocal stereotypes. Even if our beliefs have no basis in fact, however, they have striking effects on our response to others; we act on what we believe to be true. Thus, when the talkies appeared, several stars of the silent films were ruined because the public expected their voices to sound consistent with their screen personalities. The great lover with the high-pitched voice was too great a disappointment.

Volume

One precondition of effective verbal communication is adequate **volume**. If your voice is so low that you can barely be heard, people rapidly become too tired or too embarrassed to ask you to repeat your last remark. In this case, it is you, the message sender, who becomes a source of interference for the receiver. In organizational communication, vocal intensity can reinforce or enhance a person’s power base and convey a sense of confidence. For example, an employee who speaks loudly is more likely to enhance his or her expertise. And higher volume also seems to be one of the cues associated with perceived dominance (Tusing and Dillard, 2000).

Most people link volume to certain personality traits: Thus it is commonly thought that an aggressive person speaks in a louder voice than one who is reserved and shy. Volume, however, is not necessarily a function of personality. Our models in childhood also influence our volume level.

Feedback from the receiver is the best check on volume. If you are not getting through or if you're coming on too strong, adjust your voice accordingly.

Rate and Fluency

Your **rate of speech** is the *number of words you utter within a specified time*. The unit most often used is one minute, and the average speaking rate is about 125 to 150 words per minute.

Speech rates are highly stable for individuals. For this reason, a faster rate (as well as shorter comments and more frequent pauses) seems to be linked to fear or anger and a slower rate to grief or depression (Barnlund, 1968, p. 529). Some people are able to control their rate of speaking despite their emotions, but the strain of maintaining this control is often expressed in other vocal or facial cues. There is no optimum speaking rate. Like many other vocal qualities, rate of speech is more effective when adapted to the verbal content of the message and to the specific receiver.

The **fluency**, or *continuity*, of our speech is closely related to rate, and pauses, of course, affect fluency. The person who pauses continually, whose speech is full of vocalizations such as “um,” “er,” and “ah,” may destroy his or her effectiveness as a communicator. Pauses that are frequent, long, and vocalized, and that come in the middle of an idea are usually unsettling and undermine the sender's purpose. When used for emphasis and variation, pauses often enhance the verbal message—particularly if they are infrequent, short, and silent, and are used at the end of an idea.

Pitch

When, in *My Fair Lady*, Professor Higgins speaks with distaste about someone's mother who has “a voice that shatters a glass,” he is referring to **pitch**—*the frequency level (high or low) of the voice*. Your pitch range is determined by the size and shape of the vocal bands within your larynx, or voice box. Optimum pitch, the level most comfortable for you, is usually one-third above the lowest pitch you are capable of producing. Most untrained speakers use a pitch somewhat higher than their optimum pitch, but it has been found that lower pitches are most pleasant to listen to.

Pitch is an important element in people's judgments about a speaker. A voice with unvaried pitch is monotonous and usually disliked; in fact, a monotone seems to be as unpopular as a poker face. People sometimes derive information about emotions from changes in pitch. Pitch can even influence our judgments about a doctor's professional competence and social attractiveness. According to one study (Ray et al., 1991), when discussing serious illness with their patients,

doctors with medium levels of pitch variation were rated highest in professional competence. Doctors with medium and high levels of pitch variation are also seen as more socially attractive than doctors with low variation in pitch.

Apparently, pitch level does influence your attitude toward the communicator and the content of the message. Exaggerated pitch changes are even more unpopular than the monotone. A naturally expressive voice has a variety of pitch levels, which are spontaneous and unforced changes.

Quality

Think of a violin, a viola, and a cello. Each is a stringed instrument but has a different size and shape. The same note played on each of these instruments will therefore have a different **resonance**—*a distinctive quality of sound*. Similarly, each of you has a distinctive voice quality because the resonance of your voice—which to a great extent determines its quality—is a function of the size and shape of your body as well as of your vocal cords.

There seems to be wide agreement in responses to vocal qualities. Judges could reliably distinguish voices described as shrill or harsh from those considered pleasant, or “resonant.” In our culture, several voice qualities considered particularly unpleasant are hypernasality (talking through the nose), denasality (which sounds as though the speaker has a constant head cold), hoarseness, and harshness (or stridency). Voices considered attractive and influential are “more resonant and calm, less monotonous, lower-pitched (especially for males), less regionally accented, less nasal, less shrill, and more relaxed” (Andersen, 1999, p. 71). Differences in gender also influence how vocal quality is interpreted. For example:

A female speaker with a breathy voice is perceived as pretty, petite, feminine, highstrung, and shallow; a male speaker with a breathy voice is perceived as young and artistic . . . Women with “throaty” voices are perceived as more masculine, lazier, less intelligent, less emotional, less attractive, more careless, less artistic, more naive, more neurotic, less interesting, more apathetic, and quieter. On the other hand, throatiness in men resulted in their being perceived as older, more mature, more sophisticated, and better adjusted. (Pearson et al., 1994)

Having an attractive voice is a distinct advantage, and apparently we operate from a “what sounds beautiful is good” hypothesis. People with voices that are clear, warm, expressive, and robust are more likely to be seen as powerful, dominant, assertive, and socially skilled. This is especially the case when you use voice mail and answering machines, which rely so heavily on vocal cues. One study of messages left on business answering machines found that when people left taped excuses for not taking their phone calls, a person whose voice was attractive was seen—no matter what the excuse was—as “more competent, likeable, and dominant” (Semic, 1999, p. 153). So know how you sound and sharpen those vocal skills.

Through practice and training, almost all of us can improve our vocal quality. One of the best media available for studying communication style is the videotape

recorder, though even videotape loses some nuances of vocal inflection, eye contact, postural cues, and the like. The audiotape recorder is another valuable aid.

Summing up research findings on vocal cues, Knapp and Hall (2002) point out:

You should be quick to challenge the cliché that vocal cues only concern how something is said; frequently they are what is said. What is said might be an attitude (“I like you” or “I’m superior to you”); it might be an emotion; it might be the coordination and management of the conversation; or it might be the presentation of some aspect of your personality, background, or physical features. (p. 410)

For discussion purposes, we have isolated three categories of nonverbal cues. But as we pointed out early on, people interpret messages on the basis of multiple nonverbal and verbal cues. This is certainly the case with deception.

DECEPTION

When do you think a lie would be easier to detect—when the liar is in a situation when the stakes are high or when they are low? A recent study (Vrij et al., 2000) confirms that we can more accurately detect the lies people tell when the stakes are high for them. Nevertheless, there are very few nonverbal behaviors that consistently differentiate liars from nonliars—for example, liars dilate their pupils more, shrug more often, hesitate and make more speech errors, and have a higher vocal pitch. As you try to judge whether a person is lying, you may be staring intently at her face; yet her facial expressions usually turn out to be far less revealing than other nonverbal cues, perhaps because we have greater control over our faces (Anolli and Ciceri, 1997).

The kinds of **leakage**, or *signals of deception*, that take place depend on whether the lie is spontaneous or rehearsed and whether we are concealing something emotional or factual. Deception cues are most likely to be given when the deceiver wants to hide a feeling experienced at that moment or feels strongly about the information being hidden. They also tend to occur when a person feels anxious, or guilty, or needs to think carefully while speaking.

One study found that deceivers delivering a prepared lie respond more quickly than truth tellers mainly because less thinking is necessary (Greene et al., 1985). When they are unprepared, however, deceivers generally take longer than both prepared deceivers and truth tellers. Those telling the truth generally maintain more eye contact than deceivers. Deceivers also show less body movement, probably in an attempt to avoid leakage cues. At the same time, they laugh and smile more often, presumably trying to keep their faces from displaying other expressions that may turn out to be leakage cues. It’s especially interesting that these people continue to behave “deceptively” even when telling the truth. They probably fear that they will lose control if the situation in which they need to lie should recur (Greene et al., 1985). We must note here the great potential for

intercultural misunderstandings when cultural conventions of little gesturing and infrequent eye contact may be interpreted as deception.

Another study of naive and able liars (Anolli and Ciceri, 1997) emphasizes that lying is for the most part a vocal act, one that is very demanding. The researchers found that when people were lying their pitch was higher, they used more words, paused more, and showed greater eloquence and fluency in their speech. Liars were classified as good, tense, or overcontrolled. The study emphasizes that lying, a “strategic act,” is intellectually demanding because the liar, who knows the truth, is trying to be more persuasive—and also to conceal the emotional arousal that is sometimes created by the act of lying (especially if the liar is unprepared). At times the control a liar must exert is transformed into overcontrol so that the voice becomes flat and deeper in tone.

Much deception research has focused on the nature of deception cues and on how information is leaked, but research by Buller and others looks at mutual influence in deception and the actual communication exchange between deceivers and detectors.

Do you think it would be easier to tell if your roommate was lying or if a total stranger was lying? And what about probing questions? By asking questions could you figure out whether someone was telling the truth? One study (Buller et al., 1991a) examines how effective probing is as a strategy for detection and whether knowing the source—that is, the deceiver—affects our ability to distinguish what is truthful. Buller found that as receivers we communicate whether we accept or suspect a message and we also communicate our suspicion nonverbally through our increased vigilance. When receivers were suspicious, they “spoke slower, were less fluent, and lacked clarity in their messages. When probing . . . [they showed] longer response latencies [delays] as the conversation progressed” (p. 18). In fact, they may have tried to conceal their suspicion by asking fewer probing questions—in effect, they themselves become less truthful. Deceivers, in turn, can judge our reactions to see how successful they have been and sometimes even modify their behavior to appear more truthful.

In another study (Buller et al., 1991b), people participating in a conversation “relied more on facial and head cues when judging deceit—head nodding, smiling, head shaking, and facial animation—while observers relied more on vocal behaviors—interruptions, talkovers, and response latencies” (p. 37).

Most deception studies have used college students as subjects. Over the last 25 years of research, Ekman and Sullivan observe, “people have not been very accurate in judging when someone is lying,” with average accuracy estimated as rarely above 60 percent (1991, p. 913). One study of professional lie catchers looked at members of the U.S. Secret Service, federal polygraphers, judges, police, psychiatrists, a diverse group of working adults, and college students. Most groups did no better than college students. Secret Service people were the only ones who had greater than chance accuracy in detecting liars.

But what about the rest of us? Can we train ourselves to be more skilled in our judgments? Costanza (1992) has designed a training program to improve accuracy in interpreting both verbal and nonverbal cues. Although hearing a lecture

on verbal and nonverbal cues did nothing to increase accuracy, practice in identifying relevant cues after viewing videotaped interactions—and then getting feedback about one’s judgments—did improve decoding skills. This program emphasized several deception cues established as important from earlier studies; cues included greater speech disfluencies, greater delays in response, more pauses, briefer messages, and more hand gestures (p. 309).

This study also confirms other research that women are more skilled than men in interpreting both verbal and nonverbal cues. Costanza explains this as the result of socialization practices emphasizing “interpersonal skills in women” (p. 312). Although women had higher pretest accuracy scores, they were less confident than men that they had performed well. So, again, we see that greater sensitivity or competence is not always correlated with self-confidence.

The study of deception has much to teach us not only about individual nonverbal cues but about the interaction of verbal and nonverbal behavior. If at times in the last two chapters we have spoken of verbal and nonverbal messages as if they could be separated, this has not been our intention. Face-to-face communication is a total experience. No matter what a person is trying to say, you can see his or her face, body movement, clothing, and so on, and you are responding, whether you are aware of it or not, to all these cues.

Summary

Nonverbal communication is going on all the time. In discussing the interpretation of nonverbal messages, we saw that a significant percentage of all social meaning is conveyed through nonverbal stimuli. We also saw that nonverbal channels convey primarily relational messages, messages about the emotional level of our communication, and that a nonverbal message can replace, reinforce, or contradict a verbal message. Yet verbal and nonverbal responses qualify each other in so many ways that they are not totally separable.

Three broad categories of nonverbal cues were examined. First we discussed space and time, cues that have a subtle but pervasive influence on communication style and are, to a great degree, determined by one’s culture. We saw that assumptions about nonverbal cues may create misunderstandings in intercultural communication. Visual cues from facial expressions, eye contact, body movements (particularly hand gestures), touching, and physical appearance and the use of objects were analyzed. We found that these cues give us information about human emotions and intentions; they are also the basis for some of our judgments about personality and social status. Vocal cues are another source of information, and we spoke about volume, rate and fluency, pitch, and quality.

In closing, we looked at an area of nonverbal behavior that cuts across all the individual nonverbal cues, the study of deception. We examined some conditions under which signals of deception are most likely to occur as well as new research findings about accuracy in decoding deception cues and the mutual influence of deceivers and detectors.



Key Terms

Go to the Online Learning Center at www.mhhe.com/tubbsmoss for glossary flashcards and crossword puzzles.

Chronemics

Haptics

High-contact culture

Interpersonal distance

Kinesic slips

Kinesics

Leakage

Low-contact culture

Monochronic culture

Nonverbal

communication

Objectics

Oculesics

Paralinguistics

Personal space

Polychronic culture

Proxemics



Review Questions

For further review, go to the *Self-Quiz* on the Online Learning Center at www.mhhe.com/tubbsmoss.

1. Specify four categories of communication associated with verbal and vocal communication.
2. What is the relative weight we assign to verbal and nonverbal messages? What type of information does each convey?
3. What are three ways in which nonverbal messages relate to verbal messages?
4. What is a mixed message or kinesic slip? How does it relate to both verbal and nonverbal communication?
5. What is personal space? Give an example.
6. Specify four kinds of interpersonal distance. Give an example of each kind.
7. What are some differences between high-contact and low-contact cultures?
8. What is chronemics? Give an example of how timing might interfere with intercultural communication.
9. Explain the difference between monochronic and polychronic time, giving an example of each.
10. What is kinesics?
11. What are four unstated rules in our culture about eye contact?
12. Describe three categories of nonverbal courtship behavior. Give an example of each type.
13. What is the relationship between head and body movements in communicating emotion?
14. What is haptics?
15. Describe how touch might influence bonding, compliance, and self-disclosure.
16. What is touch avoidance? Give an example from your own experience.
17. Describe how one's choice of physical objects can communicate messages to others.

18. What is paralinguistics? Give some examples of paralinguistic cues.
19. What four categories of emotion are consistently identified by paralinguistic cues?
20. Identify the conditions under which signals of deception are most likely to occur.
21. Describe the possibilities for mutual influence between detectors and deceivers, and discuss recent research findings about accuracy in decoding deception cues.

Exercises

1. Form several two-person teams consisting of one male and one female. Have each team select a place where several people are likely to pass by. Have both members take turns asking strangers the time of day, or some other standard question. While speaking, slowly violate the stranger's proxemic norms until you are very close to him or her. The other member of the team should observe and record the stranger's reactions. When all the teams have collected data, discuss these questions in light of the data collected:
 - a. In what ways did the strangers demonstrate nonverbal/vocal and nonverbal/nonvocal communication?
 - b. How did the strangers respond to the questioner as he or she began to violate proxemic norms?
 - c. Did male and female strangers respond differently to proxemic norm violation depending on whether a male or female did the violating?
2. Repeat the exercise just described, but this time have one questioner dress very neatly, and the other in a sloppy, unkempt manner. Discuss the differences in the strangers' reaction to the questioner.
3. Go to www.members.aol.com/nonverbal2 and access *The Nonverbal Dictionary*. Read all the entries on facial expressions including the "blank face" and "zygomatic smile." Find three unposed examples of both in current online sources, magazines, or newspapers and identify each by context.
4. Make a list of the various paralinguistic and vocal cues discussed in this chapter. Tape-record a series of short messages presented by a male and a female that illustrate the various types of paralinguistic and vocal cues. Construct a Semantic Differential similar to the one suggested in exercise 1a in Chapter 3. Then ask a number of people to listen to the taped messages and rate the speakers using the Semantic Differential. How did the various paralinguistic and vocal cues affect the listeners' perceptions of the speaker? Relate the results to the concepts discussed in Chapter 2 on person perception.

5. The next time you get angry with someone, try to observe your own nonverbal behavior. Whom do you sound like? Whom do you remind yourself of? Most people look and sound like their parents or other members of their family. Facial expressions, posture, gestures, and vocal cues are often similar among family members. Do you notice similarities? What differences can you detect? Can you account for these similarities and differences?
6. Select three shopping sites on the Web and find three magazine ads that advertise (a) clothing, (b) furniture, or (c) cars. Analyze and compare what the advertisers suggest would be the nonverbal messages—for example, status, intelligence, power, physical attractiveness—the consumer would be able to convey by purchasing and using these items.

Suggested Readings

Andersen, Peter A. *Nonverbal Communication: Forms and Functions*. Mountain View, CA: Mayfield, 1999.

This is an excellent survey of nonverbal communication, organized in an original and very useful way. Chapter 4 on cultural cues, Chapter 5 on gender differences, and Chapter 6 on nonverbal communication in intimate relationships are of special interest.

Bates, Brian, with John Cleese. *The Human Face*. London: BBC, 2001.

A popular book, written in connection with the BBC presentation of a documentary on the face. It's informative, easy to read, and has a host of wonderful illustrations and photographs. Try getting hold of the BBC video of the same title.

Gudykunst, William B., and Young Yun Kim. *Communicating with Strangers: An Approach to Intercultural Communication*, 2d ed. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1997.

The critical role of nonverbal behavior in intercultural communication is the subject of Chapter 9 in this valuable text.

Hall, Edward T. *The Dance of Life: The Other Dimension of Time*. Peter Smith, 1994.

The author views time as culture and explores how, both consciously and unconsciously, time is formulated, patterned, and used in diverse cultures.

Knapp, Mark L., and Judy A. Hall. *Nonverbal Communication in Human Interaction*, 5th ed. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 2002.

An excellent resource for the student of nonverbal communication. The approach is research-based and comprehensive. Chapter 4 covers the effects of the environment—including architectural design, color, and structure—on communication.