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**Insight through Body Language and Non-verbal Communication
References In Tirukkural**

R. Subramani, Ph.D.

Abstract

Nonverbal Communication may be defined as transfer of messages without words. It comprises visible expressions like touching, eye contacts and gazes, facial expressions and intonations, as well as less noticeable messages like dress, posture and space between human beings. There are clear distinctions between the meanings we offer in words and the meanings we give off in non-verbal signs. Senders and receivers simultaneously encode and decode the meanings of the messages in non-verbal communication and it can be considered as an interactive medium in human communication. Around sixty five percent of the social meanings of the messages are exchanged with others non-verbally. Human emotions can effectively be transformed through nonverbal communication and are likely to influence others' perceptions.

One of the ancient Tamil scriptures, which is popularly known as Tirukkural, has eminently articulated the use of body language in interpersonal communication in its couplets.

This paper tries to explore the insight through body language and Non verbal communication references in Tirukkural.

Introduction

Renowned scholars have affirmed communication as social interaction through message (Fiske: 1990), a process in which participants create and share information with one another in order to reach a mutual understanding (Rogers: 1995), an activity in which symbolic content is not merely transmitted from one source to another, but exchanged between human agents, who interact within a shared situational and/or discursive context (Price: 1997), a process whereby people in groups, using the tools provided by their culture, create collective representations of reality (Trenholm:1999), and a process in which there is some predictable relation between the message transmitted and the message received (Graber:2003). They articulate the social, cultural, behavioral and cognitive characteristics of communication.

Non-verbal Communication

Communication is the process of transferring information from one person to another. People spend most of their time in communicating their knowledge, thoughts, and ideas to others. But, many of us fail to understand the role of non-verbal signs and codes in the process of communication.

Non-verbal communication does not depend on words to express meanings. ‘Nonverbal communication is usually understood as the process of communication through sending and receiving wordless messages, those messages may be communicated through gesture; body language or posture; facial expression and eye contact; object communication such as clothing, hairstyles or even architecture; symbols and info graphics; prosodic features of speech such as intonation and stress and other paralinguistic features of speech such as voice quality, speaking style’ and emotion (Knapp & Hall: 2002).

Goarden Goates (2009) argues that Non verbal meanings can be easily communicated beyond the barriers. ‘When words are used to communicate information, their meaning can be anything very vague to very precise. In addition, words can entirely be descriptive, abstract, or anywhere in between. Descriptive communication with words provides information which allows the identification of something which is already known to one or more of the five senses’.

Non-verbal communication simply includes all communication which is not achieved purely through the use of words or other symbols. It is believed that non verbal communication always complements and enhances the verbal communication. Emotions can be effectively portrayed through non-verbal means (Atkinson: 2004). Basically it is sending and receiving messages through diverse ways without the use of verbal codes. In brief, there are two basic kinds of non-verbal language: nonverbal messages produced by the body; nonverbal messages produced by the broad settings like time, space, silence.

Non-verbal Communication

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Nonverbal expressions have very close association with verbal activity, even though it can stand alone. It is affirmed that 'the human body is always present in social, interactive situations. In mediated situations, when people are on the telephone, only the voice is heard; yet it sends nonverbal paralinguistic messages (Pittam: 1994). Many reasons have been cited for the usage of non verbal communication. Some of them appear thus:

Words have limitations: Nonverbal communication is more effective than verbal communication (when explain the shape, directions, and personalities).

Nonverbal signal are powerful: Nonverbal cues most importantly express inner feelings but verbal messages basically deals with outside world.

Nonverbal message are likely to be more genuine: Nonverbal expressions cannot be controlled as easily as spoken words.

Nonverbal signals can express feelings in appropriate to situation: Social manners limit what can be said, but nonverbal cues can communicate thoughts.

Separate communication channel is not necessary: A speaker can add enormously to the complication of the verbal message through simple nonverbal signals.

Communication researchers suggest that feelings and intentions can be transformed more effectively in non verbal communication.

A study of Albert Mehrabian (1971) provides some attractive information about the significance of verbal and non-verbal messages. Mehrabian ascertains that only 7% of messages have been exchanged by words, remaining 93% of the messages are exchanged by nonverbal expressions. Moreover, communication can be classified as either verbal or nonverbal. But it can further be subdivided into either vocal or non vocal. Vocal category consists of spoken language and Non vocal involves written communication as well as sign language, finger spelling, Braille, or other similar alternatives to verbal language.

Non-verbal communication has been take place through cues and signs. Non-verbal messages are conveyed through behavior which comprises a range of direct and indirect cues (Sheldrick-Ross and Dewdney: 1998). Human body is not only creating vocal sounds but also generating movements as well. The Non Verbal signs and codes can broadly be interpreted as 'Communication is a sharing of meaning through the transmission of information via mutually understood signs. Because meanings exist in the human mind, they cannot be shared or communicated except through some external vehicle. The human body is capable of making sounds and movements which in turn can create a system of vehicles for sharing inner meanings and ideas with others'(communication and Language:2009).

An invisible layer exists between verbal and nonverbal communication. They principally localized in different areas of the brain, verbal in the left hemisphere (half of front part of brain) and nonverbal in the right hemisphere. Further, they are processed differently in the brain, the verbal being processed discretely (unconnectedly) while the nonverbal is processed as a gestalt (form or shape) (Andersen: 1999).

Types of Nonverbal Communication and Body Language

According to experts, considerable portions of our communication are nonverbal. Every day, we respond to receivers through nonverbal cues and behaviors including postures, facial expression, eye gaze, gestures, and intonation. Scientific studies on Nonverbal communication and behavior have started from study of Charles Darwin's (1872) '*the expression of the emotions in man and animals*'. At the outset, large quantity of studies on the forms, effects, and expression of silent communication have been carried out in the field. The study of nonverbal communication is divided into several categories.

Kinesics (the study of body movements, facial expressions, and gestures -Ray L. Birdwhistell : 1950) deals with physical movement with posture in standing and sitting, as well as with eye and facial expressions, such as the arching of eyebrows or rolling of the eyes. It includes body movement, gestures, facial expression, eye contact, posture, and speaking volume. Another category of non verbal form is Proxemics (the study of how people use and perceive the physical space around them. Edward T. Hall: 1966) deals with the distances between communicators, and the use of time, smell, touch, and space. Moreover, five types of complex classification of non-verbal behavior have suggested by Ekman and Friesen (1969), and are referred to translatable, illustrative, affect-display, regulator and adapter. Non verbal communication has many distinctive features and classifications. The excerpts of the research findings of many scholars appear thus:

Personal Space: Invisible boundary has always been existed between the encoder and the decoder. The amount of personal space for casual conversation and formal conversation may not have the same nature. Personal space has greater part in ascertaining our role in the communication.

Eye contact and Gaze: Looking, staring and blinking are considered to be an important non verbal behavior. Eye look can display the range of the emotions of the individual. Eye contact is a direct and powerful form of non-verbal communication and it alters the meaning of other nonverbal behaviors.

Body Language and Posture: The whole body is a component of communication. Body Position and movement can convey much of information. A person's physical posture communicates a rich diversity of messages. slouching, stiff, slumped, twisted, cringing,

towering, crouching, angled torso, legs spread, pelvis tilt, shoulders forward, general tightness, kneeling, angle of head, jaw thrust are some of the signs of body language and have emotional impact in communication.

Paralanguage: This deals with the power of tone of voice. Non-lexical (not related to words) vocal communications may suggest many emotional nuances. They are: Inflection (rising, falling, flat...) Pacing (rapid, slow, measured, changing...) Intensity (loud, soft, breathy...) Tone (nasal, operatic, growling, wheedling, whining...) Pitch (high, medium, low, changes...) Pauses (meaningful, disorganized, shy, hesitant...) It is evidently proved that the tone, pitch, quality of voice, and rate of speaking convey emotions that can be accurately judged in spite of the content of the message.

Facial Expressions: Facial expressions can typically communicate emotions and expressions. The human face is expressive, and able to express countless emotions without expressing a single word. According to Birdwhistell 'face has 2, 50,000 different expressions. Mehrabian believes 'verbal cues provide 7 percent of the meaning of the message; vocal cues, 38 percent; and facial expressions, 55 percent. This means that, as the receiver of a message, you can rely heavily on the facial expressions of the sender because his/her expressions are better indicators of the meaning behind the message than his/her words'.

Gestures: Body movements and signs are playing significant mode in the dissemination of meaning. Gestures have been created by movements of the facial muscles, head, limbs or body. 'These movements may express or emphasize a thought, feeling, or mood. Gesture is seen accompanying speech, Man makes gestures without speech also (M.S.Thirumalai: 2003). There are many kinds of gestures: clenching fist, shaking a finger, pointing, biting fingernails, tugging at hair, squirming, rubbing chin, smoothing hair, folding arms, raising eyebrows, pursing lips, narrowing eyes ,scratching head, looking away, hands on hips, hands behind head, rubbing nose, rocking, sticking out tongue, tugging earlobe, and waving.

Touch or Haptics: Touch is an important non verbal behavior. People have different areas of personal intimacy. Even the angle of one's holding another person hand might suggest a hurrying or coercive implicit attitude, or on the other hand, a respect, gentle, permission-giving approach (Smith, Clance & Imes: 1998).

Locomotion: Physical movement in the space also communicates a great deal, as well as affecting the feelings of the person doing the moving (Morris: 1977). They are: Slither, crawl, totter, walk, stroll, shuffle, hurry, run, jog, spring, tiptoe, March, jump, hop, skip, climb, swing, acrobatics, and swim, slink etc.

Pacing: Notifying the way of the actions. Jerky, pressured, nervous, gradual, graceful, fatigued, tense, easy, shaky, deliberate furtive, clumsy are some of the way of the actions of the body.

Adornment: Clothes, makeup are capable of making some meanings in the society. They offer signals relating to context, status, and individuality. Carry cigarettes, pipes, canes, or relate to their belts, glasses offer some semiotic meanings.

Physiological Responses: Therapists are aware of subtle signs of emotion of the body. Some of the clues in physiological processes is observed and they include: Shaking, flaring of nostrils ,trembling chin ,sweating ,blanching, cold clammy skin, blushing, moisture in eyes ,flushing ,blinking ,swallowing ,breathing heavily etc.

Functions of Non Verbal Communication

Nonverbal communication is playing multiple roles in human communication. It regulates relationships and may support or replace verbal communication. Argyle (1988) has identified five primary functions of nonverbal behavior in human communication. He encapsulates that the Human body can ‘express emotions; express interpersonal attitudes; accompany speech in managing the cues of interaction between speakers and listeners; and act as an external vehicle of Self-presentation of one’s personality; and Rituals (greetings)’.

Nonverbal mode of communication has clearly exhibits the self identity of the individual. Ting-Toomey (1999) affirmed that ‘Non verbal messages signify who we are via our artefacts (e.g. the clothes we wear), our vocal cues, our nonverbal self-presentation modes, and the interpersonal spaces we claim for ourselves’. Moreover, Non verbal communication can act as an interface between sender and receiver. Malandro (1989) has stated that ‘Nonverbal Communication is Complementing (adding extra information to the verbal message), Contradicting (when our nonverbal messages contradict our verbal messages), Repeating (used in order to emphasize or clarify the verbal message), Regulating(serves to coordinate the verbal dialogue between people), Substituting(occurs when a nonverbal message is transmitted in place of a verbal message), Accenting (emphasizing a particular point in a verbal message) the verbal communication’. Similarly Patterson's (1990) has simply stated functions of nonverbal communication. Non verbal communication is ‘providing information, regulating interaction, Expressing intimacy, Presenting identities and images, affect management’.

Insight through Body Language and Nonverbal references in Tirukkural

Tamil Language has rich traditions and literatures; it possesses social values and universal thoughts. Tirukkural is one such ancient scripture in Tamil, and consists of 1300 couplets (two lines of verse) which are popularly known as Kural. They are grouped into three major sections of Virtue, Wealth and Pleasure.

Tiruvalluvar’s Tirukkural has exclusively deals two units of couplets on non verbal communication. The importance of the face and the eyes in communication are emphasized in the couplets. Anger, authority, fear, timidity, coyness, confidence, diffidence, etc. can be

decoded from one's gaze. They can signal intimacy, concern, naughtiness, joy, surprise, curiosity, affection and love, pleading for mercy, attempts to fake.

Linguistic scholar M.S.Thirumalai has cited many literary references of communication through Eyes. His text reads as 'Eye as a communicative medium has referred to in many poems and other works of literary art. The expression of emotion via eye attracts special notice in dramatic works also. At the ritual level, eyes are seen as 'a means of expressing feelings, of imposing silence, will, love or reverence, a means also of participating in the essence and nature of the person or object looked at'.

The human face is extremely expressive, and able to exhibit immeasurable emotions without pronouncing a word. Facial expressions are universal and they communicate information about emotions, regulates interpersonal behavior and perceptions. The human face is the most complex and resourceful. It is a rich and versatile instrument in serving many different functions. It serves as a window to display the circumstances of the person. Through the face we can able to make one's behavior more predictable and understandable.

Tiruvalluvar extensively deal with body language in his literary work. In the couplets 701-710, we can find descriptive interpretations on Body language and non verbal communication. One can easily identify the Insight; feelings, thoughts, mindset of the individual through his/her face, and eyes. The encoder (sender) and decoder (receiver) can mutually identify the state of mind and nature of the message through body language. This has been explicitly appeared in the couplets of Tirukkural. Facial expressions, Eye contact, reading the eyes are widely uttered in the literary portions.

As noted above, emotions and feelings can be decoded through facial expressions and gazes. The below uttered couplets encapsulates the active transformation of messages between the senders and receivers. The face can act as a medium for human communication. Tirukkural couplet reads thus:

Who knows the sign, and reads unuttered thought, the gem is he,
Of earth round traversed by the changeless sea. (701)

The English commentator G.U. Pope commented as 'the minister who by looking (at the king) understands his mind without being told (of it), will be a perpetual ornament to the world which is surrounded by a never-drying sea'. The face is an organ of emotions and, it provides vital clues to our own feelings and those of the people around us.

Our face could be able to offer vivid expressions, and act as a visual display, emotions can appear instantly, and then suddenly vanished and new expressions may appear. Valluvar emphasized that we must have companionship with those who are having the capacity of reading the facial expressions of the individual. His versions read thus:

Who by the sign the signs interpret plain,
Give any member up his aid to gain. (703)

The commentary of the articulated version says that ‘The king should ever give whatever (is asked) of his belongings and secure him who, by the indications (of his own mind) is able to read those of another’. Reading the signs and symbols from the facial expression of the individual is considered as a valuable art in interpersonal communication.

The face is a powerful channel for nonverbal communication. We encode messages through facial expressions; at the same time decode faces around us. It is evident that face can reveal the internal images of the person. In this context valluvar text reads as:

As forms around in crystal mirrored clear we find,
The face will show what's throbbing in the mind. (706)

The commentator said that ‘As the mirror reflects what is near so does the face show what is uppermost in the mind’.

We constantly monitor the face because it provides vital clues to a notable range of possibilities, attraction, whether a person likes or dislikes us. The face has the tendency of reflecting the inner feelings of the person. The face acts as an indicator of the body. In this context valluvar text reads as:

Than speaking countenance hath aught more prescient skill?
Rejoice or burn with rage, 'tis the first herald still! (707)

The commentary interpreted as ‘Is there anything, as full of knowledge as the face? (No) it precedes the mind, whether (the latter is) pleased or vexed’. Human Face may exhibit the personal feelings and the intensity of the psyche to the world.

The face contains influential signs. Our face also plays a significant role in physical attractiveness. If you have a capacity of reading the facial expressions of the individual, no need to have conversation with the person.

The following text of Tiruvalluvar is evidently supporting the theories of nonverbal communication. They are:

To see the face is quite enough, in presence brought,
When men can look within and know the lurking thought. (708)

The meaning interpreted as 'If the king gets those who by looking into his mind can understand (and remove) what has occurred (to him) it is enough that he stand looking at their face'.

The eyes can able to communicate everything to the world. If a person is not able to make out the meaning from the eyes of others, the encoder eyes may not consider as a useful organ. Valluvar text reads as:

By sign who knows not sings to comprehend, what gain,
'Mid all his members, from his eyes does he obtain? (705)

The commentator interpreted that 'Of what use are the eyes amongst one's members, if they cannot by their own indications dive those of another?' According to valluvar, eyes can act as an important medium for non verbal communication.

The eyes can help an individual to identify the nature of relationship with the person. Tiruvalluvar articulates as:

The eye speaks out the hate or friendly soul of man;
To those who know the eye's swift varying moods to scan. (709)

The meaning says 'If a king gets ministers who can read the movements of the eye, the eyes (of foreign kings) will (themselves) reveal (to him) their hatred or friendship'. Eyes are performing as a diplomat in defining the relationship of the individual with the society.

Eyes are the measurement scale to examine the state of mind of the individual. In this context Tiruvalluvar couplets reads thus:

The men of keen discerning soul no other test apply
(When you their secret ask) than man's revealing eye (710)

The commentary says 'The measuring-rod of those (ministers) who say we are acute will on inquiry be found to be their (own) eyes and nothing else'.

More interestingly, Tiruvalluvar has written many couplets about nature of love. The lovers can mutually exchanging messages through signs. The following versions have supplied explicit meanings of sign language .The texts read as:

Her painted eyes two glances dart
One hurts and other heals my heart (1091)

G.U. Pope's commentary says that 'There are two looks in the dyed eyes of this (fair one); one causes pain, and the other cures. Each eye has different functions in the context of love'.

Another couplet describes the notion of eye sight; it provides meaning for each form of sight. More interestingly, Eye look may exchange different meanings between the lovers. The text reads thus:

The slighting words that anger feign, while eyes their love reveal.
Are signs of those that love, but would their love conceal. (1097)

The commentary is 'Little words that are harsh and looks that are hateful are (but) the expressions of lovers who wish to act like strangers'. The signs of lovers have different meaning in the public place.

Tiruvalluvar has strongly advocating the potential of non verbal communication. If the lovers have reached mutual agreement through gaze, there are no uses for words. The texts read as:

The words of mouth are of no use
When the eyes to eye agrees the gaze (1100)

The commentary is 'the words of the mouths are of no use whatever, when there is perfect agreement between the eyes (of lovers)'. Tiruvalluvar points out that eyes are crucial in reading the mind of a person.

Conclusion

Nonverbal communication has strong association with verbal communication and is considered as an accompanying medium. Wordless communication alone speaks volumes. The nonverbal cues which are indicated in the couplets have supply new dimensions for nonverbal communicators. Facial expressions, gaze including eye contact, the posture of the body and gestures convey lot more to the receiver. Tirukkural couplets points out that facial expressions and gazes, eye contacts are dynamically exchanging the messages between the encoder and decoder.

In this process sender and receiver can simultaneously decode the messages. Thereby Valluvar's nonverbal expressions act as an interactive medium in the communication. Valluvar's couplets are not only points out the expressions and feelings of the sender and they talk about the receivers as well. More interestingly few couplets have supplied the meaning for gaze of the lovers. Human body is an external vehicle to communicate messages to the world. The analyzed couplets have provides new insight for non verbal communication and further analyses may offer more and more explanations on body language.

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