

# 1 Non Verbal Cues in Group Behavior Amongst Youngsters

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## 6 **Abstract**

7 This paper aims to study non verbal cues in group behavior amongst youngsters. For this  
8 analysis two groups (age ranging from 18-19 years) of 66 students, 45 boys and 21 girls were  
9 studied. They were studied at different time intervals and in different setting. It has been  
10 observed that there were various non verbal cues which were more prominent and expressive  
11 than the verbal interaction. The non verbal cues of the participants which occur throughout  
12 the interaction were more instrumental in shaping the group behavior than the verbal cues.

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14 **Index terms**— Communication, non verbal cues, group interaction.

## 15 **1 Introduction**

16 Communication is an exchange and flow of information and ideas from one person to another. It is the basic  
17 necessity of human life, as integral and vital as our breath. People sustain in the society through their interaction  
18 with fellow beings where meaning is conveyed in an attempt to create a shared understanding. "It is the  
19 process of transferring of thoughts or an idea so that the mental picture perceived by the receiver is the same as  
20 that envisioned by the sender." ??Robbins, 1989). This flow of interaction is indicative of relationships people  
21 share in any cultural and linguistic group. In a communicative situation, one active participant encodes and  
22 transmits the message and the other receives and decodes it. The encoding and decoding takes place at different  
23 dimensions mainly verbal (using a language system) and mysteriously non verbal (using signs, symbols, posture,  
24 gestures, facial expression, artifacts etc). Communication is not only about language, rather a great deal of  
25 interaction takes place without using words through non-verbal cues, which cut across cultural and language  
26 boundaries. Albert Mehrabian (1981) has held that transmission of message is effective only when all three  
27 aspects of communication-the verbal (words-7% impact), the vocal (intonation, pitch, volume -38% impact) and  
28 the visual (gestures, posture 55% impact) are in tandem with one another.

29 Non verbal cues which are natural, unintentional and unconscious broadcast our true feelings in any given  
30 moment also clue us into the feelings of those around us. Although affective reactions are influenced by both verbal  
31 and nonverbal cues, inferences about relationships and feelings (affect) are more heavily influenced by non verbal  
32 cues. ??Zajonc, 1980 There is a rich variety of dimensions by which we transmit and receive meaning nonverbally.  
33 Highlen and Hill (1984) have identified areas of study in non verbal behavior as paralinguistics, kinesics,  
34 facial expressions, visual behavior, proxemics and touch. Later day researchers from cultural anthropology and  
35 linguistics have added occulistics, artifacts, and chronemics to the list. Communication, therefore, is much more  
36 than an understanding of the spoken or written language. Abercrombie, one of the proponents of the study of  
37 paralanguage believes, "We speak with our vocal organs but we converse with our entire bodies; conversation  
38 consists of much more than a simple interchange of spoken words" ??Abercrombie, 1972: 67). Based on the  
39 discussion on importance of non verbal cues in communication, this paper aims to study the non verbal / vocal  
40 behavior and attitude of students in group interaction and what role it plays in building up mutual consensus.  
41 Most of the studies have been focused on individual non verbal cues, here in this paper, an attempt would be  
42 made to study non verbal cues in a group and how it shapes the group interaction.

43 There is a large amount of rich non verbal communication that acts as a catalyst in shaping the group behavior  
44 during a predominantly verbal discussion.

45 **2 II.**

46 **3 Methodology**

47 In this paper, a qualitative analysis of non verbal cues in a group interaction is studied by using case study  
48 method. Two groups (age ranging from 18-19 years) of 66 students, 45 boys and 21 girls were studied. They  
49 were studied at different time intervals and in different setting. Two groups labeled A & B were made consisting  
50 of 33 students each. Further each group was randomly divided into 3 sub groups (11 students each) -A1, A2 &  
51 A3; B1, B2 &B3. Intentionally different topics were assigned to each group.

52 **4 III.**

53 **5 Case Study i**

54 For group A, interaction started by assigning variant topics to groups A1, A2 &A3. Participants of group A1 &A2  
55 were both boys and girls; whereas A3 group consisted only boys. There were certain non verbal cues which were  
56 more or less common to all the groups. Their Formal verbal introduction was accompanied by illustrators (mainly  
57 hand gestures) enforcing the speech and accentuating it. Initially the hands of the students were placed on the  
58 table, feet placed firmly under their chairs and their bodies open to reception, displaying responsive body posture.  
59 Emblems like head movements for 'yes' and 'no' were prominent throughout the interaction. Non participants  
60 interlocked their fingers closing themselves to the interaction. "Of all the parts of the human body that are used  
61 to transmit information, the eyes are the most important and can transmit the most subtle nuances" (Julius  
62 Fast, 1971). The students who had sufficient knowledge about the subject tried making eye contact with every  
63 member of the group whereas those with lesser information withdrew eye contact, giving a sign of submission.  
64 While perceptions of a communicator's credibility become more favorable with more frequent and appropriately  
65 longer eye contact, perceptions of distrust increase with the absence of eye contact ??Hemsley & Dobb, 1978). It  
66 was also noticed that students who were overconfident about their subject knowledge and verbal speaking skills  
67 made little eye contact with other participants but more with the evaluator displaying their superiority over the  
68 others.

69 One difference that was noticed in the students of group A2 was that most of them were dressed in formal attire  
70 which brought about an added formality to their verbal interaction and projected immense confidence, competence  
71 and credibility. The affect of attire was visible in physical appearance and resulting perception. Studies suggest  
72 that physically attractive communicators are more persuasive ??Chaiken, 1975), successful in changing attitudes  
73 ??Kahle & Homer, 1985) and are perceived as being more friendly than less attractive communicators.

74 As discussion proceeded there were many ideas to which everybody did not agree to, before verbal disagreement,  
75 their retaliation was visible through defiant cues, their postures became combative by leaning forward, hands  
76 getting raised and fingers pointing; clearly signaling disagreement with the speaker. Whenever we talk of gender  
77 differences, non verbal cues can also not ignore this aspect. There was a marked difference in the non verbal cues  
78 of group A3 which consisted of only boys. They had fixed facial expressions indicating lack of conformity, whereas  
79 the participants of the other two groups (mainly girls) had expressive facial expressions. It was also observed that  
80 during the combative interaction paralinguistic cues such as vocal pitch, vocal loudness, tone and speed of group  
81 A3 was more aggressive than the other two groups. During disagreements they displayed fugitive body posture,  
82 rejecting the communication by moving back, looking around and folding their arms and sometimes even banging  
83 on the table. These gestures were not seen in group A1 and A2. It was also noticed that during argumentation  
84 members of group A3 moved closer to each other asserting their views without any gender inhibitions. The  
85 distance reserved for acquaintances vary depending on cultural interpretation of distance (Jain & Choudhary,  
86 2010).

87 Towards the end of the interaction, as one member was concluding verbally, the consensus was communicated  
88 by the other members through their non verbal cues (nodding of heads, facial agreements and relaxed body  
89 posture). Showing sensitivity and concern about time (chronemics) the interaction ended in the allotted time.  
90 Non verbal cues played vital role in shaping the group behavior.

91 **6 IV.**

92 **7 Case Study 2**

93 On the same grounds, three sub groups of Group B also started their interaction on three different topics. Group  
94 B1 and B3 had almost equal no. of boys and girls whereas group B2 had more girls compared to boys. Eagerness  
95 of participation was visible through their open arms and hands at the onset of every interaction. They were  
96 completely engaged in the beginning, evident through their posture, they were leaning forward, pens down, and  
97 hands on the table. All the participants displayed responsiveness and enthusiasm by making eye contact with  
98 others. Members of the group, who had information on the topic but were not able to communicate due lack of  
99 vocabulary used hand gestures more frequently than the others and gave submissive amusing smiles when they  
100 fell short of appropriate language. Auberge and Cathiard (2003) showed that amused smiles carry much Smiles  
101 communicate different meanings and can relate to different underlying meanings. As the interaction progressed,  
102 it was noticed that the non performers tried to mask their lack of subject knowledge by giving deceptive facial

103 expressions but refrained from making eye contact with the other group members and also displayed nervous  
104 hand and leg movements. Ekman and Friesen (1972) noted that expressive parts of the body which are regarded  
105 high in 'sending capacity' are easy to control and are less likely to allow deception leakage, whereas other parts  
106 like hands and legs are less controllable and hence emit more leakage than face.

107 In group B2, which consisted of more girls than boys, it was observed that girls were more assertive in their  
108 paralinguistic and body language compared to the other two groups. They displayed their leadership qualities  
109 through verbal and vocal cues, whereas the girls in the other two groups made use of occulesics (eye and facial  
110 movements) while asking their counterparts to give their views. The display of interpersonal warmth is more  
111 effectively communicated through non verbal channels (Sundaram and Webster, 2000).

112 It was observed that the participants who were seated in the center of the round table got an advantage of  
113 spatial arrangement. They projected more leadership traits as they had more communicative proximity with each  
114 member of the group whereas participants sitting on extreme corners displayed more paralinguistic cues such as  
115 vocal pitch, vocal loudness, tone and speed in order to give their opinion on the topic. Lack of proximity with  
116 the other members was posing a barrier to their effective verbal communication. Their fingers and hand gestures  
117 projected restlessness while waiting to participate in the interaction and used object adaptors (pens and pencils)  
118 to assert their views. It was with the aid of non verbal cues that even the participants sitting at a distance were  
119 able to convince others to their view point shaping consensus for the group.

120 As the interaction of group B3 extended beyond the allotted time, some members gave cues to others for  
121 concluding the interaction by use of artifacts (looking at their watches). They hurriedly gave an amicable  
122 conclusion to their interaction while their gestures displayed fugitive body posture.

123 V.

## 124 8 Conclusion

125 To conclude, non-verbal cues are very important in shaping the group interaction as has been observed in  
126 different groups across different settings and different timings. Nonverbal cues affect and get affected by the  
127 group dynamism. Cues of casual smiling, light laughter, forward body lean, open body posture, and frequent eye  
128 contact are perceived as conveying intimacy and non dominance, the characteristics commonly associated with  
129 friendliness and courtesy ??Sundaram & Webster, 2000). Non verbal signals are equally, perhaps more, important  
130 than verbal signals in persuasive communication. It is estimated that less than ten percent of interpersonal  
131 communication involves words, the remaining being made up of voice tone, sounds and a variety of devices such  
132 as kinetics (movement), haptics (touch), occulesics (eye-contact), proxemics (space) and chronemics (time) as  
well as posture, sound symbols and silence, which either replace or accompany words. <sup>1</sup>



Figure 1: Global



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