

ROLES OF NON VERBAL LANGUAGE IN PEACE BUILDING AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION

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INTRODUCTION

According to Onwuka (1998) communication is the transmission of information from a source to a receiver through a channel. In a simple conversation between two people, for instance, the source of communication is the person who speaks and the receiver is his audience. What is said or transmitted is the message and the medium of transmitting the message, that is, the spoken voices is the channel. To communicate basically means to share ideas, information, opinion, feelings or experiences between people. Communication is sharing or exchange between people, that is, the ability to establish a common ground with another person or group of persons. This common ground must be established between the people involved in any communication process, before communication can be effective.

As a matter of fact, the word communication is derived from communis which is a latin word, meaning common. Barker (2019) describes communication as that body of meaning through symbols (verbal, musical, pictorial, plastic, gestural) which makes up the message itself. Language is social and serves to communicate needs. It is also symbolic and has an organizing function. Thus, communication model consists only four communication elements; the source, channel, message and the receiver.

CONDITIONS NECESSARY FOR SUCCESS IN COMMUNICATION

According to Ngwu (2002) communication theory postulates certain conditions for success in communication. Most basic of these are:

1. The message must be so designed and delivered as to gain the attention of the intended destination.
2. The message must employ signs which refer to experience common to source and destination, so as to get meaning across.
3. The message must arouse personality needs in the destination and suggest some ways to meet those needs.
4. The message must suggest a way to meet those needs which is appropriate to the group situation in which the destination finds himself or herself at the time when he/she moved to make the desired response.

TYPES OF COMMUNICATION

According to Bittner (1998) three types of communication can be distinguished and these are

- a) Intra- personal communication
- b) Inter-personal communication and
- c) Mass communication

A. Intrapersonal communication is a communication takes place within an individual. It is the most basic form of communication and one which enables an individual to make decision. For example, when you commit a crime which makes you liable to arrest and incarceration, the sight of a police officer triggers off within you an intrapersonal communication. The outcome of this communication might be the decision to run away, to resist arrest or to surrender. In this case, your eyes and ears as sense organs receive information which is then communicated to the brain. The brain then interprets the information as dangerous or danger-free resulting in a decision to stay or run away etc.

B. Interpersonal communication is communication between and among individuals whether in a face to face situation or through a medium. Two or more persons, for example, may meet to discuss an issue of common concern. Such a discussion can also take place through the medium or telephone. Interpersonal communication does not take place in

vacuum. For it to be meaningful, it must be preceded by intrapersonal communication both on the part of the communicator and the communicatee. Again, for interpersonal communication to be meaningful and to produce purposeful result(s) those who engage in it must share a common field of experience. According to Bittner (1998) our background, knowledge, beliefs and virtually anything about us make up our field of experience. When we engage in interpersonal communication with another person, our fields of experience begin to overlap. This overlapping of fields experience is called homophily. The more homophily that is present, the more chance for effective and meaningful interpersonal communication.

- C. Mass communication is any communication to a large number of people through a mass medium. The presence of a mass medium makes it possible for a message to be conveyed, simultaneously to a large number of people who live far away from one another. The media of mass communication include the radio, newspapers, magazines, books, television, film etc. Each of these media carries information to people who are distanced from one another and sometimes around the world.

NON VERBAL MESSAGE AND PEACE BUILDING AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION

According to Onwuka (1998) non verbal communication is message without words. It is a silent message. This involves talking without words. They are behaviours that are not language. Non verbal communications are messages which are not spoken.

NON VERBAL CHANNELS

According to Larson (2010) the non verbal channels include: a. facial expression and eye behavior, b. bodily communication, c. proxemics, d. physical appearance, e. artifacts, f. vocal features, g. tactile communication and h. chronemics.

A. FACIAL EXPRESSION AND EYE BEHAVIOUR:

According to Knapp and Hall (2002) the face is the most important source of non verbal information. Facial expression is familiar and readily noticed and subtle nuance in facial expression can greatly alter perceived meaning. Orban (1999) defined eye contact as visual interaction with the eyes of listeners and facial expression as variations of facial muscles that convey perceptual stimuli to listeners. He claims that these two channels can be combined and be used in peace building and conflict resolution. The facial expression and eye contact can be

combined to create emotional and credibility is essential to persuasion in peace building, so persuader can enhance their communication credibility via the non verbal channel. We notice this not only in interpersonal interactions but in the interactions we observe in our media saturated world of advocacy or propaganda.

Knapp and Hall (2002) noted that people often use the face as measure of personality, which frequently determines peace or conflict. They also identified ten general categories of facial expression which includes: disgust, happiness, interest, sadness, bewilderment, contempt, surprise, anger, determination and fear. Any of these could help in peace building and conflict resolution.

Eye behavior also serves an effective function by indicating positive and negative emotions. With our eyes we show our emotions of fear, anger, happiness and sadness and all these help in peace building and conflict resolution.

B. BODILY COMMUNICATION:

Bodily communication has several dimensions, one of which is kinesics or physical movements of the body, such as how a person holds his or her body (tense or relaxed) and whether the person is moving about or gesturing with the shoulder, hand or head. Successful peace builders indicate power by seeming to be physically or perceptually above their audiences. They demonstrate a relaxed but erect posture, not slouching, dynamic gestures, good eye contact and variations in their speaking rate and inflection. Non successful peace builders in contrast, behave more submissively and exhibit lots of body tension, little direct eye contact, closed postures with legs and arms crossed and use few gestures. Knapp and Hall (2002) identified several head movements that convey meaning, including cocking, tilting, nodding and shaking the head as well as thrusting out the jaw. And of course, other bodily movements convey meaning such as clenching of fist, putting hands on lips and standing in an open stance with legs spread apart. These movements can indicate anger, intensity and degree of commitment or dedication, all of which can help or hinder peace building and conflict resolution.

C. PROXEMICS:

This is the use of physical space. Hall (1959) identified several kinds of space in his best-selling book titled: the silent language which have been confirmed by numerous researchers since then. The proxemics are:

1. Public distance: it is often found in public speaking settings in which speakers are 15 to 25 feet or more from their audience.
2. Social or formal distance: This is used in formal but non public situation, such as job interviews or committee meetings. Formal distance ranges from 7 to 12 feet between the source and destination.
3. Personal or informal distance: two colleagues might use personal or informal distance when discussing a matter of mutual concern, such as roommates discussing a problem they share. Here communication is less structured and both relax and interact with one another, bringing up and questioning evidence or asking for clarification.
4. Intimate distance: people use intimate distance when they whisper messages they do not want others to overhear or when they are involved in a conspiratorial. Usually, the message is one that will not be questioned by the receiver. He or she will nod in agreement. The distance ranges from 6 to 18 inches.

D. PHYSICAL APPEARANCE: Physical appearance involves much more than simply good looking and proper attire. Larson (2010) claimed that larger than normal facial features (nose, ears and lips) are generally considered unattractive. Knapp (2002) reports other findings regarding physical appearance. For example, attractive females are more likely to persuade male audiences than unattractive females. Another element in physical appearance is bodily attractiveness which according to Larson (2010) specifically, slenderness is considered attractive in females whereas larger waisted and hipper females are perceived as less attractive. For males, broad shoulders, a muscled body and a tapering upper trunk result in high attractiveness rating. How people dress themselves contribute to physical attractiveness and all have impacts in peace building and conflict resolution.

E. ARTIFACTS: Artifacts are physical objects that are used in construction, display and decoration of oneself or of a setting. We human beings decorate our houses and offices for highly symbolic reasons. Look at your work area or at that of a roommate or friend, you will find that it is arranged not only for work but for other reasons as well as is usually decorated with things that symbolize the owner's sense of self, such as posters, pictures, etc. artifactual communication or the messages others get from the objects we

choose to display, decorate or wear, is also symbolic. Culture teaches us how to react to the artifacts of others and the way they are used. These patterns of response forms ways of peace building and conflict resolution. Clothing is another type of artifact. What people wear sends signal about what they are like and what they are like and what they believe or represent. Large objects like furniture also sends signals. Types of furniture can also symbolize certain characteristics. Nigerian flag, green white green symbolizes peace and agriculture for the nation. Thus, through different artifact, peace is built and promoted. Artifact messages vary among cultures and even among sub-cultures.

F. **VOCAL FEATURES:** each of us has had the experience of answering the phone and not being able to figure out who is calling. We are embarrassed and so we listen carefully and ask questions until something the person says triggers recognition of his or her vocal feature. Then we breathe a sigh of relief, say to ourselves, oh, so it's you. I should have known that you are the person. Orban (1999) notes that a semantic of sound or the meanings we deduce from the sound of a voice or other sounds like hesitation or heavy breathing, can affect peace building and conflict resolution. The factors in each voice include volume or loudness, pitch, rate, vocal quality, clarity of pronunciation, intonation pattern, breathiness etc. they all influence peace building and conflict resolution.

G. **TACTILE COMMUNICATION AND HAPTICS:** some of the more important non verbal message carriers are the ways in which and the degree to which people touch one another or sense things communicated by the sense of touch. This is called tactile communication. The head, shoulders and arms are the most frequently touched parts of the body. Touch conveys special kinds of emotion like empathy, warmth and reassurance. Touching and hugging are frequently used at wakes and weddings. Touch can be extremely important in facilitating certain kind of communication like in peace building and conflict resolution.

Haptics relates to touch but not between persons. Instead, it is what is communicated by the texture or the feeling of objects or other things in the situation, example, temperature, humidity, etc. usually communicates something to the receiver.

H. **CHRONEMICS:** chronemics is the way we use time, such as being prompt, late or long-winded. Indeed, the use and misuse of time can communicate many messages to others.

Different cultures have different chronemics behavior. Keeping to time is very essential and necessary in peace building and conflict resolution.

CONCLUSION

Communication is very essential in peace building, peace promotion and conflict resolution. There are verbal and non verbal forms of communication. To communicate basically means to share ideas, information, opinions, feelings or experiences between people. Communication is interaction process through which persons or groups relate to each other and share information, experiences and culture. Non verbal communications are behaviours that are not language. In non verbal communication, all the signs are used in peace building and conflict resolution since they communicate feelings and we must read meaning out of every behavior, signs and symbols.

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