

IS LANGUAGE THE ONLY WAY WE CAN USE TO COMMUNICATE?

Ashita Gupta¹, Prof. G. Anburaj²

¹School of Computer Science and Engineering Vellore Institute of Technology, Vellore-632 014, Tamil Nadu, India.

²Assistant Professor of English, School of Social Sciences and Languages Vellore Institute of Technology, Vellore-632 014, Tamil Nadu, India.

anburaj.g@vit.ac.in

ABSTRACT

The premise that possibly there are other means of communicating apart from language has generated a lot of interest in different areas. This study looks at non-verbal forms of communication that primarily includes gestures, movements, expressions, symbols and art or media. The research involves administering qualitative surveys and interviews on how non-linguistic assistance is employed in day-to-day activities. Responses have been analyzed to seek out prominent non-verbal interactions and how these can be rated against the use of verbal communication. The results acknowledge the need to explore linguistic variations further as a prevalent unspecified concern in the domain of language.

Keywords: Language, Communication, gestures.

1. INTRODUCTION

Communication refers to the process of exchanging information between individuals. While language which is either spoken or written, is often seen as the primary medium of communication, however it entails much more. Non-verbal communication, such as body language, gestures, facial expressions, and visual symbols, play a vital role in conveying meaning, often complementing or even replacing verbal interactions. Such communication has piqued scholars' interests for nearly their entire existence, concluding into studies ranging from anthropology to psychology and even semiotics. Non-verbal indicators are frequently automatic and innate to a certain extent, hence, overlapping all cultures and languages. Attitudes and feelings are also expressed through gestures and positions. Extending from a hand gesture to the introduction of eye contact, each conveys meaning. Language has been the center of attention in various forms of communication for a long period of time, non-verbal forms have been ignored in many instances. The current study reviews the communicative value of non-verbal cues and whether any of them are capable enough to replace language. Due to the emergence of new communication technologies which consists aids such as illustrations and texts are incorporated with emoji's make us question about the fact that is language still the primary channel of communication, or does it reside in a more complex system? With the arrival of online platforms and communication technologies, people have become more interconnected than ever. Visual communication through emoji's, pictures, videos, and even silence can be expressed effectively. Non-verbal communication becomes effective in cases where the spoken language might be insufficient, such could be explained through situations like when one is trying to communicate feelings, different cultures, or even when one has a disability and is unable to speak. In addition, some non-verbal aspects of communication may be more important than the languages spoken, and this makes such aspects highly important in worldwide communication. This is also the reason why this research will focus on studying these relationships and the non- verbal communication in present generation interaction. The objective is to evaluate the efficiency of non-verbal communication in opposition to the linguistic gestures. By analysis, these prevalent non-linguistic practices such as gestures, facial expressions and visual symbols in real world and virtual environments seeks to investigate whether language can be treated as the sole or the most significant communicative channel or it is just a fraction of a wider system. One of the obstacles encountered is the subjectivity of non-verbal signals as people from different cultures tend to read the same signals differently due diversification. Additionally, the linguistic channels of communication are easier to study and measure in comparing to the non-verbal channels which often lack metrics. One may find it problematic to evaluate how different societies and social contexts interpret the same gaze or hand movement. As a matter of fact, the study conducted digitally can be seen as a shortcoming because it may not depict all the rich aspects of non-verbal communication exhibited in face-to-face interactions. In this study, the researchers aim to look for additional dimensions for communication while paying more attention to non-verbal means of communication which are often neglected. This research aims at giving equal importance to these means of communication especially in the digital world in view of establishing their functionality and universality more so in relation to spoken languages. While it is true that non-verbal and body language may complement or even replace verbal language, it is also apparent that these aspects are subjective due to cultural and situational differences.

2. PROBLEM STATEMENT

This research intends to examine means of communication other than spoken or written language, particularly those that rely on gestures, facial expressions, postures, and use of some images appropriately. For a long time, it could not be denied that language was used in the first instance to convey ideas, feelings as literally, and as much information as possible to the audience. However, more often than not, the message sent out is not what the receiver understands, and therefore several non-verbal cues become essential in augmenting or clarifying the intended message. In other situations, the strong demand for the supremacy of various forms of art, particularly non-verbal art, and calls into questioning the validity of the phrase that asserts the importance of language. This research also aims at whether the absence of language would hamper communication in a social or cultural setting and social engagement. The relationship of such processes with language will be viewed in terms of what is the communication coherence of the spoken language and the gestures and communication signals outside of spoken language. The importance of communication will also be considered in relation to cultural aspects and possible differences in meanings between verbal language and body language in various countries. The scope of this investigation also includes an assumption that non-verbal and verbal elements function interdependently, which imposes limits to the understanding of communication as an act in which language is the only means of conveyance.

Research Gap

While the importance of non-verbal communication within every form of interaction has been receiving more amounts of recognition than before, there are still few comprehensive studies that have attempted to assess the role of non-verbal communication in correlation to verbal communication in different situations. Most of the studies accessible to this day, tend to deal with specific types of non-verbal signs and their effectiveness when used with verbal communication. Nonetheless, certain investigations contain the elaboration of non-verbal communication in specific instances such as in-person interaction or technology-based communication but fail to elaborate on how those cues operate across multiple contexts horizontally, making them less clear. Alongside this, overuse of digital communication mechanisms is changing conventional relations between individuals, however there are not enough findings on how non-verbal communication is defined and is functioning within audiovisual communication compared to traditional face-to-face discourse. There is also a lack of research in consideration that non-verbal cues may have different meanings across cultures which is important with the current state of communication. An appreciation of how cultures assess the non-verbal and verbal forms is important in bridging the gap that is raised by a number of cross-cultural issues.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

Communication transcends language conventions, one sees; it encompasses gestures, facial expressions, and even tone. Kendon (2004) and McNeill (1992) accentuate the potency of gestures in expressing an idea, and Ekman and Friesen (1978) point out facial expressions as universal indicators of emotion. The cultural and context-dependent notions portrayed by the likes of Hall (1966) and Birdwhistell (1970) outline complexity and variability. Argyle (1988) on body language in social interaction and Knapp and Hall (2010) consider the mix of verbal and nonverbal modalities in creating meaning.

Other studies also show that nonverbal communication fills the gaps left by language, with Matsumoto (2001) providing research into the cultural stipulations governing emotional expressions. Likewise, Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1998) explore how nonverbal cues reflect cultural diversity, creating a reparation for cross-cultural communication. Burgoon and Buller (1996) reveal how nonverbal behaviors disclose lies and truths in the communications process. Cummings (2005) stressed the complementary aspect of nonverbal parts in augmenting verbal communication. Collectively these two studies reveal that language, while remaining crucial, is not the sole form of communication; it is a rich, multimodal process well-augmented with nonverbal dimensions.

4. METHODOLOGY

The primary objective of conducting this survey is to understand the importance of both verbal and non-verbal communication among the students.

This survey also assessed whether people consider art or music as an effective medium of communication. Voice modulation, imagery and others depending on the type of audience are examples of communication which raises the questions of how these various forms of communication are perceived by the people.

A set of 50 sheets comprising of 10 questions each, has been prepared and circulated among students, PhD scholars, professors and assistants to gather their opinions on the matter and 50 responses were recorded via Google forms.

5. RESULT ANALYSIS

Communication is a basic necessity in all human relations as it gives room for individuals to exchange ideas, opinions, emotions, etc. People that use the spoken and written language understand and appreciate the use of communication. But this is a narrow view on the rich human experience that all humans enjoy, for communication goes beyond and is much more complex than just words as it involves numerous forms including the use of body language, images, art, and even the absence of anything for that matter, all of which enhances meaning and connection. There have been many modes of communication developed by human beings due to their needs at different times. From the complex signs used by primitive societies, people today, have advanced to several languages that cut across nations. Each one has its own usefulness, and its effectiveness can vary depending on numerous situations. For example, there are instances whereby one needs to put together several complex constructions which may need an oral or written session without necessary bodily relations but all to use a specific code verbal language. This is where one utilizes all the bodily components: the arms, the face, even the torso (facing someone) to express emotions and usually this type of conversations and connections consist more honesty and real bonds. Studies show that most of the communication that occurs between individuals is non-verbal. Besides the verbal and non-verbal cues, visual communication is another important component of sharing and perceiving information. It is inevitable that pictures, drawings, and even imageries worked out in the form of presentations managed to bridge the gaps in language and thus eased communication among people of different cultures. Art and music, of course, also are very expressive and help people express emotions and thoughts that cannot be easily conveyed using words. Diverse techniques reveal not only connections bonding individuals but also the very nature of human interaction and its intricacies, the relevance and the application based context of each method encouraging one step further. Moreover, silence in itself could be seen as an effective way to communicate, with much of its meaning being contextual. There are certain societies that cherish silence, passing for thought or respect, and others that might regard it as troublesome or bored disinterest.

The responses recorded show a strong belief in the effectiveness of digital communication while recognizing its limitations. It indicates a growing adaptation to digital interactions but highlights areas for improvement. The results show that while visuals are generally viewed positively, there's a caution about their potential to replace verbal nuances. This underlines the importance of balance in using visual aids. The data indicates a strong appreciation for gestures in communication, reinforcing the idea that non-verbal cues play a critical role in conveying meaning. The results suggest that while written communication is valued for its clarity, it is observed as less spontaneous and emotionally expressive than spoken language. It also indicates a strong appreciation for the emotional depth that art and music can provide, suggesting a valid alternative to traditional language. The results highlight the importance of facial expressions in communication, showing that while they are generally perceived as helpful, there are nuances to consider. Eye contact is largely viewed as beneficial, but with an understanding that cultural differences may impact its interpretation. Silence appears to be a double-edged sword in communication, valuable yet potentially misleading, suggesting the need for context to interpret silence accurately. The findings affirm the idea that art serves as a meaningful medium for expression, although some acknowledge the complexity of interpretation. Such methods of communication are very useful because they help overcome language barriers, which in turn enables better understanding between people coming from different cultures.

Hence we understand that achieving a balance between verbal and non-verbal communication is essential for effective interaction. Both forms of communication are necessary for creating a more comprehensive and clear exchange of ideas, emotions, and intentions. Verbal communication, through words, allows us to convey precise information, express thoughts, and articulate complex concepts. However, words alone are often insufficient in fully capturing the meaning of what we intend to communicate. This is where non-verbal communication comes in, enriching verbal interactions with added layers of meaning through gestures, facial expressions, tone of voice, and body language.

Earlier referenced communication helps understand that there is more than verbal communication. Being aware of these and other forms of interaction in a social context is critical as it helps improve the quality of relationships created between people. Language and nonverbal cues often complement each other providing emphasis and at times, even negating the central idea of the language. Without even uttering a single vocabulary, volumes could be expressed. Non-verbal communication relates to how individuals orient themselves for interaction. For instance, individuals who fold their arms may be interpreted as being defensive or uncomfortable, whereas, a person with arms uncrossed appears open and confident. Alongside these, gestures say a lot and one does not even have to rely on words most of the time. In fact, in certain instances, verbal exchanges may be disregarded and simple actions shall suffice. Everybody communicates to a certain level, and facial expressions are the most widely used ways of expression. These include smiling, frowning, raising or lowering one's jaw to display a range of emotions that can range from happiness to sudden shock or aggressive confusion. These can be used in face-to-face conversation to support and

provide clarity to the spoken language, but can also exist as their own, very comprehensible and appropriate for multiple contexts, emotion conveying images. The tone and paralanguage dimension of communication suggests that the manner of speaking can be as critical as the content of the speech. It assists in the conveyance of feelings and views thus it becomes a very important factor in all forms of communication which goes beyond the impairment of the words. Art, pictures and motion pictures are also parts of visual communication in the sense that they serve to express ones thoughts or feelings without the use of language. For instance, a picture of a sunset may create a sense of calmness and beauty while an abstract drawing may incite one's thought or feeling. Today, in the era of digital communication, the use of emoji's and GIFs is regarded as the contemporary methods of showing such feelings and responses besides the use of text, and in some cases even replace it all together.

6. DISCUSSION ON THE RESULTS

We know that language is not the sole way of communicating. We understand from the responses that non-verbal communication is an important way of communication. This indicates that gestures are widely perceived as a useful tool for cross-cultural or multilingual interactions. Other than gestures, people found facial expressions also a way of communication. People can communicate both in verbal as well as non-verbal form.

Unexpected Findings

Surprisingly, some participants felt that the non-verbal communication is a threat to verbal communication. One more unforeseen finding was that a number of those polled were of the opinion that art and music could be as good as language in enhancing communication. This denotes that some people consider the expressive forms such as art and music to be just as effective in communicating feelings and thoughts as oral communication, thereby indicating that such expression goes beyond mere utterance and plays a vital role in human interaction.

Scope for further research

No doubt, communication is not limited to words spoken and entails a good field of study. For instance, one area of growth that researchers can explore is multi-modal communication. This concerns research on the use of modes (for instance verbal, non-verbal, visual, and auditory) and how they work together in a particular setting such as an educational or social one. New forms of digital communications such as emojis and GIFs can also provide interesting focal areas to investigate, particularly looking into their efficiency over the conventional use of language. The use of digital communication modes especially social networks also opens up other avenues of research focus especially in the areas of language and non-verbal communication, especially to the youth. Also, it would be interesting to evaluate virtual and augmented realities in the context of improving non-verbal communication and social interaction.

7. CONCLUSION

To conclude, the exploration of whether language is the only means of communication reveals a rich blend of modalities through which individuals convey meaning and connect with one another. While language, in its spoken and written forms play a critical role in human interaction, non-verbal communication, visual symbols, artistic expressions, and alternative forms of communication significantly enhance our ability to share thoughts, emotions, and cultural narratives. Non-verbal methods improve our communication and presents in a more presentable manner.

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