1978

The Development and Implementation of Units of Nonverbal Instruction Which Increase Teachers' Nonverbal Behaviors

Malinda Garcia

University of North Florida

Suggested Citation

https://digitalcommons.unf.edu/etd/30
UNIVERSITY OF NORTH FLORIDA

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

THE DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION
OF UNITS OF NONVERBAL INSTRUCTION WHICH
INCREASE TEACHERS' NONVERBAL BEHAVIORS

by

Malinda Garcia

A thesis submitted to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Master of Education

Committee Members:

Dr. Janice Wood
Dr. Paul Eggen
Dr. James Mittelstadt
ABSTRACT

THE DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF UNITS OF NONVERBAL INSTRUCTION WHICH INCREASE TEACHERS' NONVERBAL BEHAVIORS.

Janice Wood, Ph.D., Advisor

June, 1978: University of North Florida

Malinda Garcia

Nonverbal communication was not considered a science until 1950, after Ray Birdwhistell conducted extensive nonverbal research. Thus, the research on nonverbal communication in the classroom is still in its pioneer stage.

The purpose of this project was to increase kindergarten teachers' awareness of nonverbal communication and its effect upon students. This pilot study emphasized four specific nonverbal behaviors: eye contact, touch, smile and proxemics. Research has found these behaviors to be true indicators of one's psychological state at the given time. It was believed that by increasing a teacher's nonverbal behaviors he could change students' immediate responses toward school.

Three classes were involved in the study. Two of the classes were given handouts for four weeks containing pertinent research, authors opinions and suggestions of nonverbal behavior guidelines to practice for a week. It was expected that the implementation of this project would provide kindergarten students more opportunities to non-
verbally relate with their teachers and to learn nonverbal skills to use when interacting with others. The "control group" was not given any information, but the "smiley face" assessment was administered after each suggested behavior, the same as in the other two classes. The data on pre-tests and post-tests was compared.

Students in Class A responded most favorably to school as compared to the other two classes. Averaging Class A and Class B, pre-tests and post-tests differences, there was an 8% increase in students positive responses toward school. The data suggests proxemics to have had the most influential effect upon the students, whereas touch elicited the least positive responses.

The author concluded that teachers can change students' immediate response toward school by sending nonverbal messages. In-service programs can increase teacher's awareness of nonverbal communication and provide them with suggested ways to include body language into their rapport with others.

Further study is needed to find if student achievement can be improved through nonverbal communication. In-service programs would be helpful to provide classroom teachers with suggestions of nonverbal behaviors that are effective communication tools.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the following people for their advice and support through this project.

Judy Sheklin, Susan Joseph and Nanci Faulkner, teachers at Mayport Elementary School, for implementing "Nonverbal Now" in their classes;

Nanci Robertson for her encouragement and use of her typewriter;

Dr. Janice Wood and Dr. Jim Mittlestadt who helped me find answers to my questions;

Dr. Elinor Scheirer, for her patience and suggestions.

Malinda Garcia
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter..................................................................Page

I. INTRODUCTION...............................................1
   Statement of the problem........................................4
   Definition of Terms.............................................5
   Delimitation of Problem........................................6

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE.................................6

III. DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION.............20
   Developmental Phase..........................................20
   Implementation Phase........................................21

IV. DESIGN......................................................23
   Analysis of Data...............................................37

V. RESULTS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS 39
   Appendix A.....................................................44
   Bibliography..................................................45
We have learned to forge through mountains, cross rivers, control energy, and record mysterious communications from space. However, all too often we find it next to impossible to understand or to be understood by the person sitting next to us.

One aspect of human behavior is communication. This behavior is generally broken down into two categories, verbal and nonverbal communication. While a great deal of research has been conducted in the area of verbal communication, research in many areas of nonverbal communication has been virtually untapped.

The importance of communication in human social interaction is quite obvious. Verbal behavior is critical to communicating ideas and accomplishing tasks. In addition, nonverbal behavior is at least as significant in communication as verbal behavior. Every normal human being, regardless of the culture that he lives in, responds to and operates within a system of nonverbal communication patterns characteristic of his society. The well known anthropological linguist, Edward Sapir (1927) said, "We respond to gestures with an extreme alertness and one might almost say, in accord with an elaborate and secret code that is written nowhere, known by none, and understood by all." (Key, 1975, p. 4)
The functions of communication in nonverbal behavior are probably much the same as they are in verbal behavior. May (1972) has identified three functions. One function is informative in that information is supplied; the nonverbal behavior is thus used as a vehicle for ideas. In nonverbal events, this is illustrated by sounds and gestures which convey information, such as counting gestures, or a nod of the head to indicate "yes."

A second function of nonverbal communication is directive; here communication affects the behavior in the respondent. A look can quiet a child. A hand gesture can get a door closed. A yawn can direct the speaker to look at his watch and end his speech.

A third function of nonverbal communication is expressive. Posture, facial expression, eye contact and tone of voice can be used to express one's emotional state in any given situation. While these three functions can be identified and described, it is unlikely that any behavioral event has a single function; instead it is seen as containing overlapping functions (Jakobson, 1970).

Development of Nonverbal Behavior in Children

During the infant stage of life one totally depends upon nonverbal communication to relate with the world. Before a child learns how to verbalize his needs, he becomes proficient
at sending nonverbal messages to those around him. The child depends upon nonverbal communication until approximately the age of two. Then he begins to use language to communicate his needs. (Wood, 1976) Unfortunately, the nonverbal which was his first means of communication is often ignored at this stage, so he depends solely on his words for his total rapport with others. It is interesting to note that seven percent of a total message is verbal, a fact which makes it difficult for anyone to rely solely on verbal behavior for all of his communication.

Children aged four to seven years frequently employ nonverbal gestures to communicate the following: "Go away." "Come here." "I do not know." "Goodbye." "Hello." (Michael & Willis, 1968) They learn body language by imitating people that are around them and from people they see on television. Children use their posture, facial expressions, the way they walk, and the space around them to communicate how they feel about others and themselves. (Hall & Hall, 1971) The socioeconomic and literacy level of the child also influences their use of nonverbal language. (Galloway, 1963)

Another element in our culture which affects the kinds of nonverbal behaviors a child chooses to use is the school. This study is concerned with the significance of the teacher's nonverbal behavior as it might affect the student's perception of school. Therefore, the teacher's nonverbal behavior can be seen as critical to the development of the child's nonverbal behaviors.
The nonverbal behaviors examined in the study were touch, smile, eye contact, and proxemics or one's use of space. These specific behaviors have also been found to communicate love and positive evaluation of the recipient. (Mehrabian, 1972) These behaviors were chosen because the literature indicates that they are easily observed. It is also noted that these behaviors are believed by the observer to be authentic when they are observed.

The nonverbal behaviors of Kindergarteners are of particular interest since they are experiencing their first encounter with school. Also they are in the process of establishing communication patterns with teachers and classmates.

The teacher plays a significant role in the school. Teachers influence the child so much that if a child does not like his teacher he will also say that he does not like school. It could even be hypothesized that a teacher could change a student's immediate response toward school through exhibiting positive, nonverbal behaviors. This study will attempt to examine the teacher's impact upon students through nonverbal communication.

Statement of the Problem

The problem examined in the study was the effect of teacher nonverbal behavior upon students' perception of school.
The specific question addressed by this study was: Does a teacher's nonverbal behavior affect the Kindergarten child's perception of school? The following is a list of the behaviors that were studied:

1) Eye contact
2) Touch
3) Smile
4) Proxemcics

These behaviors are expressive behaviors and are thought to be interpreted by students as signs of the psychological state of the teacher. (Galloway, 1970) The significance of these behaviors will be discussed in the review of the literature in Chapter II.

In summary, before a child learns how to use language to communicate he uses the language of his body. He learns body language by imitating others in his environment.

This study is concerned with the significance of a teacher's nonverbal behavior on a Kindergartener's immediate response toward school. Specifically, eye contact, touch, smile, and proxemics were selected for study.

Definitions

For the purpose of this project the following definitions will be used:

1. communication- a social act involving two or more persons in a situation.
2. Cross-referencing systems—observable behaviors that are combined with one another communicate one's needs.


4. Modalities—the discrete units of communication in both verbal and nonverbal language.

5. Nonverbal Communication—a social act in which messages are sent and received, independent of the written or spoken word.

6. Proxemics—the study of man's personal space zones developed by Edward Hall.

**Delimited Problem**

This study was seen as a pilot study conducted in Kindergarten classrooms in an urban Southern elementary school. The Kindergarten levels were examined because of availability of classes and, the opinion that a child's first year in school must be a positive experience and, as noted earlier, that a teacher's nonverbal behavior can be most influential in this regard.

**Review of Literature**

The previous chapter described two communication systems that humans utilize daily, the verbal and the nonverbal. This chapter will discuss the significance of the nonverbal means of communication. It will also discuss studies that
have been conducted in this area.

Webster defines communication as a process by which meanings are exchanged between individuals through a common system of symbols. The process of exchanging new ideas and information is a small part of communication; the greatest part of communicating deals with the social interaction of feelings and attitudes, and the relationships of those persons involved. Words are an excellent means of relating new information, but they cannot communicate everything we wish to share. In social interaction many messages are nonverbally communicated, replacing words and, in fact, communicating what words cannot even communicate themselves.

In our society we utilize forty five phonemes, which include nine vowels, three semivowels, twenty one consonants, four stresses, four pitches, and four junctures. Comparably, the human face alone is capable of making some 250,000 different expressions. (Birdwhistell, 1970, p.8)

Birdwhistell's (1970) observation that the verbal communication system is not as powerful as the communication of the face alone reminds us that we need to take a closer look at the language of the body.

Through the various modalities of communication one finds out who he is in relation to others and what his expectancies and responsibilities are as a human being.
Combining these modalities, Mehrabian (1968), found that the total message was 58 percent facial (nonverbal), 35 percent vocal and only 7 percent verbal.

Non-Verbal Communication

We have studied verbal communication a great deal, but lack of research in the area of nonverbal communication is derived from a genuine difficulty in discovering how to capture the expressions of the body for observation and study. The task was considered so difficult that until recently, with the exception of Birdwhistell (1961), no one had devoted his professional career to the study of the human body in action (Spiegel & Machotka, 1974). Before this time scientists did not attempt to interpret man's kenesic (or nonverbal) behavior (Scheflen, 1973).

In the past some of the problems researchers have had in the study of nonverbal behavior included: 1) The study of nonverbal implied a separation of body communication from verbal modes of communication. The researchers' approach was to study the gesture and movement of a person as a supplement to verbal content, but Birdwhistell (1962), found that words, tone of voice, and gesture occur in combination with each other which he calls "cross-referencing systems". 2) The lack of agreement on the stimuli from the actor's body that are responsible for the observer's perceptions of movement of expression. Investigators have
found that limiting the stimuli presented to the observer and being as specific as possible about the stimuli presented would help the observer.

There are three major classes of nonverbal communication studies that have been carried out. One group includes studies that focus on what an actor expresses and how he expresses it. Another group of studies includes those that inquire into what expressive meanings the observer perceives and those behaviors to which perceptions are correlated. The third group includes studies that treat the actor and perceiver as parts of a social group or cultural system. (Spiegel & Machotka, 1974)

Barbara Woods (1972) found that children use their nonverbal behaviors to communicate as young as six months and continue to three years of age. Table 1 describes a child's developmental stages of nonverbal communication. Table 1 breaks down the stages of development into chronological years with explanations of each of the zones.

---

Table I

Children's Acquisition of Territorial Zones: a Tentative Proposal

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AGE</th>
<th>ZONE</th>
<th>EXPLANATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Birth - 3 years | Intimate  
  far phase (0"-16") | Children learn the closeness of communication with their mothers and caretakers. They engage in touch, desire hugging, and profit from close communication. |
|           | Personal  
  far phase (2½'-4')  | Children become full-fledged communicators. Much of their activity is self-centered and egocentric and they have not acquired an understanding of socialization. |
| 3-7       |                       |                                                                           |


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AGE</th>
<th>ZONE</th>
<th>EXPLANATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Social (4'-7')</td>
<td>When children become more social as opposed to egocentric, they learn how to behave and form strong social relationships.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>far phase (7'-12')</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>(12'-25')</td>
<td>Older children acquire public type of communication, particularly in the school setting which allows one to act in a public situation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the child's first years of development they engage in touch and desire hugging and close communication. The Mother plays the most important role during this stage and investigators have found that this is the most vital time to touch a person.

Children become full-fledge communicators between the ages of three to seven. The child is thought to be self-centered and egocentric because they have not acquired an understanding of socialization.
After the age of seven, children are capable of forming strong social relationships. They have acquired social skills and their personalities are more social as opposed to being self-centered. The child also has acquired public skills of communication. (Wood, 1976)

Therefore, it is apparent from this Table that proxemic's is an important area when we study children's nonverbal behavior. Hence, proxemic studies will be discussed in the next section.

**Nonverbal Behaviors**

The nonverbal behaviors examined in this study were eye contact, touch, smile, and proxemics. Literature describes these behaviors as being easily observable, and perceived as authentic by the observer.

In some way that we do not understand completely yet, the nonverbal act seems to be more important in interpersonal relationships than language itself. (William Austin, 1972) Research has found that the underlying forces that cause interaction between people are attitudes and emotions. These messages are conveyed through the language of the body. Therefore, if there is conflict in the body with the verbal message the body message usually prevails. (Curwin, 1975)

Research also tells us that much of a teacher's attitude is communicated through nonverbal behavior. In 1968, Mehrabian found that a subject with a positive attitude
tended to exhibit touching if in close contact, maintain more eye contact, lean toward the addressee and face him directly. However, if the subject was in a state of tension this trend was reversed. The subject did not touch, maintain eye contact or face the addressee directly.

Since teachers do communicate without speaking, four behaviors which exhibit positive attitudes were selected for study in this project. Each of these will be discussed in the sections which follow.

**Smile**

There are undoubtedly different forms of smiling. The two extreme forms are the broad-smile and the wide-mouth smile. Smiling has been found to represent non-hostility, social attachment or friendliness. (Grant, 1969; Brannigan & Humphries, 1969)

Mehrabian (1968) found that smiling is social in the sense that it occurs in the company of others, and is considered to be a person's typical behavioral response to other people and social situations when those situations are positive. When people are confronted with something agreeable, tender, or lovable, we may smile. Since the smile has been reported as one of the first gestures a baby makes, it is of significant value for study.
Smiling as an indication of positive communication is common in the American culture, but Japanese scholars report opposite meanings of the smile in Japanese culture. Smiling is not to express good humor or a friendly attitude, but is, instead associated with social discomfort, or even tragedy or sorrow. (Key, 1975)

Leach and Jones (1972) in studies on nursery school children found that children who smile a great deal have mothers who smile often, and are likely to smile at the teacher when they arrive at school and throughout the day. Therefore, a smiling teacher may be able to change the non-smiling behavior of his students.

In summary, the smile is generally believed to be social in nature and is used to convey positive feelings to the recipient. One final point of interest, females have been found to smile more throughout their lifetime than males. (Key, 1975)

Touch

Touch is defined by Webster as "the state of being in contact or communication." When this occurs, two people have eliminated the space between them. In the Western world check patting, chin chucking, and shoulder contact are tactile behaviors which indicate affection and friendliness. These tactile behaviors are performed by
adults to children but are not usually demonstrated to adults by other adults. (Montagu, 1971)

Tactile behavior is not possible beyond arm's reach. Mehrabian (1971) included this behavior in his theory of affiliation. He found that in social situations touching is a person's typical response to other persons, if they feel friendly and sincere toward the person.

Touch is thought to be one of man's most necessary means of communication. Harlow (1971) found that monkeys seek tactile stimulation even at the expense of nourishment. In his study, monkeys clung to cloth "mothers" who did not provide nourishment over wire ones which did supply nourishment. Therefore, Harlow's study found that a monkey prefers touching to eating; the tactile behavior of monkeys is therefore thought to be a necessary need which is related to communication and which seems to be more important than nourishment.

Tactile behavior can thus be seen as important in communication. Research tells us that tactile behavior is not possible beyond arm's reach and it is a person's typical response to other people when positive interaction is occurring. Harlow's study found monkeys to seek tactile stimulation over nourishment, therefore suggesting that touch, a necessary means of communicating may be critical to one's survival.
Eye Contact

Eye communication has been given special consideration because of the general belief that the eyes are the "gateway to the mind." Unlike the mouth, which is only a sender of communication, the eyes can both send and receive. Eye contact occurs when one person's eyes are locked in with another's; those two people—and only those two people—share that communication.

There is some indication that response to eye contact may be innate (Argyle, 1969), but Birdwhistell (1968) contradicts this opinion by saying that eye behavior is also learned. After one has spoken, eye contact tends to occur when one is seeking feedback on how the utterance was received. Also, we usually look more while listening than when speaking. (Maccoby, Breitrose & Rose, 1974)

Empirical research has not been extensive in the area of eye contact. However, some initial studies have been conducted with classroom behavior. Studies have found that eye contact occurs when the communication channel is open. If a student does not know an answer, he may avoid communicating by acting very busy, by taking notes, by rearranging papers or books or, by dropping a pencil, etc. If he does know the answer, he will look into the instructor's eyes, thus opening the communication channel. (Knapp, 1972)
The teacher can personalize his contact with every student in his class through eye contact. Studies have demonstrated that the person speaking breaks off eye contact more frequently than the listener. (Nielsen, 1962) Therefore, a teacher can make innumerable personal contact with each student while speaking to the class.

Eye contact is generally perceived by the student as positive feedback and as a sign that the teacher is personally interested in him. Studies have also found that a look can quiet and control a child. (Key, 1975)

Meachan and Nicolai (1976) gave four and five year olds conflicting cues to assess the importance of pointing, verbalizing, and looking from adults in order to gain the attention of young children. They found that children were more likely to attend to the pointing cues rather than the looking cues. It was therefore concluded that eye behavior is learned and children would benefit from nonverbal communication education in the preschools.

In summary, the teacher is a communicator. Part of the communicating apparatus is his eyes, which can provide a constant channel of communication. The eyes can communicate awareness, personalized attention and genuine interest. Thus, eye contact is a vital nonverbal function of the communicative teacher.
Proxemics

Proxemic's as been defined as the study of man's personal space zones and the way he uses them. The zones are divided into four categories. These four zones have been described as the zones of territory that constitute the space in which people communicate. The first is termed the "Intimate Zone", the two people who are communicating with one another are six to eighteen inches from one another. The second zone is the "Personal Zone", one and one half to four feet from one another. "Social Zone" identifies a third zone, which is approximately four to twelve feet apart. The fourth zone is the "Public", twelve to twenty five feet between the two communicators. (Hall, E., 1971, pp. 133-40)

Authors of proxemic studies have argued that social behavior cannot be generalized to all segments of our people, but they have agreed that distance and space are used by all people to control relationships with others. (Key, 1975, p.85)

Physical proximity is one of the most important elements in classroom discipline and control. A teacher who avoids speaking to, standing near or touching a student is believed to be communicating loudly and clearly that he does not consider the student to be of much worth.

Robert Koch (1975) conducted a study with teachers and their students. He asked one teacher to deliberately try moving closer to her students. She reported that it was
difficult to do at first. She felt conspicuous, ill at ease and so uncomfortable that she would have given up on further attempts had she not received immediate, positive feedback from her students. They sent her messages that they liked her close proximity and they felt warmth and interest from her. (Key, 1975, 45) Therefore, Dr. Koch's study found that close proxemics are interpreted by the receiver as warm and sincere.

Mehrabian conducted comprehensive studies of proxemics (1965, 1967, 1968, 1969) and found that the amount of distance between the communicator -- addressee is correlated with the degree of negative attitude inferred by or communicated to the addressee. Therefore, a rule of behavior seems to be that if one feels positive toward the addressee, he will stand closer to him. (Mehrabian, 1976, pp. 47-55)

In summary, man uses four space zones of territory to communicate with others. These zones are: Intimate Zone (6" to 18''); Personal Zone (1½' to 4'); Social Zone (4' to 12'); and the Public Zone (12' to 25') Classroom discipline and control are affected by the teacher's use of proxemics. Research has found that teachers who stand near to and touch their students are interpreted by the students as being warm and genuinely interested in them.
CHAPTER III

DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION

Developmental Phase

When teachers graduate from college they are generally expected to possess all the necessary skills for communicating with their students. Throughout the teachers' course work they are required to take English courses. They are taught how to speak properly and how to communicate verbally basic needs and desires. However, such verbal communication comprises only 7% of the total message that is conveyed. The other 93% of communication is nonverbally transmitted, unfortunately, teachers are never taught how to communicate nonverbally with their students.

The need for a nonverbal curriculum or inservice program was determined on the basis of personal observation of teachers interacting with students', students' needs, and research findings. Research has shown that nonverbal communication has been used to motivate achievement, improve self concept and to encourage intrinsic motivation. Therefore, teachers who understand nonverbal communication will be better equipped to deal effectively with others, and with themselves.
It was assumed that with a desire to change one's own body language, a person could become more experienced at transmitting positive feelings. Therefore, this study attempted to make kindergarten teachers aware of their nonverbal behavior so that they could communicate on a more genuine, positive level with their students.

After reviewing the literature on nonverbal communication, the author distilled relevant ideas that could be given to teachers in a 'cook book' format to stimulate their awareness about four specific nonverbal behaviors: touch, smile, eye contact and proxemics or man's use of personal space. These behaviors were selected because they have been found to communicate authentic feelings and they are considered by students to be true indicators of the psychological state of the teacher.

The teachers involved in this pilot study were given pertinent research, written materials describing various nonverbal behaviors, along with suggestions to use in changing their nonverbal behavior. The guidelines presented to the teachers to use in modifying their nonverbal behavior were supported by research.

**Implementation Phase**

This pilot study was conducted in three kindergartens at a southern urban elementary school. The kindergarten classes were selected because these students are experiencing their first encounter with school. The kindergarten teachers
need not only to communicate verbally but also to communicate nonverbally with their students because the quality of their first school experiences will have a lasting influence on their attitudes toward school in the next twelve years. The kindergarten students are in the process of establishing both verbal and nonverbal communication patterns with teachers and classmates that will likely last for many years.

Each of the three classes involved in the study enrolled an average of thirty-two five year olds. (Enrollment fluctuated due to the mobility of the military families serviced by the school) Two of the teachers were given guidelines and pertinent research explaining the behavior and suggestions for using it. One of the classes served as a kind of "control" or "experimental group." This teacher was given no such material.

An informal assessment was given to all three classes two weeks before the first week of the study, and two weeks after the study. The "smiley face" assessment was administered to all of the children. Papers with incomplete faces were given to all the children and were asked the question, "Do you like school?" was asked. If the children did like school, they were directed to make a smile on the incomplete face; if they did not like school, they were asked to draw a frown. The "smiley face" test was administered every Friday after the two teachers had implemented a suggested nonverbal behavior for five days during "Activity time." Activity
time lasts for one hour and a half. During Activity time
circle time, story time, Social Studies, and center's are
implemented in these classrooms. The format of the handouts
given to teachers directing their behavior during Activity
time will be discussed in the next chapter.

TEACHER MATERIALS: NONVERBAL NOW

The teacher materials which follow entitled "Nonverbal
Now," were given in installments over a four week period
of time. Each section is labeled according to the week
in which the material was distributed.

WEEK 1

You may be asking yourself; why should kindergarten
teachers be interested in nonverbal communication? First,
if we merely listen to the words of children, we are only
partly understanding their messages as children often do
an incomplete job of expressing themselves. Secondly, the
students are experiencing their first encounter with school,
and they are in the process of establishing communication
patterns with teachers and classmates which are likely to
endure. Therefore, this study is intended to make you more
aware of the body language of your students as well as your
own body language.

The nonverbal behaviors will be discussed one at a time.
You will focus on each behavior for a one week period. You
will be given suggestions for demonstrating the specific behavior with your students. At the end of each week, your students will share their feelings about school by completing a face with either a smile or a frown to represent their attitude toward school at that time. It is assumed that changes in teacher behavior may affect the student's immediate response toward school.

**Eye Contact**

Do you nonverbally communicate with your students? During the next month I am asking you to participate in my study of teacher nonverbal behavior. Each week you will be asked to concentrate on one specific behavior during Activity Time. These behaviors include: Eye Contact, Smile, Touch, and Proxemics.

This week I would like for you to make a conscious effort to have eye contact with each of your students during the activity period. While reading a story, conducting a large or small group activity, or any other kind of activity, do not just see--LOOK.

Here suggestions are given for personalizing your classroom instruction, making your students aware of your interest in them and of your presence and for disciplinary action through use of eye contact. You will find that you must make numerous adjustments to your individual students.
Therefore, I cannot give you a prescription to follow in all cases. You should behave in your most natural way.

Eye contact is no more likely to work effectively with all the students in your classroom than are questions, media, or any other alternatives available. It is one alternative that each teacher must test to determine its effectiveness in the classroom.

In a large classroom with too many students, eye contact may be used to psychologically reduce the distance. Communication channels can be opened by the mere look of an eye. A look can even quiet and control a child. Let's take a look at what research has found about this important nonverbal behavior.

There are some suggestions that response to eye contact may be innate. Man is the only mammal which has habitual eye contact with his mother during nursing. Thus, you may be satisfying one of the basic needs of your students by indicating your awareness of their existence through eye contact. The students may also be satisfying your basic needs by looking back.

Studies have been conducted in classrooms to determine if eye behavior can be taught. For instance, in one study, after several weeks of the teacher concentrating on his eye behavior, the children responded more to his eye behavior. Therefore, it can be assumed that eye behavior can be taught. Girls bat their eyelashes in our
society more than boys. In Indian religious cults such as the Fakir's, they can learn to look at the sun without blinking or face a dust storm without closing their lids.

In summary, students can soon learn the meaning of teacher expressions. Even though you may have a large class you can open communication channels by using eye contact. Glances and eye contact express support, disapproval, or neutrality. You can also teach your students how to nonverbally communicate with their eyes.

Eye Contact and Group Instruction

Group instruction can become individualized through personalized eye contact. Individualized contact does not constitute "Individualized instruction." It can personalize your classroom. The public system obliges you to teach thirty plus students. Therefore, it is difficult to work with each individual student. The personalized eye contact described earlier can prove useful in reaching individuals. In essence, you need only make a conscious effort to have frequent eye contact with each student in order to individualize group instruction.

A teacher can focus on a student and capture his attention. Also, during periods of individual or small group instruction in which you do not play an active role, you may want your students to be aware of your presence and availability. This can be successfully accomplished
by scanning the faces of those in your group and of the children throughout the classroom. Consequently, you can "lock in" on those who need your attention.

Discipline

Instead of giving the child the "eagle eye" it may be equally as effective to stare with a neutral expression. For example, a stare communicates, "I see you—I am continuing to look at you for a special reason—because I know what you are doing." You can do all of this without interrupting the classroom discourse. After you feel that you have communicated your nonverbal message to the child, you may go ahead with your lesson. It is wise to "lock in" again with the student you have just nonverbally reprimanded as if to say, "I still see you, and I am just checking up on you to see how you are doing. Furthermore, I am not going to forget you."

In summary, the teacher is a communicator. Eye contact can be used to show awareness and personalized attention. However, as you try to use your eyes in the above mentioned ways, it is cardinal to behave in your most natural way. Teacher—student eye contact can help in classroom management, individual motivation, and disciplinary problems if used in the proper way. Remember, eye contact cannot be maintained if the psychological distance is too great.
Guidelines for the Week

1. Try to personalize classroom instruction through individualized eye contact.
2. Nonverbally remain in control using eye contact to make your students aware of your presence and availability.

WEEK 2

"Tactile communication is not possible beyond arm's reach." Edward Hall, 1971

In some way that we do not understand completely yet, nonverbal behavior seems to be more important in interpersonal relationships than language itself. The study of nonverbal cues is new, yet is as old as communication itself. It really is not new to teachers. You use it all the time, but you need to become aware of the messages that you are sending to your students.

Why should teachers be interested in nonverbal communication? First, if we merely listen to the words of children, we are only partly understanding them. Secondly, children are not as verbal as adults and often times do a poor job of expressing themselves verbally. Therefore, they need to be reinforced
in their nonverbal behavior in order to relate to those in their environment.

Last week we examined eye contact and its role in classroom management, discipline, and personalization. This week we will concentrate on the importance of touch between teacher and student.

**Touch**

Teachers use nonverbal communication daily with their children consciously or unconsciously. If teachers would get as close to students as they possibly can, even close enough to touch, new communication channels could be opened.

In an unpublished study, a teacher was asked not to answer or respond when a child called out to her. The study concluded that avoidance behavior by a teacher caused changes to occur in a child's verbal and nonverbal behavior. Voice pitch became higher, the facial expression showed squared upper lips and oblique eyebrows with the children eventually touching the teacher to gain recognition.

Research states that touching in a social situation is a person's typical response to other persons if they feel friendly and sincere to that person. From this it can be assumed that teachers have such an attitude toward children or they would probably be in another occupation.

**Children and tactile behavior**

Tactile behavior is thought to be one of the most necessary means of communication. Cheek patting and chin
chucking are tactile behaviors which indicate affection and friendliness in the Western world. Studies have found that children tend to be more open to touch and need to touch more than adults. Consequently, when touching is desired by the student, and when it is a natural act with the teacher, it can be a powerful nonverbal communication channel. We also remember that students do what they do because of what teachers do.

Classroom Suggestions

Poor communication is a result of not being understood and in not understanding the responses of others. In schools the teacher's communication makes the difference in the child's ability to communicate. We need to understand that communication does not consist of the transmission of words and nonverbal behaviors, but the communication of meaning between people.

To show enthusiastic support and thus communicate positive meanings, one might pat someone on the back, nod to show pleasure or enjoyment or display any act that shows pleasure or enjoyment or display any act that shows obvious approval. A teacher that tries these nonverbal behaviors is encouraging communication with his students.

In summary, once two people touch one another they have eliminated the space between them. Touching is thought to
be a person's typical response to other persons, if he feels friendly and sincere to the person. Tactile behaviors are often evident when adults relate to children. Children also need to be touched. This week, therefore try to touch each child in your classroom during activity time.

**Guidelines for the week**

1. Open communication channels through touch.
2. Gain student recognition or attention by touching.
3. Children need to be touched--so try it.
4. Show support of your students through touch.
5. You are encouraging communication with your students when you use nonverbal behaviors such as touching.

**WEEK 3**

Poor communication results in not being understood and in not understanding the responses of others. In school, the teacher's communication can make the difference in whether or not a student understands what is going on.

During the past weeks I have asked you to make a conscious effort to touch and have eye contact with each of your students. This week I am asking you to smile at your students some time during activity time. This is another nonverbal behavior you can use to individually personalize your classroom.
Webster defines smile as a change of facial expression involving a brightening of the eyes and an upward curving of the corners of the mouth that may express amusement, pleasure, affection, or agreement. This is the definition of smiling that I would like for you to use this week. All of these emotions can only enhance communication between teacher-student if properly expressed.

**Current research**

When a situation is positive, smiling is considered to be a person's typical response to other people. It has been found to represent non-hostility, social attachment and friendliness.

A study was performed with nursery school children. They found that children who smile a great deal have mothers who smile often; these children are also likely to smile at the teacher when they arrive at school and throughout the day. Perhaps a smiling teacher may, like the mother's, be able to promote the smiling behavior of students in turn, change negative feelings a child may have toward the teacher and possibly school in general.

**Smile in the classroom**

It is obvious that the quality of communication influences the quality of the interaction between two people. This week try to improve the quality and quantity of your
smiling behavior. Be conscious of the messages you are sending and receiving.

There is nothing necessarily fakey or wrong about one deliberately smiling at a student. After a while it becomes a habit.

Guidelines for the week

1. Smile at each child during circle time or when they first enter the class. It is a great way to start the day.
2. Smile at everyone during activity time.
3. When you correct a student's behavior, reassure the student that you still value him as a person by ending the interaction with a smile.
4. When you re-enter the room, instead of asking, "What's going on?" assume the positive and try a smile—it is more effective.

Research has found that teacher's use nonverbal tactics to influence the behavior of their students. These expressive behaviors are illustrated by eye contact, touch, smile, facial expressions and physical proximity. These behaviors are thought to have lasting effect on the students because they are taken by the students as signs of the psychological state of the teacher.
Proxemics: Space Zones

This week we will examine the nonverbal behavior called proxemics, or the use of man's personal space zones. The zones are divided into four categories. These zones have been described as the zones of territory that constitute the space in which people communicate to others how they feel about them and themselves. The first is termed the "intimate zone", six to eighteen inches between two people who are communicating with one another. The second zone is the "personal zone", one and one half to four feet between two people. "Social zone" identifies a third zone, which is approximately four feet to twelve feet between the people communicating. The fourth zone is the "public zone", twelve to twenty five feet and beyond between the two communicators.

Research suggests that five year olds have not acquired full understanding of socialization and are prone to respond more to the "personal zone" than the other zones.

Personal Bubble

Each of us maintains a protective bubble, an area around us that determines exactly how close others may come before incurring a rebuke. For example, a girl who is shy and new to school probably requires a larger space than that of an extroverted and popular student.
The evidence so far

In general, we stay away from those we dislike or fear. A teacher who avoids speaking to, standing near or touching a student is communicating loudly and clearly that he does not consider the student to be of much worth. Thus, the closer a teacher gets to a student, the more the student will feel that the teacher likes him.

A recent study was conducted with teachers and the distance they have between themselves and their students. The teachers were asked to deliberately try moving closer to their students. One teacher reported that it was hard to do at first. She felt conspicuous and ill at ease and so uncomfortable that she would have given up on further attempts had she not received immediate, positive feedback from her students. They sent her messages that they liked the warmth and interest that her close proximity engendered. Thus, it is possible that proximity can be interpreted as a positive feeling toward your students.

Classroom discipline

Physical proximity is one of the most important elements in classroom discipline and control. When discipline is carried out effectively, it is almost invisible, displayed naturally from moment to moment and in a low key. Therefore, you can gain better control of your classroom by simply and quietly moving closer to your students.
Guidelines for the week

1. Since five year olds respond most to people in the "personal zone" (one and one half feet to four feet), try to sit or stand within this distance relative to each student in your class during Activity time.

2. Instead of verbally reprimanding a behavior problem, move close enough to be seen but not heard. You may be surprised at what happens.

3. Show your students that you do respect them and care about them by standing or sitting close to them.

Closing thoughts

In summary, the first step in applying the principles of nonverbal communication is awareness. After reading this you will begin to notice nonverbal signals tomorrow. As with any skill, you will rapidly improve in your awareness of messages that are sent and received; refinement of nonverbal behaviors will take more time.
Analysis of Materials

The "smiley face" data was non-ordinal and it was believed that a formal statistical analysis was not appropriate. Therefore, the pre-assessment data, interim weekly data collected after the teaching focus on each of the specified nonverbal behaviors, and post assessment data are presented as percentages in the following chart.

Following is a chart that describes the four specific nonverbal behaviors and their respective positive effects on the students involved. This data is not based solely on a constant enrollment figure of thirty two students per class due to absenteeism, and the high attrition rate evidenced with a military population.

Percentages of Students Responding Positively to School on Different Testing Dates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classes</th>
<th>Pre-Assessment</th>
<th>Post Eye Contact</th>
<th>Post Touch</th>
<th>Post Smile</th>
<th>Post Proxemics</th>
<th>Post Assessment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class A</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>97%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class B</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both Classes (A&amp;B)</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class C **</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** (not included in study)
The results of this pilot study suggests that touch elicited fewer positive responses toward school than the other three nonverbal behaviors stressed in this study. In Class A 86% of the students responded favorably toward school, whereas Class B had only 66% of the students indicating positive feelings. It is interesting for the reader to note that Class C, which was not formally involved in the study, had 38% of the population eliciting positive responses.

The data appears to indicate proxemics had the most positive effect on the students immediate responses toward school. Class A had 96% of the population responding positively, while only 74% of Class B felt positive toward school. In Class C, where the teacher was not specifically emphasizing nonverbal behaviors, 76% of the students liked school, which can be contrasted to the 74% in Class B.

The percentages of positive responses toward school following the week in which smiling behavior was emphasized tend to suggest that smile was the third most important nonverbal behavior emphasized in this study. Class A responded positively toward school with 93%; only 69% of the students in Class B felt positive at that time. It is interesting to note that Class C had 87% of the students liking school without the teacher exhibiting different kinds
of nonverbal behaviors.

The percentage data indicate that emphasis on eye contact had little to do with the students positive attitudes about school. Class A responded with 83%, whereas Class B had 81% of the students indicating positive attitudes. Class C had 84% of the population responding positively.

Comparing the pre-assessment and post-assessment data there was an 8% increase in students' immediate positive responses toward school. This data tends to suggest a trend toward an increase in students positive responses toward school following emphasis on increasing the positive nonverbal behavior of teachers.

In summary, proxemics was found to be the most effective nonverbal behavior in increasing the children's positive attitudes toward school with an average of 85% of the children responding favorably toward school. Touch was found to contribute the least to children's positive attitudes toward school with an average of only 76% of the sample responding favorably.

Conclusions and Recommendations

This study examined four specific nonverbal behaviors to test their effect on children's attitude toward school. These behaviors included: eye contact, touch, smile and proxemics. Research has found that nonverbal tactics
influence the behavior of students. These expressive behaviors are illustrated in bodily posture, facial expression, and expressions of the eyes. Research has also shown that these expressive behaviors have lasting effect on the students because these behaviors are interpreted by the students as signs of the psychological state of the teacher.

Results of pilot study

The outcomes of this pilot study were threefold: the development of a nonverbal curriculum plan for the in-service education of teachers, the implementation of the plan, and the assessment of the effect of the in-service program on student attitude toward school implemented for a period of one month. Pre and post tests were administered one week before the study began and one week following the completion of the study.

The assessment data tends to suggest a trend toward an increase in students' positive responses toward school following emphasis on increasing the positive nonverbal behavior of teachers. In comparing the pre assessment and post assessment data, there was an 8% increase in students' immediate positive response toward school.

In conclusion, proxemics was found to be the most effective nonverbal behavior in increasing the children's positive response toward school. Eighty-five per cent of the sample population responded positively toward school.
after emphasis on the teachers' use of space when relating to students. Touch elicited fewer positive responses according to the data, with only 76% of the sample responding favorably following emphasis on this nonverbal behavior.

It is interesting to note that one of the teacher's involved in the pilot study said, "American's stay away from one another and don't like touching or space invaded by people." After the week following specified touch guidelines, only 66% of this teacher's students responded favorably toward school, a decrease from 86% in their pre-test. This could have been a result of the new nonverbal behavior not being a normal response of this teacher. The children were perhaps not used to the touching behavior of the teacher, and the onset of this behavior could have caused them to have negative response toward school.

The teacher's involved in this study said that they enjoyed the "Nonverbal Now" plan. They felt that they loosened up and started enjoying their students more. One commented that he was now able to have rapport with a student that had been closed to interaction before he touched him.

In conclusion, the post test administered one week after "Nonverbal Now" indicates that the effect of the nonverbal behaviors was not lasting. The nonverbal behaviors were not practiced as they had been and the positive effect of the behaviors was extinguished after reinforcement ceased.
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

Further study in this area needs to be done with subjects exposed to the experimental treatment for one month with each of the four specified behaviors to assess their effectiveness more accurately. However, the entire pilot study was conducted in one month.

Implementation at a time in the school year when county-wide testing is being administered is not suggested. The classroom is under stress and the teacher cannot be expected to practice new behaviors.

In-service Needs

The review of the literature undertaken for this study suggests two important questions with regard to the nonverbal behavior of teachers and students. First, can teachers or students be helped to develop proficiency in sending and receiving nonverbal cues? Secondly, how can our knowledge of nonverbal communication be taught to students and teachers?

The answer to the first question is yes—we can develop nonverbal skills. Research has found that those who are sensitive to verbal cues will be sensitive to nonverbal cues. Awareness is the first step in becoming nonverbally sensitive, then with practice it becomes a powerful communication tool.

The answer to the second question is more complex, as there are many avenues one could take in teaching nonverbal
communication skills. So far in-service programs have: 1) provided a foundation for understanding nonverbal behavior through readings and lectures; 2) allowed students to actively participate in nonverbal experiences; and 3) used training in on-the-spot observation and films.

We are just beginning to find applications of nonverbal communication theory and of skill development programs. Research is now being conducted in America's classrooms. However, this influential system of communication needs further study in the area of education.

In conclusion, the author attempted to make teachers aware of the use of nonverbal communication and its tremendous impact upon interaction with their students. The message communicated to children through nonverbal behavior is implied rather than clearly stated and, as a result, can be a gentle management tool as well as an avenue through which to express human feelings. Both uses of nonverbal behavior are likely to reinforce a child's self-concept.
Percentages of Students Responding Positively to School on Different Testing Dates—Chart 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classes</th>
<th>Pre-Assessment</th>
<th>Post Eye Contact</th>
<th>Post Touch</th>
<th>Post Smile</th>
<th>Post Proxemics</th>
<th>Post-Assessment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CLASS A</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>97%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLASS B</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both Classes (A&amp;B)</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLASS C **</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** not involved in study
BIBLIOGRAPHY


ARTICLES


UNPUBLISHED MATERIALS


