UNCONSCIOUS COMMUNICATION:
A POTENTIAL TOOL FOR PROFESSIONAL GRADUATES TO WIN A JOB INTERVIEW

M.D. Abdulla,
Assistant Professor of English,
Narasaraopeta Engineering College,
Narasaraopet

ABSTRACT

This study examines the role of unconscious communication in understanding the relationship between the performance of the job aspirant and interviewer’s perception in evaluating the skills. Unconscious communication plays a vital role in acquiring a job. Most of the job aspirants concentrate much on verbal communication skills rather than nonverbal communication. One can exchange the messages effectively without a single utterance of a word with one’s nonverbal cues. Interviewee’s non-verbal behavior throughout the entirety of the interview adjudicates his/her success or failure. Most of the graduates, though mastering sound verbal communication skills, fail in communicating their non-verbal cues due to lack of awareness of the importance of this unconscious communication skills. The interviewer depends on interviewee’s Non-verbal behavior in forming impressions about his or her during the interview process. According to Leathers, 1986, p. 204 "First impressions account for a disproportionate amount of the information used in the formation of all impressions, and nonverbal cues exert a controlling influence on the development of first impressions". This paper lists out the most important non-verbal cues which are helpful for professional graduates to win a job interview.

Key words: Job interview, Unconscious communication, Auditory & Visible Non-verbal cues, Guidelines.

Preamble:

Getting a good job in this cut throat competition is a hundred dollar question to most of the professional graduates. Most of the graduates flunk in the interviews due lack of command over the non-verbal communication skills. Employers give much priority to the way how one communicates rather than, what one communicates. According to Burgoon, Buller, and Woodall (1989), “Nonverbal communication is defined as behaviors that are typically sent with regularity among members of a social community, are typically interpreted as intentional, and have consensually recognizable interpretations (p. 16).” There is saying that “It’s not what you say; it is how you say it”, with this saying we can come to know the importance of non-verbal communication. It is true that one gets success in interview who answers all the questions properly and sells him effectively. At the same time it should be remembered that little things may cause the failure. One such aspect is nonverbal communication during the interview. According to BVM Rao, Head Human Resources at Shoppers Stop, "We always look at the candidate's balance between non-verbal and verbal communication while conducting an interview. Certain non-verbal signals such as eye contact and overall body language are very important in our recruitment process. If we find a candidate constantly rolling his
eyes or fidgeting, we immediately know that he's lying. Therefore, there are other cues which indicate if the candidate is confident or otherwise."

Most of the students have a false notion that interview means only answering the questions of the employer. But they hardly know that the interview process begins with the moment they enter into the company’s premises and ends when they leave. For example if a job aspirant spends two hours in the company and with interviewer only fifteen minutes, he will be under the observation of the employer for two hours. During these two hours he will be tested in many aspects like, his attitude, behavior in the company’s premises. According to Prakash Nahata, CEO, Anthroplace Consulting Pvt Ltd "In several cases we focus on the candidate's overall presentation - starting from the time they enter the office premises to the time he leaves the recruiter's room. Here, as the candidate remains unaware of our screening process to measure his non-verbal aptitude, we end up getting valued information about him." So the job aspirants should understand the importance of unconscious communication and convey it properly to succeed in job interview.

**Job Interview:**

Job Interview is a skills assessment process of the employers where a job aspirant is given innumerable opportunities to discuss the skills, abilities, talents and qualifications that they don’t express in their resume. Job interview is a strategic conversation between interviewer and interviewee with a purpose. During the interview process the interviewees undergo various stages where their skills and abilities will be evaluated. The interviewee may hardly spend 10 to 15 minutes of time with interviewer during the interview, so interviewers will use an eagle eye to examine the interviewee’s skills. since the moment they enter into the interview hall, they observe each and every moment of the interviewees’ like the way they enter into the interview room, the way they walk towards the table, the way how they occupy the chair, their sitting posture, eye contact, hand gestures, and other nonverbal and verbal behaviors of the candidate. Interviewees’ non-verbal way of communication will be more concentrated by the interviewers rather than their verbal communication. Nearly 80% of the interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee is only through non-verbal communication.

**Unconscious Communication:**

Unconscious Communication is the elusive, unintentional, unknown cues used by an individual to convey the message to other individuals. It may be auditory Non-verbal; like speech patterns, the tone of the voice and vocalized pauses, intonation, vocally produced noises or it may be visible non-verbal; like facial expressions, hand gestures, body language. Unconscious communication is always unintentional because the people who use unconscious communication cues hardly aware that they
are doing so. These unconscious communication cues play a vital role in conveying the message effectively. But sometimes misuse of these non-verbal cues creates lot of problems and leads to a great loss. Non-verbal communication precedes verbal communication because since the birth of a child it relays on non-verbal means to express itself. While communicating with others we *consciously* use the **verbal language** that is only 20% to 25% part of the communication, and the remaining major part conveyed **unconsciously** is through **body language**.

**Unconscious communication Cues:**

**Auditory Non-verbal Cues:**

1. **Vocalized Pauses:**

   ‘Vocalized pauses’ are nothing but extraneous words or sounds that disrupt fluent speech. The most common vocalized pauses that crawl into our speech include sound interrupters: 'hmm’, ‘um,’ ‘uh,’ ‘er,’ word interrupters: ‘well,’ ‘and’ ‘OK,’ ‘you know’ ‘so’ and ‘like.’ These vocalized pauses are unintentional and are not the part of intended message. Generally vocalized pauses are used when we momentarily search for the suitable word or idea. However, the excess use of vocalized pauses by the interviewee during the interview makes the interviewer perceive him as nervous or unsure of what he/she is saying. As the use increases, it leaves a negative impression on the interviewee as he is confused and his ideas as not well thought out. We can understand the paralinguistic
part of a message as something that is contradicting or complementing the meaning carried out by the verbal message.

2. **Pitch:**

   ‘Pitch’ is the high force or low force of vocal tone. People increase and decrease vocal pitch and alter volume to indicate queries, emphasize their thoughts, and express nervousness. People raise the pitch when they feel nervous and lower it when they are trying to be forceful. Lower pitch voices always express more humility and believability. High pitch voices project the nervousness of a speaker. The job aspirants are considered more dynamic, extravert, and have their performance rated more favorably during the interview, if their pitch is varied widely.

3. **Volume:**

   ‘Volume’ of speech is the loudness or softness of tone. Some people may have roaring voices that carry long distances, and some are normally soft-spoken irrespective of their normal volume level; however, the change in volume depends on the situation, place and topic of the discussion. For instance, people speak loudly when they are angry, and speak more softly when they are being romantic or loving. A job interview demands a moderate level of volume that can be neither too loud nor too soft but comfortably audible to the interviewer.

4. **Rate:**

   ‘Rate’ is nothing but the speed at which a person speaks. People tend to talk more quickly when they are excited, frightened, nervous, or very happy and speak slowly when they are worried, very sad or are trying to emphasize a point. During the job interview the rate of the voice too speaks of the interviewee’s curiosity, anxiety, and liability.

5. **Quality:**

   ‘Quality’ is the characteristic of an individual person’s voice. Every one’s voice has a distinct tone. Some voices are rough, some are creepy, and some have horn-like qualities, while others are throaty or nasal. The interviewee should be very conscious of his own voice quality that helps him get the positive impression in the interview. To know and better the quality of one’s voice there are many ways; like speaking before the friends and teachers and asking them for feedback; recording the voice and listening to it etc.,

6. **Intonation:**

   Intonation is the fluctuation that takes place in one’s voice, it is nothing but rise and fall of the voice pitch. Some people have little intonation and some sound monotone. Other voices have a rhythmic like quality and may have a childlike tone to them. The job aspirant has to maintain a moderate amount of intonation while answering the questions during the interview. Speaking with a clear volume, pronunciation, and intonation always results the interviewee positive impression in interview.

**Visible Non-verbal Cues:**

1. **Gestures:**

   Gestures are nothing but the movements of our hands, arms, fingers and body that we use to describe or to emphasize something. Generally we use hand gestures
to accompany our spoken messages, to add more meaning to our speech. Dumb persons communicate with others by giving some signals with their hand gestures. Some persons go out of control in using their gestures like moving their hands incessantly, tapping a foot, shaking a leg, clapping the hands, putting the hands in their pockets or behind their back, and twisting a strand of hair. The over use of these gestures deviate the attention of listeners from what they are saying. One must be very conscious in using their gestures during the interview. An open palm gesture indicates the sign of openness and sincerity and crossed arms around the chest indicates a strong sign of defensiveness. The safest way is to keep the hands folded in one’s lap or on the desk.

2. Posture:

Posture is the position and movement of our body. Sitting or standing postures speak about one’s interest and attentiveness. Interviewers interpret a lot from our body orientation; how respectful, attentive or dominant we are. Proper sitting posture conveys a sense of positive energy and engagement. Slouching, appearing too relaxed and excessive fidgeting charge negative impression. Sitting up straight, head up position, and leaning forward slightly show the keen attentiveness and more interested in conversation and assure a positive impression.

3. Appearance:

The physical appearance of an interviewee also speaks much about his attitude and behavior. When the interviewee gets into the interview hall, the first impression interpreted by the employer is interviewee’s appearance. Appearance includes the aspects of body shape, hair color, hair grooming, and skin tone, dress including both clothing and jewelry, and use of appearance enhancements like brandings, body piercings, and tattoo marks. The way of dressing varies from country to country, and culture to culture. Irrespective of country and culture it is better to prefer formal dress at the time of interview. One should be very careful about the dress; it should be very simple, pure formal but not too decorative and odd colored.

4. Space:

During the interview the interviewee will be offered a chair to sit on, interviewers intentionally maintain a certain distance between the table and the chair, so that they can observe the body language of the candidate. People who are diffident tend to shrink into their own bodies, by reducing the space they take up physically. The space occupied by a person during communicating with others depends on the culture, the situation, and the closeness of the relationship. It indicates different signals like intimacy and affection, aggression or dominance. In an interview, sit confidently and respect the ‘personal space’ of the recruiter. The candidate doesn’t need to convince the interviewer by leaning close to him by occupying his personal space. He should make sure that he is not sitting closer than 1 meter and not more than 3 meters away from the interviewer.

5. Eye Contact:
Eye contact is the way how and how much we look at others when we are communicating. The range of eye contact varies from person to person and from situation to situation. Through our eye contact, we express our emotions like anger, affection or fear. A poor eye contact in an interview signifies the candidate is not comfortable and uninterested in the position. A good balance of eye contact with the interviewer conveys honesty, interest, and confident. Sometimes it may be difficult to look into the eyes of interviewer, the best way to maintain eye contact is to look at the forehead of the interviewer which is comfortable and seems you are responding properly.

6. **Facial Expression:**

   Facial expression is a gesture executed with the facial muscles to communicate emotions or reactions to messages. It is the biggest indicator of our true inner state of mind. Through our facial expressions we can convey six basic emotions like happiness, sadness, surprise, anger, fear. Face is the index of mind; we can guess one’s feelings by observing their facial expressions.

   Lack of facial expression can make the interviewer give less importance to the candidate. One needs to synchronize ones verbal messages with one’s facial expressions. It is better to maintain natural smile during the interview. The best way to win the interview is, imagining it a casual conversation with a close friend and express oneself freely and effortlessly.

**Things to be remembered during the Interview:**

1. Wear a formal plain, neatly ironed dress which suits your color; limit the application of colognes and perfumes because concentrated perfumes may make the interviewer uncomfortable.
2. Walk in confidently into the company with a professional look. Because the moment you walk into the building you will begin to be evaluated on your behavior. There are many examples where employers watch from their office as interviewees arrive, to determine how their body language changes.
3. Deliver a firm handshake with the interviewer. Let him feel your positive energy through the way you hold his arm.
4. Walk gently near to the chair, and occupy it after getting the permission from the interviewer. Sit up straight, keep your back against the chair, your chin up, chest out, stomach in, shoulders straight and make sure your feet touch the floor. Rest your hands on your laps or knees.
5. Establish a comfortable amount of personal space between you and the employer. If you enter the personal space of the interviewer it makes him uncomfortable and takes his focus away from your conversation.
6. Maintain a warm smile on your face as soon as you enter into the interview hall and let the interviewer
know that you are relaxed, comfortable and happy to be there for your interview.

7. Don’t cross your arms or legs when you are before the interviewer. Crossing the arms across your chest shoes your defensive nature and crossed legs posture always gives a negative sign.

8. Maintain proper eye contact with the interviewer while answering the questions, which shows the interviewer you are attentive and comfortable.

9. Be conscious in using your hand gestures, most people have trouble with them. It is ok to gesticulate with your hands to make a point, but don’t over use them. Keep your arms uncrossed hands away from your face; don’t touch your nose or ears as it indicates you are lying.

10. Be aware of your body moments in the chair, constantly changing sitting position will make you look awkward and uncomfortable.

Conclusion:

Communication is the part and parcel of every one’s life. Most of communication delivered by every individual is non-verbal. If one misuses the non-verbal cues during the interaction with others, it leads to misunderstanding, so one should be very careful while using non-verbal cues. Especially job aspirants who attend the interviews should be aware of their body language. Most of them consider these as small things, in fact they hardly know these non-verbal cues make a difference on whether they get hired or not. One must take care of one’s verbal and nonverbal communication during a job interview to make a reliable impression. For example, a candidate can hardly claim that he/she has open personality; by being unconscious of his/her holding arms crossed during the entire interview and will not be credible by avoiding eye contact with the interviewer while answering. Non-verbal communication plays a vital role in our communication. Therefore our body language will determine to a large extent the impression we leave behind after a job interview; besides this all the clothing, wearing decorative ornaments and too much of perfume also can have a negative impact in an interview. Hence the professional graduates must be conscious of using their unconscious communication during a job interview to get the desired positive results.

References:


