

# *Kinesics & Body Language – The “Silent” Communication*



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*Communication between human beings is always coordinated with other behaviours. These displays in face-to-face communication are essential items in conveying useful information. The informative communication is important and it is widely transferred by means of verbal language. However, there are other means of communication such as Kinesics and body language. Kinesics, which is often called body language, is the study of a type of non-verbal communication which interprets body movement for example, posture, facial expression or gestures as a communication. This paper gives a brief history of kinesics and explores the various types of body language. Also the cultural differences in using body movements will be explored. Mehrabian's 7-38-55 Rule is discussed and arguments against it. Finally, this article will show how one can read others' body language according to gender differences as an instance. Also, it questions whether driver trainers are aware of their own and their pupil's body language and the importance of recognising and correctly interpreting them in order to embellish and improve their training. Finally, a conclusion is given.*

# *Kinesics & Body Language – The “Silent” Communication*

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*“The world is a giddy montage of vivid gestures – traffic police, street vendors, expressway drivers, teachers, and children in playgrounds, athletes with their exuberant hugging and clenched fists and high fives. People all over the world use their hands, heads and bodies to communicate expressively” Roger A. Axtell<sup>1</sup>*

## Introduction

In his play *Troilus and Cressida*, Shakespeare said: *“There’s language in her eye, her cheek, her lip”*.<sup>2</sup> Even as far back as the late 1500s, it appears that the Bard of Avon was conversant with body language or nonverbal behaviour as we know it today. Interest in Kinesics, also known as non-verbal behaviour, or ‘body language’, has grown rapidly in recent years because in this fast-paced and time-poor world we’re constantly judged on first impressions. People are making snap decisions as to whether they trust us, like us, want to work with us, have a love affair with us – and much more. As research continually points out, words alone don’t provide the whole picture. It is in the nature of the human condition that we communicate more through the body than merely through language. Every day we constantly have to interpret what another person’s body language is telling us – as well as controlling our own to create the right impression. Two-way traffic! You may have come across the oft-cited study in the 1970s which concluded that more than 90 per cent of meaning in any interaction is derived from non-verbal cues – the manner in which your body ‘talks’ and also the way that you say things (vocal) – and just a mere seven per cent from the words you actually speak. We can play around with the actual figures of course, but the fundamental point is that the overwhelming meaning of a message, when communicating with others, comes from an unconscious display of the ‘silent’ language; that either reinforces or detracts from the words being used. Research has shown that the most successful people, in all walks of life, are ‘intuitive’ in deciphering these signals. So, why do teachers and driver trainers need to pay attention to their body language?

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<sup>1</sup> *An Analysis of Kinesics: A ‘Forgotten’ Language to Facilitate Comprehension of Speaking procedure Text at English Teaching and Learning in College Students.* (A Mini-Research of Sociolinguistics Study). academia.edu

<sup>2</sup> *The Illustrated Stratford Shakespeare.* (1982) Chancellor Press. 81, Fulham Road, London SW3 6 RB

Simply, because it is what make students and pupils respond to their teaching/training and their output. Research has shown that students do not respond to the content of the lesson if the way of presenting it is poor. Effective teaching occurs when the teacher/trainer knows how to convey enthusiasm and send out positive body signals.

### **How Do We Meet and Greet People?**

Enthusiastic teachers/trainers use a wide range of facial expressions, intonation and gestures to convey interest and excitement of the subject matter. But, what does our body language say when initially meeting and then teaching pupils to drive? Initially, how do we meet and greet them. Is our handshake a bone crusher or a finger squeeze? Giving someone a ‘death grip’ will signal to them that you are a bully or overcompensating for something. So, take care not to crush your client’s hand though. A nice firm handshake will give you instant credibility while a weak or limp handshake will make you appear fragile. A firm handshake has long been recommended in the business world as a way to make a good first impression, and the greeting is thought to date back to ancient times as a way of showing a stranger you had no weapons.<sup>3</sup> Do driver trainers notice the non-verbal communication (NVC) through sending and receiving wordless messages? Such messages can be communicated through gesture; body language or posture; facial expression and eye contact and object communication such as clothing and hairstyles. Specifically, this paper will outline the use of gestures, head movements and posture, eye contact and facial expressions and non-verbal communications as they relate to the driver trainer and others. This article is an expanded version of a similar article - *Body Language & the Driving Instructor* published in September 2019 - and is just shy of 8,870 words - 23 pages. As kinesics and body language is vast subject ergo; only a summa is given in this paper.

### **In The Beginning**

Everyone knows someone who can walk into a room full of people and within minutes give an accurate description about the relationships between these people and what they’re feeling. The ability to read a person’s attitudes and thoughts by their behaviour was the original communication system used by humans before spoken language evolved. Before radio was invented, most communication was done in writing, through books, letters and newspapers, which meant that ugly politicians and poor speakers such as Abraham Lincoln could be successful if they persisted long enough and wrote good print copy.

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<sup>3</sup> Ramadas, Nidhin. “Handshake” Beckham Institute. Retrieved 13 September 2016. en.wikipedia.org

The radio gave openings to people who had a good command of the spoken word like Winston Churchill, who spoke wonderfully, but may have struggled to achieve as much in today's more visual era. Readers who are old enough will remember silent-movie actors like Charlie Chaplin, Buster Keaton, "Fatty" Arbuckle, Lon Chaney, Harold Lloyd, Greta Garbo, Douglas Fairbanks, Rudolph Valentino and others who were the pioneers of body language skills, as this was the only means of communication available on the screen. Each actor's skill was classed as good or bad by the extent to which he could use gestures and body signals to communicate to the audience. When talking films came into vogue and less emphasis was placed on the nonverbal aspects of acting, many silent-movie actors faded into obscurity and only those with good verbal and nonverbal skills survived.

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### 'All the World's a Stage'

Actors have to be masters of kinesics and body language in order to convince us to believe in the role they are playing while at the same time helping us to 'suspend our disbelief' (since it's not real life) so that we can engage with and put our own emotions into the performance. When we see mannerisms and gestures that ring true to a particular emotion, or what's being said or felt, we unconsciously accept the 'message' and go along with the make-believe – good acting! Since we're all acting out certain 'roles' in everyday life, both in our personal lives and especially at work, body language is the way in which our bodies communicate our own or a 'character's' attitudes. There's nothing 'false' about it – as Shakespeare tells us in 'As You Like It':<sup>5</sup>

*All the world's a stage,  
And all the men and women merely players;  
They have their exits and their entrances;  
And one man in his time plays many parts.*

### History of the Study of Nonverbal Communication

The use of body language goes back to prehistory and indeed pre-language times. After all, when we didn't know how to communicate verbally, all we had was to communicate with non-verbal signals. Some signals are universal.

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<sup>4</sup> Allan & Barbara Pease (September 24 2006) *The Definitive Book of Body Language*. The New York Times. nytimes.com

<sup>5</sup> "As You Like It", a five-act comedy by William Shakespeare, written and performed about 1598-1600 and first published in the first folio of 1623. Shakespeare based the play on *Rosalynde* (1590), a prose romance by Thomas Lodge. The play is considered to be one of Shakespeare's "great" or "middle" comedies.

Everyone around the world understands that smiling suggests happiness, satisfaction or when you want to show that you don't mean any harm. Crying is normally taken for sadness or pain. (*Or sometimes happiness. Ed.*) How come these facial expressions are universal? How come we can understand each other through body language? There are indeed some cultural differences, but there are also many similarities. Despite various racial differences in body shape and colour around the world, there is still a lot of similarity among humans which directly leads to comparable uses for body language. Why are we the same? The answer lies in significant breakthroughs and research carried out in the last decade, in particular in the field of genetics. (**Wade 2007**).<sup>6</sup> Nonverbal communication plays an important role in human social interaction. In this regard, **Abercrombie (1968)**<sup>7</sup> states what is generally taken for granted. "*We speak with our vocal organs but we converse with our entire bodies*". Every facial expression and every gesture contributes to the overall meaning of a statement. Thus, our body language accompanies every speech we make, and even if we do not speak, our nonverbal behaviour constantly transmits information that can be meaningful. Nonverbal communication was studied in greater detail predominantly in the 20th century. The most influential book in the field when it first started to gain attention was **Charles Darwin's *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals (1872)*** which examined various types of genetically determined behaviour. With his modern approach, **Darwin** was the first to systematically explore and compare the expression of emotions in humans and animal species. He asserted many frequent modes of expressions which are almost universal, meaning that all humans exhibit some natural or innate expressions, regardless of culture. This was later confirmed by the findings of **Ekman, Sorenson and Friesen (1969)**<sup>8</sup> in their 1969 article *Pan-Cultural Elements in Facial Displays of Emotion*, who found that people of vastly different cultures interpreted facial expressions of emotion in the same way. Since every culture uses the same basic facial expressions to express emotions, it is suggested that they are innate.

### **Six Universally Recognizable Emotions**

Psychologists studied facial expressions at the beginning of the 20th century and considered that there are six universally recognizable emotions: happiness, sadness, surprise, fear, disgust and anger.

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<sup>6</sup> Wade, N. (2007) "*Before the dawn: Recovering the Lost History of Our Ancestors*". Gerald Duckworth & Co. skillsconverged.com (last accessed 16 April 2020).

<sup>7</sup> Carola Surkamp (2014) *Nonverbal communication: Why we need it in foreign language teaching and how we can foster it with drama activities*. research.ucc.ie

<sup>8</sup> Ekman, Paul. *et al* (1969) *Pan- cultural elements in facial displays of emotion*. Science 164 (3875): 86-88.

- **Happiness** – raising and lowering of the mouth corners, cheeks raised and muscles around the eyes tightened.
- **Sadness** – Lowering of the mouth corners, and raising the inner portion of the brows.
- **Surprise** - Arching of the eyebrows, eyelids pulled up, and sclera<sup>9</sup> exposed, mouth open.
- **Fear** – brows arched and pulled together, eyes wide open, mouth slightly open.
- **Disgust** – Eyebrows lowered, upper lip raised, nose wrinkled, cheeks raised.
- **Anger** – brows lowered, eyes bulging and lips pressed firmly.

Kinesics, which is the anthropological term for body language, appeared with the development of paralinguistic studies in 1952 by the American anthropologist Ray Birdwhistell.<sup>10</sup> It basically refers to the study of gestures and facial expressions and other body movements. Linguistics had a major impact on Birdwhistell's research. He considered kinesics to be socially acquired and culture-specific, meaning that there is no universality to kinesics. Although people may not be aware of it, the process of learning kinesics is similar to the process of learning verbal language and can therefore be broken down into smaller elements comparable to units in linguistics. Body language is an old aged science; it was first to appear as Physiognomy, which is the art of discovering temperament and character from the outward appearance. Kinesis (from the Greek work kinesis meaning 'motion') is the systematic study of nonverbal body movement relative to communication. Kinesics is the study of body movement, as such; it is one of several forms of non-verbal behaviour which we unconsciously use on a daily basis.

### **Kinesics**

The term kinesics was coined by Ray Birdwhistell (1952) whose book "*Introduction to Kinesics: An Annotation System for Analysis of Body Motion and Gesture*"<sup>11</sup> published in 1952 marked the introduction of formal research on body motion communication, although anthropologists and descriptive linguists growing interest for the study of nonverbal communication was present from the 1940s. In popular discourse, kinesics is termed 'body language', a term older than kinesics.

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<sup>9</sup> The white outer layer of the eyeball.

<sup>10</sup> Waiflein, Megan. (2013) "*The Progression of the Field of Kinesics*". *Senior Theses – Anthropology. Paper 3.* <https://ir.library.illionsstate.edu/sta/3>

<sup>11</sup> Ray L. Birdwhistell (1918-1994). University of Louisville. Washington DC Dept. of State. Foreign Service Institute. 1952.

(Merriam-Webster Dictionary notes its first known use in 1885) but not used by Birdwhistell since the definition of 'language' only partially corresponds to the meaning conveyed by the body. Kinesics is the interpretation of body language such as facial expressions and gestures - or, more formally, non-verbal behaviour related to movement, either of any part of the body or the body as a whole. Eye-contact is another major aspect of facial communication and it serves many purposes.

### **Definition of Kinesics, and Body Language**

Although body language is an important part of communication, most of it happens without conscious awareness. Body language mustn't be confused with sign language, as sign languages are full languages like spoken languages and have their own complex grammar systems. The term nonverbal communication refers to a type of communication that conveys information not with words, but with other means. Our clothes, accessories, facial expressions, gestures, physical contact (haptics), body movement (kinesics), distancing, voice quality and tone all provide information to the listener<sup>12</sup> Whereas words are under our conscious control, that is rarely the case with nonverbal behaviour meaning that our nonverbal communication is often more sincere than our verbal one. One of the aspects of nonverbal communication is kinesics. Kinesics, which is often called body language in the popular vernacular, is the study of a type of nonverbal communication which interprets body movement (posture, gestures, facial expression) as communication. Body language is also defined as a type of nonverbal communication in which the body itself, as opposed to words, conveys information. Although the terms are often used interchangeably, there is some difference between them. Most notably, body language fails to meet the linguistic criteria of a language – the meaning of body movement depends heavily on context, situation, surroundings, and personality. This term implies universality to the meaning of body movement, when in reality it can be interpreted in multiple ways, always in combination with the verbal element of communication. Although kinesics is a more accurate term, body language is an older and far more widely used one. Since kinesics is still a relatively obscure term, to ensure clarity, both were used in the title of this paper. The term kinesics is used throughout this text, and the term body language is used when the body movement's similarity to that of verbal language is being highlighted.

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<sup>12</sup> (Navarro Joe, 2010). Stonam Tijelo Govori. Zajreb: Moziak. Knjiga.

### *Kinesics Often Called Body Language*

Anthropologists began to take serious interest in nonverbal communication through gestures, postures, and facial expressions in the 1940s. It is believed, however, that the publication of Ray Birdwhistell's 1952 book *Introduction to Kinesics* marked the beginning of formal research into what we know familiarly as "body language." Over 50 years later, the results of kinesics are deeply entrenched in our culture, giving us a whole new language with which to interpret everyday encounters and interaction.<sup>13</sup> Kinesics, which is often called body language, is the study of a type of non-verbal communication which interprets body movement for example, posture, facial expression or gestures as a communication. There are many others such as the way we stand or sit any swaying or other movements, gestures with arms or hands, eye contact or lack thereof, breathing rate, swallowing or coughing and blushing or fidgeting. In everyday encounters people use all means at their disposal to communicate. Body language exists in both animals and humans. It is largely unconscious and it can't be (effectively) faked. Body language messages exist independently of speech communication. Whether you're speaking or not, body language communication is still happening.<sup>14</sup> Words are a very practical means of communication and are primarily used for conveying facts, descriptions, and explanations. During a driving lesson, presentation, conference, businesses meeting etc., interpreters are required to interpret a lot of verbal information (mostly facts, numbers, and figures of speech). However, using the verbal channel is not the only way to communicate. The nonverbal communication signals our emotional state and attitudes, rather than facts. In addition to disclosing feelings, nonverbal communication is used for the following: emphasizing verbal messages, expressing attitudes toward the listener, substituting the verbal message, repeating the verbal message, regulation of verbal communication, and opposing verbal communication.<sup>15</sup> The way in which nonverbal communication regulates its verbal counterpart is especially interesting for interpreters. For example, when speakers are ready to pass the microphone to the other speaker, their last sentence will have an upward inflection, or rising tone, which will gradually decrease until the last syllable. In such a way, the current speaker will signal that the segment is finished, and that the next speaker may take over. If the speaker were to continue to upwardly inflect in the last sentence, the next speaker (and the target language audience) would wait, expecting for the speech to continue.

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<sup>13</sup> Merriam-Webster (Since 1828) Kinetics merriamwebster.com

<sup>14</sup> Brojo, *Body Language (Kinesics)*. brojo.org

<sup>15</sup> (Rijavec, Magda & Dubravka Miljković (2002). *Neverbalna Komunikacija*. Zagreb: IEP (pp. 5-8)



The majority of people (including speakers, which is of great importance for interpreters) are not aware of the way they communicate nonverbally. Frequently, the unconscious interpretation of a speaker's nonverbal signals is termed 'intuition'. Listeners do not know how they came to a certain conclusion, especially if the verbal message was incongruent with the nonverbal one, when in fact they were just interpreting the nonverbal messages of others. This is especially surprising considering the fact that nonverbal communication accounts for around 60–65% of entire human interpersonal communication.<sup>16</sup>

### Posture

Proxemics is the study of how people use and perceive the physical space around them. The space between the sender and the receiver (instructor and learner) of a message influences the way the message is interpreted. Our gestures may be articulated with the hands, arms or body, and also include movements of the head, face and eyes, such as winking, or rolling one's eyes. While the mouth is busy with word articulation, the body conveys messages with its posture, gestures, motion quality, facial expression, and does so in a structured way (analogue to the verbal one). Posture can be used to determine a participant's degree of attention or involvement, the difference in status between communicator, and the level of fondness a person has for the other communicator.<sup>17</sup> When a driving instructor tends to slouch in the passenger seat and head is tilted to one side it gives the impression that they lack interest in what's going on and are bored. Those who sit bolt upright portrays a very formal approach. One of the most basic and powerful body-language signals is when a person crosses his or her arms across the chest and this may be interpreted as defensive. This can indicate that a person is putting up an unconscious barrier between themselves and others. Posture is understood through such indicators as direction of lean, body orientation, arm position, and body openness. An upright but relaxed posture is best to avoid back strain and doesn't overpower the pupil. The fingers casually intertwined are best avoided because when the hands become sweaty on hot day you may be unable to release them quickly enough to intervene in the event of an emergency such as correcting the steering. Some researchers put the level of non-verbal communication as high as 80% of all communication. A more realistic figure would be around 50-65%.

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<sup>16</sup> Burgoon, Judee, K. (1994) *Non-verbal signals*. In Knapp, Mark, L. Gregory, R. Miller (eds.) *Handbook of Interpersonal Interpretation* (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.) Thousand Oaks: Sage, 229-285).

<sup>17</sup> Knapp & Hall, 2007, p.8.

That's exactly what **Mehrabian**<sup>18</sup> discovered in his study on communication. He found that only 7% of communication comes from spoken words, 38% is from the tone of the voice, and 55% comes from body language. Good body language can enhance a pupil's ability to learn. **Orton, J. (2007)**,<sup>19</sup> states that:

***“The spontaneous use of gestures plays a significant role in natural learning processes, assisting the learner to grasp concepts, develop skills, and store new knowledge in any field”.***

Unfortunately, despite its importance, body language is one of the most commonly overlooked methods of communication, particularly by new and existing driver trainers. Poor body language suggests that the teacher or trainer is uncomfortable teaching his pupil(s), is disengaged and does not consider their role as important. As a result, this can lead to a student lacking confidence in their trainer's ability and undermining their authority, disengaging with the lesson content and not taking their lesson seriously, all of which are major problems in the learning process and environment. Because of this, it is vital that trainers are aware of their body language so they can prevent themselves from displaying these elements of poor (bored) body language. Also, by recognizing the learner's body language, trainers are able to judge the level of engagement that each pupil presents. The body language of an engaged learner will be very similar to the positive body language that they would display with good posture, eye-contact and a warm facial expression, all being positive signs of kinesics.<sup>20</sup>

### **Many Types of Body Language**

In addition to the spoken word, humans use other means of communication, such as voice quality and tone, proximity to the listener, pauses, physical appearance, and body motion. Consider how you speak and the various gestures and body language you use during driving lessons especially when emphasizing an important learning point. Examples might be “talking with your hands”, nodding in agreement, or moving your head from side-to-side etc. It's important not only to interpret your pupil's body language to formulate how he/she is “thinking” but that of your own to ensure that you're not sending out the “wrong message” which may have a negative and off-putting effect.

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<sup>18</sup> Albert Mehrabian & His 7%-38%-55% Rule.

<sup>19</sup> P 16. Kinesics. Nonverbalcommunication715.wordpress.com

<sup>20</sup> Non-Verbal Communication. 715. Wordpress.com

One of the most famous speeches of all time is Abraham Lincoln's "*Gettysburg Address*." Its 272 words continue to inspire 150 years after they were spoken. No one had the slightest idea of Lincoln's movements or voice tones. The study of kinesics-body motion is an important part of nonverbal communication. Since nonverbal communication is largely subconscious, it is also more sincere than the verbal one which is under conscious control of the speaker. While translators rely solely on verbal information to transcode meaning into the target language, interpreters use a wider variety of information coming from the speaker. Although meaning produced via body motion is not isolated and relies on context, simultaneous and consecutive interpreters can use knowledge of kinesics to improve their skills. In simultaneous, interpreters cannot use their own kinesic behaviour to produce meaning but the way they position their body influences their physiology, mood, attitude, and stress levels. Additionally, they use verbal and paralinguistic means to interpret extra-linguistic elements used by the speaker. In consecutive, interpreters actively produce meaning with their own kinesic statements, making an immediate impression on the listeners. As public speakers, they signal personal confidence and mood via facial expressions, eye-contact, arm movement, posture, and gesturing.<sup>21</sup> In the age of virtual data and images, as well as the different audiovisuals, people are looking for more accessible means of communication besides the spoken words. Humans communicate not just through verbal language, but through other means such as gestures, signs, eye looks and many others (art, dress, music...). There are many types of body language for example, aggressive body language, bored body language, confident body language, emotional body language, defensive body language, trustworthy body language etc. Faking body language is possible but not for long because when you predict something that does not represent you, your body will reveal it by showing contradictory actions. Just like former President Bill Clinton and the Monica Lewinsky scandal, experts knew he was lying by interpreting his unconscious body movement that displayed lying.<sup>22</sup>

### **Mehrabian's Rule**

Professor Albert Mehrabian has pioneered the understanding of communication since the 1960s. Aside from his many and various other fascinating works, Mehrabian's research provides the basis for the widely quoted and often much over-simplified statistic for the effectiveness of spoken communications.

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<sup>21</sup> Helena Markovic (2017) *Kinesics and body language in simultaneous and consecutive interpretation*. Master's Thesis.

<sup>22</sup> Assala Mihoubi. Academic Year 2014/5. *A research paper submitted in partial fulfillment of BA Degree. Body Language in Teaching: Case study from secondary schools in Adrar, Algeria.*

The following is a more precise representation of his findings than is typically cited or applied:

- 7% of meaning in words that are spoken
- 38% of meaning is paralinguistic – the way the words are said
- 55% of meaning is facial expression

However, Mehrabian did not intend the statistic to be used or applied freely for all communications and meanings. He provides this useful explanatory note from his own website retrieved 29 May 2009: <sup>23</sup>

*“... Inconsistent communications - the relative importance of verbal and non-verbal messages. My finding on this topic has received considerable attention in literature and in the popular media. “Silent Messages” (Mehrabian’s key book) contains a detailed discussion of my findings on inconsistent messages of feeling and attitudes and the relative importance of words vs. nonverbal cues on pages 75-80”.*

#### Arguments Against Mehrabian’s Rule

In the 1960s Professor Albert Mehrabian and colleagues at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), conducted studies into human communication patterns. When their results were published in professional journals in 1967, they were widely circulated across mass media in abbreviated form. Because the figures were so easy to remember, most people forgot about what they really meant. Hence, the myth that communication is only 7 percent verbal and 93 percent non-verbal was born. And we have been suffering from it ever since. The fact is Mehrabian's research had nothing to do with giving speeches, because it was based on the information that could be conveyed in a single word. There are those who say Mehrabian’s 7-38-55 Rule: is a farce and this is actually stated by Mehrabian himself on his website. In an article by Philip Yaffe entitled: *The 7% Rule, Fact, Fiction, or Misunderstanding*, he states:

*The 7 percent rule is a pernicious myth. He debunks the notion that in an oral presentation, what you say is considerably less important than how you say it.*

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<sup>23</sup> Nagesh Belludi (4 Oct. 2008) *Albert Mehrabian’s 7-38-55 Rule of Personal Communication*. [rightattitudes.com](http://rightattitudes.com)

*He rejects the claim that content accounts for only 7 percent of the success of the presentation, while 93 percent of success is attributable to non-verbal factors, i.e. body language and vocal variety. The myth arises from a gross misinterpretation of a scientific experiment. It needs to be put to rest both for the benefit of presenters and the sake of scientific integrity.*<sup>24</sup>

Yaffe follows on with his argument and adds:

*“Have you ever heard the adage that communication is only 7 percent verbal and 93 percent non-verbal, i.e. body language and vocal variety? You probably have, and if you have any sense at all, you have ignored it. There are certain "truths" that are prima face false. And this is one of them. Asserting that what you say is the least important part of a speech insults not only the intelligence of your audience, but your own intelligence as well. The whole objective of most speeches is to convey information, or to promote or defend a point of view. Certainly, proper vocal variety and body language can aid the process. But by their very nature, these ancillary activities can convey only emphasis or emotion. The proof? Although today we presumably live in a visual world, most information is still promulgated in written form, where vocal variety and body language play no role. Even the "interactive" Internet is still mainly writing. The vast majority of people who surf the Internet do so looking for texts, with which they may interact via hyperlinks, but it is still essentially text. Likewise with a speech, if your words are incapable of getting your message across, then no amount of gestures and tonal variations will do it for you. You are still obliged to carefully structure your information and look for "le mot juste" (the best words or phrases) to express what you want to say”.*<sup>25</sup>

### **Gestures – 5 Types**

We all gesture from time to time and our intention is to communicate meaning. Our gestures may be articulated with the hands, arms or body, and also include movements of the head, face and eyes, such as winking, nodding, or rolling one's eyes. (Remember how the Metropolitan Police (GB) 'Noddy' bikes got their name back in the 60s). The boundary between language and gesture, or verbal or non-verbal communication, can be hard to identify. Proxemics is the study of how people use and perceive the psychological space around them.

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<sup>24</sup> *The 7% Rule – Fact, Fiction, or Misunderstanding*. Ubiquity, Vol. 2011 Issue October, October 2011.

<sup>25</sup> *The 7% Rule – Fact, Fiction, or Misunderstanding*. Ubiquity, Vol. 2011 Issue October, October 2011.

The space between the sender and the receiver (instructor and learner) of a message influences the way the message is interpreted. When another driver extends a courtesy, to you or your pupil, do you acknowledge it with a nod, smile or raised hand? As driving instructors we meet people from many different cultures and a single emblematic gesture can have a very different significance and meaning in different cultural contexts, ranging from complimentary to highly offensive.<sup>26</sup>

*Ottenheimer*<sup>27</sup> (2007), and psychologists *Paul Ekman and Wallace Friesen* suggested that gestures could be categorized into five types: emblems, illustrators, affect displays, regulators and adaptors.

**Emblems** are gestures with direct verbal translations, such as a goodbye wave.

**Illustrators** are gestures that depict what is said verbally, such as turning an imaginary steering wheel while talking about driving.

**An Affect Display** is a gesture that conveys emotions, like a smile or a frown.

**Regulators** are gestures that control interaction.

**An Adaptor** is a gesture that facilitates the release of bodily tension, such as quickly moving one's leg.

During a driving lesson speech is backed up by an intricate network of gestures which affect the meaning of what is said. Driver trainers should be sensitive to signals being transmitted to learners and an understanding of non-verbal signals will prove invaluable. However, mannerisms are unplanned movements repeated frequently and are carried out quite unconsciously i.e. stroking the nose or rubbing the earlobe.

### **Physical Appearance**

Physical appearance, and the way one manipulates it, is one of the most common ways of nonverbal communication. Clothing and various adornment signal individual's age, wealth, culture, nationality, ethnical identification, social class, marital status, etc. Choice of clothing, hairstyle, make-up, and accessories also reveals nonverbal clues about one's personality since it is a form of self-expression.

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<sup>26</sup> Morris, Desmond, *et al* (1979) *Gestures, their origins and distribution*. London. Cape.

<sup>27</sup> Ottenheimer, H. J. (2007). *The anthropology of language: an introduction to linguistic anthropology*. Kansas State: Thomson Wadsworth.

The main functions of physical appearance as nonverbal communication according to **Baden Eunson (2008)**<sup>28</sup> are: protecting the wearer, protecting the environment from the wearer, an indication of sexual modesty/immodesty, an indication of leisurely life, a display of group identification, a display of wealth/status, displays of dominance/physical toughness, displays of compensation, and displays of religious affiliation. Certain appearance-related choices evoke social stereotypes (e.g. uniforms, fashionable items, and body piercings) and control one's image in interpersonal interactions, making them more predictable and therefore less stressful. The same rules apply in the field of conference interpretation – dressing up or down reveal the interpreter's personality, level of conformity, approach to work, and the casualness of the setting.

### **More Than Body Positions and Movements**

Body language is not just about how we hold and move our bodies. It potentially (although not always, depending on the definition you choose to apply) encompasses:

- How we position our bodies
- Our closeness to and the space between us and other people (proxemics), and how this changes
- Our facial expressions
- Our eyes especially and how our eyes move and focus, etc.
- How we touch ourselves and others
- How our bodies connect with other non-bodily things, for instance, pens, cigarettes, spectacles and clothing
- Our breathing, and other less noticeable physical effects, for example our heartbeat and perspiration

Body language tends not to include: the pace, pitch, and intonation, volume, variation, pauses, etc., of our voice. Arguably this last point should be encompassed by body language, because a lot happens here which can easily be missed if we consider merely the spoken word and the traditional narrow definition. Voice type and other audible signals are typically not included because they are audible 'verbal' signals rather than physical visual ones, nevertheless the way the voice is used is a very significant (usually unconscious) aspect of communication, aside from the bare words themselves.

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<sup>28</sup> Eunson, Baden, (2008) *Communicating in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.) Australia: John Wiley & sons

Consequently, voice type is always important to consider alongside the usual factors. Similarly, breathing and heartbeat, etc., are typically excluded from many general descriptions, but are certainly part of the range of non-verbal bodily actions and signals which contribute to body language in its fullest sense. More obviously, our eyes are a vital aspect of our body language. It is said that “*eyes are the window to the soul*” and can be powerful, but not always mutual and not always reliable. Because our gaze can create an incredibly powerful experience, it’s easy to project those feelings onto its objects. Beware of that and resist the feeling that you’ve “fallen in love” before she even opens her mouth. Eye contact is a powerful attractor and opening fundamental, but there’s a human to get to know on the other side. Eye contact is an immensely powerful capability that creates better connections, keeps people honest and generally enriches relationships. With a bit of practice, you can become a master of this essential skill.<sup>29</sup> “*Love at first sight*” is apparently a real thing. But here’s the deal: it only works on your end. Research found that men who stared at a woman for 8.2 seconds or more were far more likely to feel like they had fallen in love at first sight. On the other hand, if a man looked at a woman for 4.5 seconds or less, he was likely to not have any interest in her at all. There’s just one problem: the woman did not reciprocate the mens amorous feelings. It was all in the man’s head. The lesson here is that eye contact can be powerful, but not always mutual and in the case of this study,<sup>30</sup> not always reliable. Reactions to other people's eyes - movement, focus, expression, etc - and their reactions to our eyes - contribute greatly to mutual assessment and understanding, consciously and unconsciously. With no words at all, massive feeling can be conveyed in a single glance. The metaphor which describes the eyes of two lovers meeting across a crowded room is not only found in old romantic movies. It's based on scientific fact - the strong powers of non-verbal communications.<sup>31</sup> These effects - and similar powerful examples - have existed in real human experience and behaviour for thousands of years. The human body and our instinctive reactions have evolved to an amazingly clever degree, which many of us ignore or take for granted, and which we can all learn how to recognize more clearly if we try. Our interpretation of body language, notably eyes and facial expressions, is instinctive, and with a little thought and knowledge we can significantly increase our conscious awareness of these signals: both the signals we transmit, and the signals in others that we observe.

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<sup>29</sup> *The Science of Eye Contact Attraction. Art of Charm.* theartofcharm.com

<sup>30</sup> Eye Contact Attraction. *Does smiling really make you less attractive? A rebuttal to the well-known psychological study. The Science of Eye Contact Attraction. Art of Charm.* theartofcharm.com

<sup>31</sup> Lynette Barnard. *Aro-Healing: Touching Lives – Theories, Techniques and Therapies. The techniques and therapies of Aro-healing.* Vol. 1.



Doing so gives us a significant advantage in life - professionally and personally in our dealings with others. Understanding non-verbal communication well is not just reading the signals in other people. Importantly, understanding body language enables better self-awareness and self-control too. We understand more about other people's feelings and meanings, and we also understand more about these things in ourselves. When we understand non-verbal communication we become better able to refine and improve what our body says about us, which generates a positive improvement in the way we feel, the way we perform, and what we achieve.<sup>32</sup>

### **Proxemics**<sup>33</sup>

The notion of personal space was introduced by anthropologist **Edward T. Hall, (1966)** who created the concept of Proxemics.<sup>34</sup> Proxemics is the study of how people use and perceive the physical space around them.

The space between the sender and the receiver (instructor and learner) of a message influences the way the message is interpreted. Hall describes the interpersonal space in non-verbal communication that may be divided into four main categories as:

**Intimate** (1.5 feet), embracing, touching or whispering.

**Social** (4 feet), interactions between good friends or family.

**Personal** (12 feet), interaction between acquaintances, and

**Public space** (25 feet), interaction used for public speaking.

The distance between communicators will also depend on sex, status and social role. Driving teachers talk about personal space in the car environment. Generally, if you are closer than an arm's reach, then you are in someone's personal space. However, this space would be impossible in the confines of a small car where the space would be less than about one foot. To create more space in crowded areas such as elevators and bars, people often tense up and use their arms as protection. When in the confines of a driving school car, personal space is limited therefore it's vitally important to be conscious of and not invade the pupil's intimate space or physical comfort zone, which is regarded as about 45/50cms.

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<sup>32</sup> Lynette Barnard. Aro-Healing: Touching Lives – Theories, Techniques and Therapies. The techniques and therapies of Aro-healing. Vol. 1.

<sup>33</sup> Proxemics is the study of human use of space and the effects of population density have on behaviour, communication and social interaction.

<sup>34</sup> Nina Brown. Centre for Spatially Integrated Social Science. Edward T. Hall. *Proxemic Theory, 1966.*

However, this may not always be possible within the confines of four metal walls in a small car, although some unprofessional driver trainers may deliberately endeavour to instigate unnecessary touching or physical contact with the opposite sex for their own gratification. **Charles Darwin**<sup>35</sup> noted in his book: *The Expression of the Emotions of Man and Mammals*: ...

***“The young and the old of widely different races, both with man and animals, express the same state of mind by the same movements”.***

Studies have supported Darwin's belief to a large degree, particularly for expressions of anger, sadness, fear, surprise, disgust, contempt, happiness and caring.

### **Illustrators, Emblems & Manipulators**

American psychologists **Paul Ekman and Wallace Friesen (1969)**<sup>36</sup> divided kinesics into five wider areas considering the function of body movements and facial expression: emblems, illustrators, manipulators, regulators, and emotional expressions.<sup>37</sup> Emblems are somewhat similar to words in body language since they have a specific meaning understood by all members of a culture. Although emblems can be multicultural, i.e. understood by members of different cultures, their non-universality is still tricky. Since they are culturally variable they should be used with caution when gesturing in different parts of the world. The most famous example is probably the ‘thumbs up’ emblem meaning approval, liking, or agreement (adopted even in instant messaging). But in the Middle East and certain parts of West Africa and South America, this gesture (thumbs up) has an obscene and offensive meaning. Another example, with some relevance to interpreters from the USA, is the ‘come here’ or the ‘beckoning finger or palm’ emblem (upturned palm either with one finger or all the fingers extending and retracting), which is offensive in Asia since it is used only to beckon animals. In the Philippines, using that emblem could lead to an arrest.<sup>38</sup> In the Filipino culture, the lips are used to point to something, while Americans and Europeans would use their fingers. Kisses in public are a normal way to say ‘hello’ or ‘goodbye’ to a loved one in some European countries, but in Asian cultures, these gestures are considered intimate and are often left for the privacy of one’s home. It’s important to be cautious when using finger gestures in some countries.

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<sup>35</sup> 1809-1882, British naturalist who formulated the theory of evolution

<sup>36</sup> Pancultural elements in facial displays of emotion. *Science* 164. (3875) : 86-88.

<sup>37</sup> (Ekman & Friesen 2004).

<sup>38</sup> (Cotton 2013)

On Inauguration Day 2005, George W. Bush raised his hand, with the index and little finger extended in the shape of the Texas Longhorn football team logo. Newspapers around the world expressed their astonishment at the use of such a gesture because in many Mediterranean and Latin countries, such as Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Cuba, Spain, Italy and Portugal, to make this sign at someone is to tell them their spouse is cheating on them.<sup>39</sup> Here are the various meanings of joining the thumb and index finger to form a ring:

This is a positive sign in the US, meaning “OK”.

In France and Germany, this signals “zero” or “nothing”.

In Japan, this means “money” if you’re in a professional setting.

In some Mediterranean, Arabic and Latin American countries, this gesture is an obscenity.

Normally, sticking out your tongue is considered an insult. It shows contempt for what one person said or did to another. In Western culture, we learn from a very young age that this gesture is unacceptable and, whatever you do, do not stick out your tongue at your parents however, in Tibet, sticking your tongue out functions both as a greeting and a sign of respect. In sharp contrast, the Maori people of New Zealand has historically used this gesture as part of a war chant preceding battle contrived to intimidate the enemy, it signifies strength and ferocity. Illustrators are movements which illustrate the verbal message, often to emphasize or even contradict that which is being said. For example, while describing a colleague’s work ethic you disagree with, you might shake your head left-to-right or roll your eyes. Likewise, a fisherman may use hand gestures to indicate the size of a fish he caught. (*Like the one that got away Ed.*) Unlike emblems, illustrators usually do not have stand-alone meaning, and depend on the speaker’s involvement with the process of speaking. *Ekman* notes that they serve “a self-priming function, helping the speaker get going or get through a difficult to explain thought”, meaning that the interpreter will be left having to interpret illustrators’ movement into a verbal message. Manipulators (initially termed “adapters”) by *Ekman and Friesen* are touching movements which indicate internal states, positive or negative, and can be directed to the self, other, or objects. Use of manipulators is usually subconscious, usually resulting from feelings of anxiety, nervousness, and lack of control (*Ekman (2004)*).

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<sup>39</sup> Sophie Thompson August 2017. Virtual Speech. *Cultural differences on body language to be aware of.* [virtualspeech.com](http://virtualspeech.com)

Self-touching provides comfort in such situations, although some manipulators may be used as a habitual activity. According to *Hans and Hans*,<sup>40</sup> most common touching behaviours are: scratching, twirling hair, fidgeting with fingers or hands, coughing and throat clearing. They also note that smart phones have become a common manipulator since they help to reduce anxiety. Speakers often use manipulators because public speaking is one of the major causes of anxiety, as is simultaneous interpretation. Regulators are movements which regulate the flow of speaking and listening between two or more participants. They tell the listener to wait longer, hold that thought, pay attention, to talk now, etc. They tell the speaker to hurry up, to repeat, to elaborate, to be less boring, and to give others a chance to speak, etc.<sup>41</sup> These movements indicate our intentions which we often communicate via nodding, eye-contact, and a difference in body position. Although eye movement is studied as a part of kinesics, it also has its separate branch of study named oculusics which studies eye behaviours in greater depth. Emotional expressions (initially termed “affect display”) by *Ekman* are movements which reveal emotions to others, usually subconsciously. These include facial expressions, gestures, hand and feet movements, and posture (*Borg 2009*).<sup>42</sup> Face is the most expressive part of the body, and therefore a major communicator. Since emotion, unlike thought, is expressed externally, it is often a more reliable source of information. *Ekman* notes that:

***“There is no involuntary signal which informs nonspecific what the person is thinking: thoughts are private, but emotions are not”.***

Therefore, interpreters can correctly assess the speaker’s emotions about a specific topic from his emotional expressions and formulate the verbal message.

### **Other Cultural Differences**

The world nowadays is getting smaller, and communication between people all around the world is a must because what is going on in the world concerns everybody. Yet, we sometimes find difficulties in communicating with other people from different cultures though we may know well their language.

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<sup>40</sup> Helena Markovic (2017) *Kinesics & Body Language in Simultaneous & Consecutive Interpretation*. (Master’s Thesis). University of Osijek, Faculties of Humanities and Social Sciences. Dept. of English.

<sup>41</sup> Ekman, Paul. (2004) Emotional and controversial non-verbal signals. In: Larrazabal Jesus, M., Miranda Luis. Perez (eds.) *Language, Knowledge and Representation*. *Philosophical Studies Series*, Vol 99. Dordrecht: Springer, 39 – 47.

<sup>42</sup> Borg (2009). *Body language - How to know what really is being said*. (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). ptgmediapearsoncmg.com

People of western countries tend to focus more on body language and eye contact during face-to-face communication while, for instance, Arabs and Muslims find it disrespectful to maintain a long duration eye contact. The Japanese look at other people very little and tend to focus on the face and the neck while conversing. Gestures are also different in many places in the world. One gesture can mean something in The United States, and mean something offensive in another country. Hands and fingers are also different in use; Middle Eastern cultures prevent eating with left hands because they are reserved for bodily hygiene. Some Venezuelans may use their lips to point at things because pointing with a finger is impolite. Though we may differ in many gestures and bodily expressions, we are alike in many others, like universal facial expressions that do not change because they characterize all human beings. The differences may be due to the social customs or some religious factors in society. We have to take into consideration those differences to show respect and appreciate other cultures because people are more comfortable with those who show good manners and sincerity.<sup>43</sup>

### **Women v Men**

Women are believed to use more expressive and involving nonverbal behaviours than men, and to be more skilled at sending and receiving nonverbal messages. Men are believed to be louder and more interruptive and to display more nervous disfluent behaviours. Thus, perceived gender differences correlated positively with differences reported in observational studies indicating that beliefs about nonverbal gender differences are generally accurate. In a study by *Tiljander (2008)*<sup>44</sup> on the analysis of leg postures in relation to the gender and communication situation, the results indicated that women tend to sit in closed postures or with their legs crossed, which is regarded as feminine, while men sit in wide positions with their legs spread, which is regarded masculine. However, leg positions alone were not found to be decisive in the messages communicated. Instead, leg positions remained gender-stereotypical regardless of the message communicated. Men and women seem to use different leg positions when communicating the same message. In his study on the effect of gender differences on detecting deception through non-verbal cues, *Fatt (1998)*<sup>45</sup> found that men hold back leg and foot movements when lying, while women do not.

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<sup>43</sup> Assala Mihoubi Academic year 2014/5. *Body language in teaching. Case study from secondary schools in Adrar, Algeria*. Ministry of Education & Scientific Research. University Ahmed Draia of Adrar.

<sup>44</sup> Tiljander, C. (2008) *Social gender norms in body language. The construction of stereotyped gender differences in body language in American sitcom Friends*. Retrieved from [www.essay.se](http://www.essay.se)

<sup>45</sup> Fatt, J.P.T., (1998). *Debating deception through non-verbal cues: gender differences*. Equal Opportunities International. 17 (2) 1-9.

Overall, women are far more perceptive than men, and this has given rise to what is commonly referred to as “women’s intuition”. Women have an innate ability to pick up and decipher nonverbal signals, as well as having an accurate eye for detail. This is why few husbands can lie to their wives and get away with it and why, conversely, most women can pull the “wool over a man’s eyes” without him realizing it. Moreover, investigating the lateralization of processing positive facial emotions in a group of right-handed individuals, **Bourne (2005)**<sup>46</sup> found that males are more strongly lateralized than women in the perception of facial expressions.

### **Conclusion**

Nonverbal communication is present in both the everyday and professional interpreter’s interactions. Unlike verbal communication it has no fixed meaning and consists of several aspects such as the way we speak, dress, and measure time, space ourselves or position our bodies. It’s important for driver trainers to self-analyze their own body language and ensure that they are not sending out the wrong signals to their clients. How they dress is only one aspect of non-verbal communication. How they sit (posture) and the proximity to the pupil must be considered. Also, driver trainers must be alert and able to decipher the non-verbal signals being sent out by their pupil. Does the pupil look bored and uninterested or looks like he’d be happier somewhere else. If so, then it’s up to the trainer to adopt measures to rectify this. Kinesics looks at meaningful body movement and the way it is produced. Knowledge of meaningful body motion is also useful when interpreting the speaker’s kinesics and other extra-linguistic elements, especially if the target language audience is of a different culture than the speaker. Although some authors indicate it, there is no substantial research yet to confirm link between interpreting kinesics and other visual input with the quality of the interpretation itself. Communication, after all, is no easy task, and those who strive for improvement will always look for ways to make their message simpler, their intention clearer, and their impact stronger. Teachers and driver trainers need to pay special attention to their body language because it is what makes students and pupils respond to their teaching/training and their output. Research has shown that students become bored and do not respond to the content of the lesson if the way of presenting it is poor. Effective teaching and coaching occurs when the teacher/trainer knows how to convey enthusiasm.

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<sup>46</sup> Bourne, V. J., (2005) *Lateralize processing of positive facial emotion: sex differences in strength of hemispheric dominance*. *Neuropsychologia*, 43 (6), 953-956.

With the unconscious display of the “silent” language, aptly mastered, readers may well remember actress and comedian Mary Jane “Mae” West, (1893-1980) - who once famously said: “*Don’t forget to come up and see me sometime*”- and who was known for her lighthearted, double entendres and breezy sexual independence who also said: “*I speak two languages – Body and English*”. Mae who was a well endowed lady used body language to full advantage to get her sometimes amorous and double-meaning messages across. Finally, words can sometimes make a barrier between people whose basic wish is that of connecting to one another. Thus sometimes we, as driver trainers, should, perhaps consider following Mehrabian’s 7%-38%-55% Rule, and ought to close our mouths more frequently and use less of the spoken word and let our “silent” body language and wordless messages do the talking. But under no circumstances should we stick our tongue out as a means of greeting our already nervous pupils even though this form of greeting may be quite acceptable in some other cultures like Tibet which is regarded as “The Roof of the World”.