



Non-Verbal Communication Case Study

Case Study Overview

Company: Global Tech Enterprises, a multinational technology company with offices in India, the USA, the UK, and Japan, has been experiencing communication challenges across cultural boundaries, including misunderstandings in virtual meetings and conflicts arising from misinterpreted nonverbal cues. The HR department has identified several critical incidents that highlight the importance of non-verbal communication.

Case 1: The Job Interview Disaster

Situation

Rahul, a highly qualified software engineer, appeared for an interview at Global Tech's Mumbai office. Despite having excellent technical skills and relevant experience, he was not selected. The interview panel noted the following observations:

Non-verbal behaviours observed:

- Avoided direct eye contact with interviewers
- Slouched posture throughout the interview
- Fidgeted with his phone on the table
- Crossed arms across chest during technical questions
- Spoke in a monotone voice with minimal facial expressions
- Arrived wearing casual jeans and a wrinkled shirt
- Gave a weak, brief handshake

Question 1

Analyze Rahul's non-verbal communication. What messages did his body language convey to the interviewers?

Question 2

What non-verbal communication strategies should Rahul have employed for a successful interview?

Case 2: The Cross-Cultural Negotiation

Situation



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Sarah, an American business development manager from GlobalTech's New York office, traveled to Tokyo to negotiate a partnership deal with a Japanese technology firm. The negotiation didn't go well, and the deal fell through.

Sarah's behaviors during the meeting:

- Spoke loudly and enthusiastically
- Used large, animated hand gestures
- Maintained prolonged, direct eye contact
- Sat back in her chair in a relaxed posture
- Interrupted to ask questions when confused
- Used first names immediately ("Call me Sarah!")
- Showed impatience by checking her watch
- Directly disagreed with some proposals, saying "No, that won't work"
- Attempted to rush to a decision in the first meeting

Japanese team's non-verbal responses:

- Became quieter and more reserved
- Avoided eye contact
- Showed subtle signs of discomfort (adjusting clothing, brief facial tension)
- Gave ambiguous responses
- Did not commit to next steps

Question

Analyze what went wrong from a non-verbal communication perspective. What cultural differences in non-verbal communication did Sarah fail to recognize?

Case 3: The Virtual Meeting Misunderstanding

Situation

Global Tech conducted a virtual team meeting with participants from Mumbai, London, and San Francisco. Maya, the project manager from Mumbai, presented a critical project update. However, team members seemed disengaged, and the meeting ended with confusion about action items.



video:

- Camera positioned too low (showing mostly forehead)
- Sitting in a poorly lit room (face in shadow)
- Looking at second monitor while speaking (appeared to avoid eye contact)
- Minimal facial expressions
- Reading from notes most of the time
- Background showed unmade bed and clutter
- Frequently on mute, causing delays
- Multitasking (typing emails while others spoke)

Team members' responses:

- Several had cameras off
- One participant was clearly eating
- Another appeared to be in a car
- Several showed minimal reactions or engagement
- Multiple people spoke over each other

Question

What non-verbal communication principles were violated in this virtual meeting? How could the meeting have been more effective?

Case 4: The Performance Review Conflict

Situation

Priya, an HR manager, conducted a performance review with her team member, Amit. The review content was positive, but Amit left feeling demotivated and confused.

Priya's non-verbal behaviors:

- Sat behind large desk (creating physical barrier)
- Maintained serious, unsmilng expression throughout



- Crossed arms while delivering positive feedback
- Kept looking at her computer screen
- Spoke in monotone voice
- Checked phone twice during the meeting
- Minimal eye contact
- Rushed through the meeting in 10 minutes

Amit's interpretation:

- Felt Priya was dissatisfied despite positive words
- Believed the positive feedback was insincere
- Felt unimportant and undervalued
- Left uncertain about his actual performance

Question

Explain the disconnect between Priya's verbal and non-verbal messages. What is this phenomenon called, and how should performance reviews be conducted?

Case 5: The Office Space Dynamics

Situation

Global Tech's Mumbai office redesigned their workspace. Several territorials and proxemic issues emerged:

Scenarios observed:

- A)** Senior managers had large cabins with doors, while junior staff sat in open cubicles
- B)** Ravi always sat in the same spot in the conference room (head of the table) even when not leading the meeting
- C)** New employee Sneha felt uncomfortable when her colleague Arun stood very close (12 inches) while discussing work



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D) The break room had awkward silence because the tables were arranged facing the walls instead of each other

E) Visitors to the office felt lost because there was no clear wayfinding or welcoming signals

Question

Analyze these situations using the concepts of proxemics (personal space) and territoriality. What improvements would you suggest?