

NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION'S USEFULNESS IN POLITICAL CAMPAIGNS¹**Ivana Baltezarević****ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4605-1420>****ivana.baltezarevic@gmail.com****Faculty of Law, Megatrend University, Belgrade, Republic of Serbia****Radoslav Baltezarević****ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7162-3510>****radoslav@diplomacy.bg.ac.rs****Institute of International Politics and Economics, Belgrade, Republic of Serbia****Abstract**

In a democracy, communication and politics are inextricably linked. The process by which politicians, the news media, and the general public exchange information is known as political communication. The majority of political communication specialists concur that nonverbal communication accounts for a significant portion of the total communication. Political persuasion has been employed for a long time in political communication, and politicians are aware that nonverbal communication plays a crucial part in winning over voters. Even while speeches, debates, and policy stances are crucial components of a political campaign, a candidate's body language, nonverbal clues, and overall appearance can have a significant impact on voter behaviour and public opinion. Since nonverbal cues can support, dispute, or replace spoken words, they have an impact on verbal communication. Given that deception relies heavily on nonverbal communication, which can be employed to acquire cooperation or establish authority, it has an impact on other people. Body language and gestures can reveal an individual's personality and the meaning behind their words, consequently, in politics, nonverbal communication is quite important, and can be crucial for communicating confidence, strength, and empathy. Politicians may be able to reveal their genuine emotions about a subject or event by their body language, gestures, facial expressions, and eye contact. Therefore, it's critical to understand that even the smallest gesture can affect how their audience views them as a speaker.

Keywords: Nonverbal Communication, Politics, Nonverbal Clues

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INTRODUCTION

Three fundamental components of face-to-face communication are words, tone of voice, and nonverbal behaviour. Effective communication relies heavily on nonverbal communication (Mehrabian, 1981). The vast collection of all nonverbal cues produced by the environment and source is referred to as nonverbal communication. Through the observation of particular details, nonverbal expressions give recipients important meanings. Even though this frequently occurs in tandem with spoken cues, audiences' perceptions (including those of voters) and assessments are greatly influenced by nonverbal clues (Bucy & Grabe, 2008). Eye contact, posture, body and extremities movement, facial emotions, voice tone, and gestures are all considered forms of nonverbal communication (Berman & Chutkan, 2016). People interpret information using salient aspects, such as appearance and noticeable nonverbal clues, when there is little information available. According to research, people tend to quickly attribute character traits to someone based on their looks and nonverbal cues (Parzuchowski & Wojciszke, 2014). It is possible to investigate sincere indications of behavioural intent that might or might not be consistent with the stated story by taking into account how, when, and why such behavioural deviations occur in answer to queries during speeches and interviews (Bull, 2023).

There are two steps involved in creating an effective communication message: creating and receiving the appropriate message. Finding the proper message entails figuring out what will inspire the intended audience to do the suggested action. When creating messages that are acceptable, one must consider the pre-existing information, attitudes, and beliefs of the target audience and have the ability to influence those beliefs, attitudes, and actions in the way that is wanted. In this sense, belief is the sense that a particular circumstance exists or is true (whether or not it is), and attitude is the degree to which one feels either positively or negatively about a situation (Salsabila et al., 2022). Cultural norms have a big impact on nonverbal communication. People's usage of personal space is largely determined by their culture, for example, people from contact cultures tend to speak louder, touch each other more frequently, maintain more direct eye contact, and choose closer distances than people from non-contact cultures (Hall & Hall, 1990).

Propaganda, electoral analysis, mass communication, and the connection between public opinion and the media are the four main areas of focus for behaviourists, who contend that political communication is founded on the acts of public institutions that seek to advance those institutions. According to the structural-functional perspective, political communication is a series of communicative acts that affect how a political system operates (Dobek-Ostrowska & Wiszniowski, 2002). The advancement of digital technologies has affected many aspects of contemporary life, including political communication (Baltezarević & Baltezarević, 2022). Print media is no longer the exclusive source of information. Nowadays, it spreads through blogs, social media,

television, and other media platforms. Politicians are said to have become more media visible as a result of technical advancements, as they use visual impressions to convey their message through appearances in magazines, newspapers, television, and, more recently, the internet (Kid, 2004). New media has emerged as a result of technological advancements. People are increasingly opting to work, communicate, and obtain information online, where they are constantly exposed to a lot of media messages (Baltezarević & Baltezarević, 2019). Emotional perception and expression have been impacted by social media. Social standards surrounding emotional expression have evolved as a result of the adoption of emojis, stickers, and other digital expressions as a new nonverbal communication tool (Wajahat, 2024).

In October 2024, a survey found that 84 percent of participants thought political debates were important in determining a candidate's success, and 83 percent said the same of national TV news interviews (Guttman, 2024). Although studies have shown that voters' demographic traits, like race, gender, education, and party, may influence voting habits, candidates with more appealing appearances are more likely to receive votes (Sigelman et al., 1995). Morally conveyed nonverbal cues are especially significant in influencing voters' perceptions of political candidates. Voters are more inclined to support a political candidate who is viewed as morally upright. Voting for a candidate is believed to need both nonverbal communication and moral character attributes expressed through smiles and direct eye contact (Horiuchi et al., 2012).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Understanding transmitted messages frequently requires taking into account both verbal and nonverbal channels. In actuality, a substantial amount of research demonstrates that hand gestures made during speech are a component of an integrated speech production system, together with the words (Goldin-Meadow & Alibali, 2013). Ten percent of messages in daily contact are communicated verbally, through speech, while the remaining ninety percent are communicated by body language, tone of voice, skin colour changes, and other means. Even more significant than spoken words, nonverbal cues can convey information far more effectively than spoken ones (Pizek-Meštrić, 2016). The field of nonverbal communication is developing quickly. New study opportunities are presented by technological advancements including brain imaging, affective computing, and autonomous measurement. Furthermore, in contrast to self-reports and measurements of non-social activities like reaction times, there is a need for greater assessment of real social conduct (Agnew et al., 2010).

Handshakes, smiles, eye contact, posture when standing or sitting, facial expressions when listening, shoulder shrugs, and movements of any part of the body can all be considered body gestures that convey information. Because nonverbal communication is so inevitable and involuntary that we are not even conscious of it, it is crucial to be mindful that your body language does not contradict your spoken word (Kurtz et al.,

2009). A one-minute video that experimentally presented Donald Trump's micro-expressions of fear had a generally positive effect on perceptions of his competence and trustworthiness in the three weeks leading up to the 2016 U.S. presidential election, according to Stewart and Hall. However, in the days immediately preceding the election, participants were largely unaffected by this type of contemporaneous information (Stewart & Hall, 2016).

A thorough and scientific classification of nonverbal communication includes the following: a) Chronemics (the timing of pauses and verbalizations); b) Kinesics (all bodily movement and body language, including posture, gesture, eye movement, and facial expressions); c) Haptics (interpersonal contact and intentional touch); d) Oculistics (both deliberate and inadvertent eye contact during speech); e) Physical Appearance (body features, attire, haircut, etc.); f) Olfactics (olfactory influence); g) Proxemics (taking personal space and physical object placement into account); h) Silence (the lack of both spoken and unspoken communication); i) Symbolism (the value attached to symbols); g) Vocalics (vocal influences on speech, such as voice tone, timbre, loudness, and speech rate) (Zoric et al., 2007). Sign language is a noteworthy exception to the broad notion of nonverbal communication. Sign language is not actually categorized as nonverbal communication, rather, it is a genuine mode of communication that does not require verbalization (Knapp & Hall, 1992).

Facial expressions are public displays of one's self-image that are intimately linked to concepts like dignity, status, and self-esteem. They also provide a peek of one's inner self (Norazlina & Masittah, 2012). According to the theory, being consistent and explicit about who we are and what we stand for can help to some degree to shape how other people perceive us, which is a major aspect of personal branding. Thoughts, ideas, and visions are not visible to humans, but deeds are (Milovanović et al., 2018). One of the behaviours that is most influenced by culture is nonverbal communication. The study of nonverbal communication should therefore be incorporated into the curriculum since it plays a crucial cultural role in the learning of one language by speakers of another (Morine, 1985). Individuals generally judge politicians by their nonverbal cues, which can include everything from their facial features to the use of patriotic symbols. Voters with less knowledge exhibit a greater tendency to relate to candidates whose faces mirror their own (Ahler et al., 2017). People's propensity to vote for a politician was influenced by things like haircut and attire, as well as opinions about the political candidate's ability, which has also been demonstrated to affect voting choices (Atkinson et al., 2009). Audiences can also be influenced by posture, which is particularly crucial in competitive settings like political debates. For example, it has been demonstrated that wide body postures in Western cultures can make people feel subservient since they are symbolic of dominance and power (Vacharkulksemsuk et al., 2016). Many

politicians have been taught an old-fashioned trick: when they approach their stage, they need to wave or gesture a little to the audience. Obama frequently performs this as he enters the stage. It is a subtle technique to demonstrate popularity and social evidence, which makes it a powerful move. It demonstrates the speaker's popularity, friendliness, and relatability (Van Edwards, 2013). Additionally, making eye contact can be a sign of determined and assertive behaviour. According to one study, those who kept eye contact were more likely than those who looked away to make audacious choices (Tang & Schmeichel, 2015). Although smiling is a crucial characteristic for establishing connections, smiling excessively conveys a sense of submission. We have a subconscious tendency to assume that people need to smile less the more important they are (Van Edwards, 2013).

Certain preconceived notions about a presidential candidate may be broken by inappropriate nonverbal cues. With the exception of the addition of the emotional component in violation expectancy, nonverbal political inappropriateness and nonverbal expectancy violations theory are fairly similar in their interpretation. Because they don't align with what viewers anticipate will happen in their field of vision, inappropriate nonverbal presidential reactions to dramatic news events can be considered a form of emotional expectation breach (Bucy & Newhagen, 1999).

CONCLUSION

Content transmission to targeted audiences is the aim of all political communications. Despite their differences, nonverbal and verbal communication are entirely complementary, feeding off each other to provide each message a more comprehensive and approachable meaning. Voters' trust can be increased by effective nonverbal political communication, such as keeping eye contact throughout discussions, nodding to demonstrate understanding, and displaying open body language.

Since most people's primary sense is visual, eye contact is a particularly crucial kind of nonverbal communication. One can convey a variety of emotions through one's gaze, such as attraction, hatred, affection, or attention. Nonverbal clues, however, can be confusing and readily misjudged. Body language, gestures, and facial expressions can be misinterpreted by people from various backgrounds, situations, or cultures. Poor posture, avoiding eye contact, erecting walls, improper spacing, excessive motions, and other activities are examples of negative body language. These motions could indicate nervousness, which is typified by low self-esteem and a lack of confidence.

Numerous researches on the intricate subject of nonverbal communication have been conducted, with differing degrees of success. Nonetheless, the majority of specialists concur that nonverbal communication accounts for nearly 90% of all communication. Because their body language frequently shapes the audience's

opinion, politicians must be conscious of it. Someone may move their hands differently, shift their weight from one foot to the other, or even blink more frequently if they are anxious or uncomfortable about something. Political speech that is supposed to be energetic can seem less convincing because of these smaller unconscious movements.

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