

Eye Contact and Facial Expression

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WHAT'S COVERED

In this lesson, you will learn about additional ways that you communicate with your audience. Specifically, this lesson will cover:

1. Eye Contact
 - a. Tips for the Speaker
2. Facial Expression
 - a. Tips for the Speaker

1. Eye Contact

Eye contact, also known as **oculesics**, and facial expression are important aspects of communicating with an audience, providing important social and emotional information.

The eyes can indicate interest, attention, and involvement with audience members, while failure to make eye contact can be interpreted as disinterest.



Gaze includes looking while talking and listening. The length of a gaze, the frequency of glances, patterns of fixation, pupil dilation, and blink rate are all important cues in nonverbal communication. Unless looking at others is a cultural no-no, lookers gain more credibility than non-lookers.

Lack of eye contact is usually perceived to be rude or inattentive in Western cultures. But different cultures have different rules for eye contact. Certain Asian cultures can perceive direct eye contact as a way to signal competitiveness, which in many situations may prove to be inappropriate.

Others lower their eyes to signal respect; eye contact is avoided in Nigeria, and between men and women of Islam. However, in Western cultures, lowered eyes and avoiding eye contact could be misinterpreted as lacking self-confidence.



TERM TO KNOW

Oculesics

A subcategory of kinesics, the study of eye movement, eye behavior, gaze, and eye-related nonverbal communication. Often used interchangeably with eye contact.

1a. Tips for the Speaker

1. Make eye contact with your audience members, and make sure not to stare at your notes the whole time.
2. If you have a large audience, make sure to alternate talking to the audience members to the right, left, and in front of you.
3. When you begin your speech do not look at your notes, look at your audience! You know your topic and who you are so introduce yourself and your topic as you would introduce yourself when you meet a new person.
4. Practice looking at the audience while rehearsing.
5. Avoid skimming over faces in your audience.

2. Facial Expression

The face as a whole indicates much about human moods. Specific emotional states, such as happiness or sadness, are expressed through a smile or a frown, respectively.

There are seven universally recognized emotions shown through facial expressions:

- Fear
- Anger
- Surprise
- Contempt
- Disgust
- Happiness
- Sadness



Regardless of culture, these expressions are the same. However, the same emotion from a specific facial expression may be recognized by a culture, but the same intensity of emotion may not be perceived.

Facial expressions, more than anything, serve as a practical means of communication. Using all the various muscles that precisely control mouth, lips, eyes, nose, forehead, and jaw, the human face is estimated to be capable of more than 10,000 different expressions. This versatility makes non-verbal facial expressions extremely efficient and honest (unless deliberately manipulated).

2a. Tips for the Speaker

People smile when they are happy. Smile before you begin speaking to show the audience that you are happy to be there, and they will smile back. Smiling is contagious.



SUMMARY

In this lesson, you learned that eyes can indicate interest, attention, and involvement with audience members, while failure to make **eye contact** may be interpreted as being disinterested, inattentive, or rude. Different cultures have different rules for eye contact. An important **tip for speakers** is to practice eye contact when rehearsing a speech.

The face as a whole communicates emotional states, such as happiness or sadness. The seven universally recognized emotions shown through **facial expressions** are fear, anger, surprise, contempt, disgust, happiness, and sadness. Human faces are capable of more than 10,000 different expressions.

Source: Boundless. "Eye Contact and Facial Expression." Boundless Communications Boundless, 14 Mar. 2017. Retrieved 31 May. 2017 from <https://www.boundless.com/communications/textbooks/boundless-communications-textbook/delivering-the-speech-12/effective-visual-delivery-65/eye-contact-and-facial-expression-260-4169/>



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