



Review

The role of nonverbal communication skills in guiding tourists

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In an age which is subject to deep and constant change, communication is of prime importance. Communication is a conscious or unconscious, willing or unwilling phenomenon through which emotions and ideas are expressed in the form of verbal and nonverbal messages (Berko and Wolvin, 1998). The messages are then sent, received and perceived. Investigations show that about 75% of our daily time is in one way or the other spent in contact or communication with others. For this reason, everyone's quality of life is affected by the quality of his or her relations with others. All of us enjoy the same kind of opportunities in our work place but only people who speak well, express their ideas clearly, and can establish appropriate and effective relations with others progress rapidly and win the respect and appreciation of others (Yahyai and Tavili, 2006). Communication is a collection of skills but the most important aspect of it is understanding the view points of our interlocutors and putting our ideas over to them. The ability to establish good relations increases our chance of successful communication and helps us in job promotion. Since, tour guides are in constant touch with people, they should be able to establish good public relations both through verbal and nonverbal communication. They should also be flexible, because they deal with people from different cultures with different customs. Therefore, a tour guide is judged by tourists not only based on his/her speaking ability but also by his/her behavior and movements. A group of expressions are used to refer to this subject including: body language, speaking by the movements of head and hands, and nonverbal behavior, in general. Therefore, the foundation of a tour guide's success in attracting tourists' satisfaction is based on establishing a good and effective communication with tourists. This fact highlights the importance of communication in putting the clients first. In this article, an attempt is made to show the importance of nonverbal communication methods and the role that tour guide can play in attracting tourists' satisfaction by appealing to these methods.

Keywords: the tourist industry, the tour leader, human communication, verbal communication, nonverbal communication.

INTRODUCTION

Tourism includes phenomena and relations which originate from the interaction among tourists, tourism service suppliers, host communities, source and target countries, universities and private organizations. It also includes the processes of attracting, transporting,

entertaining, service offering, informing, guiding and managing tourists and visitors. Tourists need to be informed about different aspects of the target place such as its attractions, routes, suitable visiting times and so forth.

Tour guides play an important role in introducing the target place to visitors. They may have a negative effect on the visitors by improper and unsuccessful performance, but a pleasant effect by proper performance.

A tour guide is a connector between the target place and tourists. He is a person who guides native or foreign people to the main tourist attractions like beautiful landscapes, museums, historic places, and cultural relics and informs them in an attractive and significant manner in their own languages.

The leader not only should have relatively comprehensive information about the attractions, but he should also transfer that information to the tourists properly.

The tour guide's verbal communication with the tourists is one of the main points which should be considered. Pleasant way of speaking, high verbal abilities, and desirable and suitable tone of language makes the leader able of establishing a good relationship with his/her companions. The tour guide should have a considerable capability in mixing with tourists. He should attract the tourists and gain their confidence. The tour guide shows his skills through mixing and establishing relations with visitors (Pond, K.L., 1993).

By travelling, we expect the group members not only to have good memories of the trip and learn many things about the target place, but also to find new friends and make good relationships with them.

Even the most knowledgeable and sensitive tour guide should be able to communicate with their group; otherwise he/she won't be a successful tour guide.

Communication skills include making good speech, eye contact, natural ways of moving hands and head, and clear voice. Lacking any of these features makes the guide's task difficult.

Sometimes, some features and gestures like nasal tones, rough accent, noise, nervous or monotonous movements of hands or head lead to confusion and affects guide's other positive characteristics.

By acquiring enough nonverbal communication skills and tricks, the tour guide will be able to start an effective conversation with tourists and respond to their problems, questions and complaints in an appropriate way (Mitchell, G.E., 2005).

Human cooperation constitutes the foundation of a tour guide's performance. This cooperation is formed by communicative tools which have evolved during thousands of years. There is no doubt that speaking is the most important tool, but the role of other communicative tools is also so important that ignoring them can be regard as a big mistake (Zahediand Balali, 2009). Regarding the fact that during the journey tourists devote all their attention to getting the necessary information, leader's manifest behavior in tourism industry, can be considered as a means of

communication or transferring information. Therefore, the leader is judged not only by what she/he says but also by what he or she does. This nonverbal behavior refers to the body language, and the movements of hands and head.

Human communication

Communication is a process through which a message is transferred. Overall, human communication can be divided into two types: verbal communication and nonverbal communication. Communication done with speaking is verbal communication. We should use the words accurately in order to succeed in our job. Every word arises different emotions, senses and reactions in people. If a tour guide uses the words which are contextually appropriate, they will affect tourists as quickly as possible. So, he/she should be careful to avoid negative words like: I cannot, it is impossible, never and so on, in facing new visitors. A tour guide should be aware of the power of words and the effect that they can have on others (Yahyai and Tavili, 2006).

Verbal communication includes four skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing which human beings naturally start to learn gradually in stages represented below:

Starting age	skill
2years old	-----speaking
4 years old	-----listening
6 years old	-----reading
8 years old	-----writing

We are able to listen from the moment we are given birth to, but listening as a skill starts when a person decides to listen purposefully.

Nonverbal communication includes all messages that people exchange besides the verbal communication; positioning yourself, your gait, gestures, face and eyes, clothing, etc. all are elements of nonverbal communication. Therefore, attention to all of the above mentioned cases by a tour guide can be effective in establishing communication with tourists and attracting their attention. Tourists, in the very first contact, judge about tour guide's personality according to his nonverbal communication. Therefore, a tour guide should try to impress tourists in a way that their judgment about him is positive.

Generally, in social interaction nonverbal signs are more reliable than verbal signs, so tour guides should improve their nonverbal behavior. They should know that the first impression is very important. It is important to know that, verbal communication constitutes 7%, along with tone and intonation accounting for 38% of message conveyance. The remaining 55% belongs to body movements and nonverbal communication which play the most important role in the transfer of messages.

Characteristics of nonverbal communication

Speech relation or spoken language has an important role in communication. But we should not neglect non-speech relation or language either. In our daily life we are surrounded by many examples of non-speech communication. Behavioral language which is the main part of nonverbal communication includes behavior that help us communicate with others appropriately such as our way of sitting, body movements, gestures (facial expression) and... . When we walk in the street our feelings are influenced by traffic signs, shops, windows of stores, pictures, flags, stylish clothes, modern cars, etc. These are non_speech relation media. Another kind of behavioral language is sign language which is used by deaf people. In this way messages are transmitted by movements of head in the process of nonverbal communication. Intelligent and suitable use of behavioral language is very important. Therefore, learning behavioral language and acquisition skill on it for communication with others is very useful.

Nonverbal communication, according to the definition of signs in semiotics, includes: body movement, body condition, facial expressions, symbolic covering and other equivalent phenomenon which has message value between its sender and receiver. This kind of communication has ten important features. Awareness of these features would enhance our comprehension of their role in message conveyance. These features are: (Richmond and McCroskey, 2008).

Nonverbal communication takes place in a specific context.

Nonverbal communication occurs in the framework of time and place.

Nonverbal communication is the gestures, behavior and mental actions.

Nonverbal communication is based on goal and distance.

Nonverbal communication is much more accepted than verbal communication.

Nonverbal communication is everywhere and in any atmosphere and area.

Nonverbal communication reveals itself in situations where there is a lack of five senses.

Nonverbal communication occurs mostly in ambiguous situations and has multiple meanings.

Nonverbal communication depends on culture type and geographical area of people and functions in different ways.

Nonverbal communication is substitutable, complementary, incoherent and dependent on verbal communication of people.

A precise perception and conception of these features and principles that are prevalent in meaning, can help us be more aware of extensive limitations and boundaries of

these scientific bounds.

Basic functions of nonverbal behavior

It should be said, at the beginning, that nonverbal communication does not take place in mere space but most of the time it accompanies verbal communication. Moreover, although particular nonverbal behavior may transmit autonomous message or messages, in general the majority of nonverbal messages are understood from groups of nonverbal behavior. Recipients interpret different messages independently but usually these messages are interpreted with each other. That which mode of expression (verbal vs. nonverbal) is dominant depends on the situation.

Ordinarily, there are six basic function for nonverbal messages. These include:

Completing: some nonverbal messages accompany verbal messages in a coordinated way. A nonverbal message, in addition to completing the verbal message, reinforces and clarifies it and makes a clear message available to the recipient.

Denying: Some nonverbal messages instead of completing verbal messages, deny or thwart it or they are in contrast with the original message. For example, people often use metaphoric or ironic language to express their thoughts. The use of metaphor and irony sometimes reverses the function of verbal message.

Repeating: Nonverbal messages that have the function of repeating or restating the verbal message are mechanisms that can function independently even in the absence of verbal messages. For example, signs like, two raised fingers while ordering two pizzas, function as a repetition of and an emphasis on the original message.

Controlling: Verbal interactions are organized means of communication because of they are controlled have direction. When these controlled and directed messages are accompanied by nonverbal messages they result in a better outcome. These nonverbal messages are: looking at someone or turning away your face from him/her, raising a finger as you make a pause to indicate that you are not finished, raising and lowering the pitch of your voice, for example, when you want to let someone else talk or looking directly at him/her and stopping bodily gestures. In this way, we control nonverbal communication.

Substituting: substitution occurs when nonverbal messages are used instead of verbal ones. Waving a hand and hailing somebody are two of the common cases. Looking angrily at someone conveys the same message that a negative sentence expresses. Most of the time, without sending any verbal message, we make people aware that we are angry with them. Our nonverbal behavior could transfer the message that we are not

willing to have them in that place and stop them from continuing the discussion.

Emphasizing

Nonverbal messages are used to accentuate, support, emphasize or put stress on the verbal messages. Pausing before speaking signals what will be said later is of much more importance. Speaking loudly instead of speaking normally could put more emphasis on the verbal message.

Tour guides should pay close attention to the functions of nonverbal messages so that they can use them effectively while speaking with tourists. When they want to show the importance of the information they are giving to the tourist, they could change the tone of their voice or pause; through looking at someone who is lighting up a cigarette in public, a tour guide can make him understand that it is not appropriate to do so and replace speaking with the eye contact or verbal with nonverbal communication. This looking language could be effective in saving the tourist's character and avoids a conversation which may be unwelcome and at the same time plays a regulating role.

Nonverbal behavior has many different forms and is transferred to the listener by different means.

Richmond and Mc Croskey,(2008) classify different forms of nonverbal communication as below:

- Physical appearance: size and form of the body, the color of skin and hair, height, weight and objects used by the person

- Gesture and movement: the movements of hands and arms, the form of the body and torso, and gait. The message transferred via gesture and movement is called body language.

- Facial expressions and eye-contact: messages transferred via face and eyes, like raising one's eyebrows

- Vocal behavior: is based on the features of voice and associated elements like accent and dialect

- Space: The study of communicative aspects of space is called adjacency and communications. There are two important sections in this study: territoriality (declared space or marked space) and personal space (interactional space). Each of these two sections encompasses important types of messages that we send, those which exist in the space and we usually make use of.

Humans are completely different from one another in using space and therefore, they send very different nonverbal messages.

- Touch: For the sake of transferring special messages to the addressee such as touching shoulders for relieving

- Environment: Factors such as architecture, decoration, music, light, color, temperature, perfume and smell

- Time: For example, arriving late or being on time is considered to be a sign of sending a special message to the addressee.

In order to understand the role of nonverbal skills in establishing an effective communication between a guide and tourists, we are going to discuss some methods of transferring nonverbal messages below.

Body language

Movements of body organs are used as a tool for transferring nonverbal messages. This kind of message transfer is called body language. Body language and movements are very complex and every movement may mean something different in different conditions and cultural environments to the addressee.

Body language is one of the most influential ways of communication which includes bodily expression, head and hands movements, eye contact and appearance that affects the listener more than verbal communication.

Listeners perceive complex messages through eyes better than ears.

Posture

Posture indicates a person's self-confidence, health and the percentage of interest towards the environment around him. Nervous or martinet mood is very unfavorable and makes a tour guide appear awkward. An ideal posture for the body is straight and at the same time comfortable. Posture should be normal and natural and those who have less natural or normal postures should work to improve it. Benefits of the good posture are better breathing, health and appearance, increased energy and strong and expressive voice. To have a good posture, specific exercises are necessary every time and everywhere.

Stand up and sit down; keep your head up and take deep breath, your stomach should expand during breathing and while exhaling your arms must be on your sides. Shoulders should be in a relaxed position. During exhaling empty your lungs and keep your head in the previous position. Your jaw should be parallel with the ground. Keep on taking deep breaths for a few minutes. Be careful about the position of the head, shoulders, breathing and stomach movement. The right body position makes you feel relaxed.

Head and hands' movement: Head and hands' movements are among the most effective ways of communicating. The most effective movements of head and hands are those which are purposeful and natural. Nervous, anxious, unnatural and abnormal movements interrupt the guide's message. One of the effective ways that makes a guide aware of his movements is attending to them by taking part in video programmed sessions. In

these sessions, experts evaluate all aspects of their speaking style. Although it is a little difficult at the beginning, this experience would be useful for them.

Factors such as culture, treatment, geographical and ethnic background, social status and environment play significant roles in the meanings of body movements and gestures. According to Richmond and Mc Croskey, body movements and gestures are divided into five different types: (Richmond and Mc Croskey, 2008).

Signs: Gestures independent from verbal utterances which can be meaningful if they have special features.

Representatives

Gestures and movements closely related to the verbal utterance that help clarify utterances. Representatives are mostly used in face to face interactions; pounding your fist on the table to put emphasis on what you are saying is a clear example of representatives.

Regulators

Gestures and body movements accompanied by eye movements and vocal signs control and maintain interaction between speakers and listeners during a conversation. As an example, take the situation in which a tourist intends to carry a message over to the guide in a group and asks him/her a question. How should he/she express his/her intention?

Effective representative posture

These signals mainly include facial expressions, but body gesture, the way of walking, hands and feet movements, and other behavior which give information about a person's emotional status to his/her interlocutor, are also included. Sometimes people control these movements through experience and training, but sometimes these gestures transform the emotions proper. The trembling of hands while experiencing anxiety is one of the effective representative postures.

Regulators: These are unintentional behaviors which rise as a result of boredom or anxiety and are closely associated with the negative feelings towards ourselves or others. These should be construed as the remnants of imitated behavior from individuals' childhood. Biting the lips, chewing the nails, picking the nose, and tapping on the table with a pen or pencil are examples of these unintentional behaviors.

Eye contact

one of the most important techniques of speaking is eye contact. Learning how to speak through eye contact is

too stressful and difficult for a novice. All in all, a well-managed eye contact is a valuable and exciting tool for a speaker. Appropriate eye contact is followed by an instant reaction. Most of the experts suggest that speakers should have eye contact with each of the audiences and this is what a tour guide could do easily. Deliberate eye contact is too difficult for an anxious novice speaker to establish who should keep so many points in his or her mind. One should make a change in the direction of gaze or choice of those who are interested in his/her speech. In this way having eye contact with them won't be difficult. Some audiences usually show negative reactions such as lowering eyebrows, looking at or doing something else while listening or pretending not to listen at all. These are what a novice person should cope and fight with. In contrast, those who are interested in speech and those who nod or smile are a great support for the anxious lecturer. When the speaker keeps him/herself calm, every kind of reflections on the part of the audiences would be useful, even negative ones; and this makes the speaker gain some information or points about his/her performance. Like other skills, learning to make eye contact easily and effectively needs practicing and spending time.

Facial expression

Experience and research have helped us understand the point that human's face is the primary instrument of conveying feelings. Facial muscles make a collection of complicated forms. In fact, most of us can make more than a hundred different facial expressions by different configurations of our facial muscles. Perhaps we can say that human's face, especially the area around eyes, is the most important part in conveying nonverbal messages. The main reason for the importance of face in human communications is that, it is this part of the body which is usually visible during interactions. When we talk to each other, most of us look at each other's face and we usually do not pay attention to other parts of the body.

Eyes are windows into the soul and face is a cover that reveals individual's emotions, status, and attitudes. We often judge about people's characters by looking at their faces and eyes.

With our face, we can show our disagreement, surprise or genuine interest towards other's messages. Our facial expressions reveal our mental status and tone. In contrast to other nonverbal behavior, our facial expressions and our eyes affect our daily interactions with others.

RESULTS

Experts have accepted that nonverbal communication transfers the effect of a message. Nonverbal signals can

be created through innate nervous reactions or acquired behavior in a culture. Each culture has its own special body language.

An experienced tour guide should be aware of simultaneous role of categories and elements of nonverbal communication in the formation and transfer of nonverbal messages to tourists and the picture he is projecting to them. He/she should also try to handle these elements simultaneously, as far as possible. This hard goal cannot be achieved unless by learning, practicing, and experiencing; and if a tour guide does not have the ability to manage his interpersonal communications, it is highly probable that contradictory messages are transferred to his/her interlocutor(s) in a single moment and this may cause confusion. A tour guide should keep in mind that he/she is a representative of the host community for tourists and his deeds, expressive ability, and nonverbal communication with tourists are influential in satisfying and attracting them.

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