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## How People Communicate: When There is No Shared Language

**Sama'a Sate'a Al-Kumait\***

Asst.Lect. in University of Tikrit/College of Education for Humanities

[Sama.satea@tu.edu.iq](mailto:Sama.satea@tu.edu.iq)

&

**Israa Bahram Azeez**

University of Tikrit/College of Education for Humanities

[Israa.bahram88@tu.edu.iq](mailto:Israa.bahram88@tu.edu.iq)

&

**Hana Qaiser Hamdi**

University of Tikrit/College of Education for Humanities

[Hanokaiser24@tu.edu.iq](mailto:Hanokaiser24@tu.edu.iq)

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### Abstract

Communication is an essential aspect of human interaction, serving as a means to express thoughts, emotions, facts and ideas and is merely a basic human need. However, when individuals find themselves in situations where a shared language (refers to individuals improving understanding amongst themselves relying on language (e.g. spoken, text) to assist them communicate more effectively) is absent, they are forced to explore alternative methods of

\* **Corresponding Author:** Sama'a Sate'a Al-Kumait, Email: [Sama.satea@tu.edu.iq](mailto:Sama.satea@tu.edu.iq)

**Affiliation:** Tikrit University - Iraq

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communication. Nonetheless, non-verbal communication can lead to significant barriers in effective interaction. While it can facilitate some level of connection, the potential for misinterpretation and cultural differences can complicate communication efforts.

Non-verbal cues, gestures, and body posture become primary tools in bridging the gap between individuals from different linguistic backgrounds. This form of communication transcends language barriers, allowing for meaningful connections to be established and relationships to flourish. Hence, the research aims to uncover how nonverbal signals contribute to the overall message conveyed in various contexts, backgrounds, and cultures. This integrated approach allows for a more holistic interpretation of interactions, enhancing our knowledge of the complexities of human behavior. This research explores the intricate ways in which humans navigate communication in the absence of a shared language, highlighting the significance of non-verbal communication, the difference between language and communication, the characteristics of human language, and the importance of multi-modal communication in fostering understanding and connection between individuals from diverse backgrounds. Additionally, it explains how language barriers pose significant challenges to effective communication.

This study employs a multimodal framework to examine the data, incorporating Knapp and Hall's (2002) Model of Nonverbal Communication, the Facial Action Coding System (FACS), and contextual analysis to provide a comprehensive understanding of nonverbal cues in five tiktok videos of the television show *Arabs Got Talent*. In conclusion, it can be deduced that communication without a shared language often relies heavily on non-verbal cues. Non-verbal communication plays a vital role in all interactions and adds richness and depth to interpersonal interactions, conveying emotion and intentions and facilitating effective communication even in the absence of shared language.

**Keywords:** Communication, language, language barrier, multi-modal communication, non-verbal cues.

كيف يتواصل الناس: عندما لا توجد لغة مشتركة

م.م. سماء ساطع اسماعيل

م.م. اسراء بهرام عزيز

م.م. هنا قيصر حمدي

قسم اللغة الانكليزية/كلية التربية للعلوم الانسانية/جامعة تكريت

المستلخص

التواصل هو جانب أساسي من جوانب التفاعل البشري، حيث يُعد وسيلة للتعبير عن الأفكار والعواطف والحقائق والأفكار، ويعتبر حاجة بشرية أساسية. ومع ذلك، عندما يجد الأفراد أنفسهم في مواقف تفتقر إلى لغة مشتركة، يُجبرون على استكشاف طرق بديلة للتواصل. تشير اللغة المشتركة إلى تحسين فهم الأفراد

لبعضهم البعض من خلال الاعتماد على اللغة (مثل: المحكية والنصية) لمساعدتهم في التواصل بفاعلية أكبر.

تتحول الإشارات غير اللفظية والإيماءات ووضعيات الجسم إلى أدوات رئيسية في سد الفجوة بين الأفراد من خلفيات لغوية مختلفة. هذه الصورة من التواصل تتجاوز حواجز اللغة، مما يسمح بإقامة روابط ذات معنى ونمو العلاقات. لذلك، يهدف البحث إلى اكتشاف كيف تساهم الإشارات غير اللفظية في الرسالة العامة المعبر عنه في سياقات وخلفيات وثقافات متنوعة..

يسمح هذا النهج المتكامل بتفسير أكثر شمولية للتفاعلات، مما يعزز معرفتنا بتعقيدات السلوك البشري. يستكشف هذا البحث الطرق المعقدة التي يجتاز بها البشر عملية التواصل في غياب لغة مشتركة، مسلطاً الضوء على أهمية التواصل غير اللفظي، والفروق بين اللغة والتواصل، وخصائص اللغة البشرية، وأهمية التواصل متعدد الوسائط في تعزيز الفهم والاتصال بين الأفراد من خلفيات متنوعة. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، يوضح كيف تشكل حواجز اللغة تحديات كبيرة أمام التواصل الفعال..

يستخدم هذا الدراسة إطاراً متعدد الوسائط لفحص البيانات، مستفيداً من نموذج التواصل غير اللفظي الخاص بـ Knapp وHall (2002)، ونظام ترميز الحركة (FACS) facial Action Coding System، والتحليل السياقي لتوفير فهم شامل للإشارات غير اللفظية في خمسة مقاطع فيديو على تيك توك من برنامج "أرابز غوت تالنت". في الختام، يمكن استنتاج أن التواصل بدون لغة مشتركة يعتمد غالباً بشكل كبير على الإشارات غير اللفظية. يلعب التواصل غير اللفظي دوراً حيوياً في جميع التفاعلات ويضفي غنى وعمقاً على التفاعلات الشخصية، حيث يعبر عن العواطف والنيات و يسهل التواصل الفعال حتى في غياب الكلمات المنطوقة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التواصل، اللغة، الإشارات غير اللفظية، حاجز اللغة، التواصل متعدد الوسائط.

## Introduction

Language and communication are two foundational components of human interconnectedness. Language acts as the invisible thread binding us together, but what happens when that thread dissolves entirely? How can we communicate when words fade away and understanding becomes elusive? Language is the primary tool of communication. It performs a vital role in enabling individuals build a bridge of relationships. Similarly, language plays as a destructor of bridges of human relations because it disconnects people from each other. Language can be a barrier to express our thoughts with others in the globalization and communication era. Language barriers create challenges in different settings; education, business, aviation, healthcare setting and social settings. While communication on the other hand enables us to share these expressions with others effectively. Through language and communication, we are able to build relationships, sharing ideas and opinions and exchange

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information between a sender and a receiver. In essence, language and communication are the foundation of society; communication has a major role in the existence and survival of individuals, groups, societies, and nations across the universe.

## **The Definition of language**

“If intelligent aliens from another planet were to visit Earth, they might notice a significant distinction between humans and other species - our ability to communicate through language. The aliens may be interested by the fascinating aspects of human language, how we utilize it, and the process of language acquisition in humans”. This is the scenario drawn by Hauser, Chomsky and Fitch (2022:2) at the start of their article “The faculty of Language: What is it, who has it, and how did it evolve?”

Many definitions of language have been emerged by linguists, yet there is no universal definition that is relevant due to the complexity of language, here are some of the definitions proposed:

“Language is a purely human and no instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions, and desires by means of a system of voluntarily produced symbols” (Sapir, 1921:82)

“Language as a tool and system for communication” (Nunan, 2007:56)

“Language is foremost a means of communication, and communication almost always takes place within some sort of social context”; “language is a rule-based system of signs” (Amberg & Vause, 2009:63)

“language, a system of conventional spoken, manual (signed), or written symbols by means of which human beings, as members of a social group and participants in its culture, express themselves.” (Robins and Crystal, 2021)

“Language is a complex and dynamic system of conventional symbols that is used in various modes for thought and Language is a structured and shared form of communication like spoken and written words, figures, characters, and gestures, or a combination of these communication” (American Speech Language-Hearing Association, 1982).

Throughout history, languages have been transmitted orally from one generation to the next before being documented in some written form. Language, as a tool functioning primarily through spoken communication, is subject to continuous evolution. It is considered the most advanced form of communication and is typically used by higher-order beings, such as humans. Unlike other living creatures, humans have the ability to communicate verbally and also express their thoughts in written form.

Therefore, Language is unique to humans and sets them apart from other animals. While other species can communicate in various ways, human language stands out for its infinite productivity and creativity. Humans can communicate about any topic and adapt their language to convey new concepts or experiences.

Distinctive characteristics of human language:

1- Language as a communication device:

Language serves as a means of communication among community members through spoken sounds that are produced by the speech organs as stated by Gorys (1997:1). It is seen as a fundamental tool for expressing oneself, ideas, thoughts and displaying one's identity. Through language, individuals can convey their perspectives, understanding of various subjects, educational background, and even their character. Language acts as a reflection of both the individual and the community. (Keraf,1997)

## 2-Arbitrary

Language is arbitrary which implies it is based on social agreement and there is no logical rapport between the words of a language and their meanings or the concept posed by them. Due to this feature, it is very difficult to explain why the four footed small pet animal is called ‘cat’ in English, ‘gato’ in Spanish, ‘qita’ in Arabic, ‘chat’ in French, ‘katze’ in German and so on. The use of such different words for the same creature is merely because people who share the same language decided to utilize the labels that were assigned to objects and ideas during their initial discussion. If language had not been arbitrary, there would be only a single language in the whole world. (Aitchison, 2010)

## 3-Non-instinctive, Conventional:

Language develops overtime; it is a system of conventions that evolve within a society. It is the result of progression and convention. Generation after generation inherits and carries this system from the previous one through learning and exposure. It is non-instinctive and not spontaneous because it is gained by human beings, no one is born with a specific language, it is not someone’s heritage. language is dynamic that can change, evolve, grow and even disappear . As a set of conventions, language can only be acquired and passed on through convention, not inherently enjoyed. This lack of instinct in language contributes to its evolution (Chomsky, 2004).

## 4-Symbolic

According to Sapir (1921:8) “Language is a purely human and non-instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions and desires by means of voluntarily produced symbols”. Each word or a phrase, or a letter or group of letters within the word or phrase in a language can function as a symbol. symbols of language are used arbitrarily and subject to change overtime. That is, symbols of language are not tied to any particular meaning, but instead serve as a means for communicating with each other. For instance the word “unique” is used to resemble something that is different or unusual. The meaning of the word is arbitrary, as there is no inherent connection between the word “unique” and the concept it represents.

## 5-Systematic

Language serves as a systematic means of communication through the use of sounds, signals, conventional symbols, body movements and patterns that have an agreed upon meaning to ensure accurate interpretation of messages. Even though language is symbolic, it still follows a specific structure. Each language has its own unique arrangement system, making it a complex network of systems. Every language consists of phonological and grammatical systems, which further branch out into various sub-systems. For instance, each grammatical system has morphological and syntactic systems, each containing sub-systems like plural, mood, aspect, tense, etc (Mukherjee,2015).

## 6-Vocal

Language is a system of vocal sounds, produced through the use of articulatory organs, to convey meaningful messages. It emphasizes that speech precedes writing, as writing serves as a means of recording spoken language. Still there are societies rely solely on spoken language without having invented their own writing systems, resulting in a lack of written language skills (Aitchison,2010).

## 7-Human

Human beings are the sole species on earth possessing the power of speech. Animals also communicate, but their system of communication cannot be regarded as language because they lack the cognitive capacity and physical structures required for human language acquisition. Human language is incredibly complex, endlessly adaptable, and beyond the capabilities of animals. But how animals communicate? Animals have their own forms of communication, such as cries, hoots, bleats, dances, and coos, these noises function for the animals as language for human.

#### 8-Productivity and creativity

“Language is a set (finite or infinite) of sentences, each finite in length and constructed out of a finite set of elements”. Noam Chomsky (1957:13).

The human brain is incredibly proficient at generating diverse sentences using the limited set of sounds and symbols within a specific language. With just a few fundamental principles of construction, the brain can produce a vast number of varied and new utterances without restriction on sentence length and both the speaker and hearer can understand without difficulty (Aitchison, 1996:122).

#### 9-INTERCHANGEABILITY:

Interchangeability is a fundamental feature of human language that refers to the ability of individuals to both produce and receive messages within a given linguistic system. This means that speakers can switch roles between sender and receiver, generating and understanding an infinite number of new utterances. Interchangeability is a key aspect that distinguishes human language from other forms of communication in the animal kingdom. (ibid:124)

#### 10-Displacement

This characteristic of languages refers to the ability to speak not only what is occurring at the moment and location of the conversation but also other situations, whether they are in the future or the past, and whether they are real or imaginary. Human language has the quality of being 'context-free,' meaning that people can talk about experiences they haven't actually had and about objects and events that are not present at the time and place of speaking, as human language is not solely driven by immediate stimuli. This feature is known as displacement. Only humans can create messages about the present, past, or future, as well as distant locations, allowing for a multidimensional conversation (Mukherjee, 2015:234).

#### 11-SPECIALIZATION

This characteristic implies that the organs used for communication do not need to be fully engaged in the act of communication. Individuals should be able to respond without stopping their current activities, and their responses should not be entirely dictated by external stimuli. Humans can talk about topics that have no connection to their ongoing activities and can discuss demanding tasks without exerting any extra effort.

#### 12-OPEN ENDED, EXTENDIBLE AND MODIFIABLE

Human language is open-ended, meaning that new items can be added into its set of symbolic units. This allows for the continual addition of new words to the existing vocabulary. Language is dynamic rather than static; it evolves constantly at all levels, including sounds, words, meanings, and sentences. Language undergoes changes and grows, with new words being introduced over time. Each generation changes and adapts its language to meet the changing needs and demands of the speakers. Consequently, language is open-ended, flexible, and expandable. (ibid:235)

## **The Definition of Communication**

While language is considered the primary medium of communication, thus communication is “a social event that requires sending and receiving messages with shared understanding of meaning.”

Communication is an essential aspect of human existence. As social creatures, people interact with one another from birth, utilizing a range of methods/tools. These methods encompass sounds, words, gestures, postures, facial expressions, and sign language. Communication is inherently social, involving the exchange of messages that convey a mutual understanding of their meaning. Individuals develop communication tools and learn new knowledge and skills. For instance, infants use techniques like crying, body movements, smiling, and some sounds; as they grow and gain more interactions, knowledge, and experiences, they develop additional ways to express themselves through body language, spoken or written language, sign language, dance, shouting, and other means (Huff, L., & Christensen, 2018:2).

Giffin & Patten (1976) stated that communication “is the process of creating meaning as well as ascribing it. It is the exchange of ideas and interaction among group members”. The Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary of Current English (2004) defines communication as “the activity or process of expressing ideas and feelings or of giving people information. In other words, communication is the act of transferring information and messages from one place to another and from one individual to another via various means”.

There are multiple types or forms of human communication like verbal, non-verbal, written and other forms of electronic communication. Communication frequently integrates both verbal and nonverbal dimensions. Verbal communication is primarily associated with the use of language, whereas nonverbal communication encompasses all forms of interaction that occur beyond words. In other words, meaning can be conveyed through various non-linguistic channels. Nonverbal communication may be manifested in body posture, eye contact, gestures, touch (haptics), and facial expressions. It may also extend to outward expressions such as clothing, hairstyles, architecture, symbolic representations, and infographics (Falih&Ahmed, 2024:189).

### **Verbal communication**

This, as the name implies, is communicating through speaking including sounds, tone, words, and language. Speaking serves as an efficient way of communicating; it has two forms: interpersonal communication and public speaking. Interpersonal communication takes place when individuals directly speak to each other. In this case, communication would be informal, they can express their feelings freely regardless of the bounds of societal norms. On the other hand, public speaking occurs when an individual addressing a large group. Here, communication is formal characterized by rule bound structure, aiming for a specific outcome. In both scenarios, speakers may intend to entertain, argue, inform, or persuade. Verbal communication, also known as oral or spoken communication, can incorporate visual aids and non-verbal cues to facilitate understanding, strengthen connections, reduce ambiguity, and encourage immediate feedback. (Aarti, 2012:8).

### **Non-verbal communication**

Non-verbal communication refers to the process of conveying meaning through non-verbal cues. It encompasses all the thoughts, information, ideas, and messages we express without using words, relying on physical cues such as haptic, tone of voice, eye gaze, smell, and body movements. This form of communication also involves artistic expressions like dancing, music, painting, drama, and sculpture, as well as symbols and sign language. Body language, facial

expressions, physical contact, and dress all communicate substantial information. Our non-verbal communication depicts who we are and reveals how we relate to other people. (Hall and Knapp,2013:70) Nonverbal communication enables the swift and effective transmission of ideas. It also serves as a powerful means of building interpersonal connections. Through various nonverbal signals, individuals can express their thoughts and emotions without relying on spoken language (Ibrahim,2023:176).

### **Body language and posture**

This type of non-verbal communication can provide a great deal of information. Body language refers to the physical behaviors, expressions, and cues that convey messages without words, often occurring instinctively rather than deliberately. Whether you realize it or not, you are constantly sending and receiving unspoken messages or signals during interactions with others. Your non-verbal actions, such as nodding, posture, blinking, tone of voice, and amount of eye contact, deliver strong signals.

In fact, it is often your body language and nonverbal signals that communicate the most. These cues can create a sense of comfort, build trust, and attract others to you, or they can lead to offense, confusion, and undermine your intended message. Additionally, communication does not cease when you stop speaking; even in silence, you continue to communicate nonverbally. (ibid:71)

### **Sign language**

This is a main example of non-verbal communication, it is a visual form of communication that involves using hand movements, facial expressions, body language, and gestures to express thoughts and ideas. It is mainly used by deaf and hard-of-hearing people and differs by region and community, leading to various sign languages globally, including American Sign Language (ASL) and British Sign Language (BSL). Each sign language possesses its own grammar, syntax, and vocabulary, categorizing them as fully developed languages. (Wilson,1972:112-113)

### **Makaton**

It is defined as a form of language that utilizes a large collection of symbols, signs and speech. It is particularly utilized with those who have learning and physical disabilities, or hearing impairment to enable them to communicate and develop their communication skills such as attention, listening, comprehension and memory.

**Braille:** This is a tactile writing system developed by Louis Braille in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century to enable individuals who are blind or visually impaired. It consists of patterns of raised dots arranged in cells that are read using touch. This system is allowing users to read and write through touch.

(<https://sightscotland.org.uk/articles/information-and-advice/braille-facts>)

**Gestures:** Intentional movements and signals that play a crucial role in conveying messages without the use of language. Common gestures including waving, pointing, and rolling eyes are widely recognized, while others can be culturally specific and arbitrary. Nonverbal communication through gestures holds significant power and influence, for example, the interpretation of some gestures can diverse across cultures. For instance, the “OK” sign made with the hand usually conveys a positive message in English-speaking countries, yet it is regarded offensive in countries such as Germany, Russia, and Brazil. So, it’s necessary to use gestures carefully to avoid any misinterpretation. (Stefani and et al,2019:7)

**Facial expressions:** According to Hall and Knapp (2013,38) facial actions play a significant role in nonverbal communication. A person's expression is frequently the initial aspect we notice, even prior to listening to their words. A smile or a frown can convey countless emotion without

saying a word. Although nonverbal communication and actions can differ widely across cultures, facial expressions like happiness, sadness, sneering, anger, and surprise are universal and tend to be the same globally.

**Eye contact:** is another substantial type of non-verbal communication. The way you stare at someone can reveal different messages, such as love, interest, anger, hostility, wonder or attraction. Eye contact plays a vital role in sustaining conversation and assessing the other person's level of interest and reaction, with behaviors like looking, staring, and blinking serving as key indicators. For instance, when you encounter something or someone you find appealing, you tend to blink more frequently. Also people often use eye contact to judge honesty. Steady eye contact is often interpreted as a sign of truthfulness and honesty, while shifty eyes are often viewed as signs of dishonesty and lying. Thus, eye contact stands out as a crucial form of nonverbal communication. (Blatner,2022:3)

**Haptic:** touch is another significant form of nonverbal communication that can express affection, familiarity, sympathy, and various emotions. Gender differences also influence how individuals use touch to convey meaning. Women tend to use touch to show care, concern, and nurturing, whereas men are more likely to employ touch as a means of asserting power or control over others. (ibid:3)

**Paralinguistic:** Paralinguistic refers to vocal communication that is separate from spoken language hence it is a form of nonverbal communication. It involves elements such as tone of voice, loudness, inflection, and pitch. For instance, the tone in which something is said can significantly alter the meaning of a sentence. A statement delivered in a strong tone may be perceived as expressing enthusiasm and agreement, while the same words delivered in a hesitant tone can convey disapproval or disinterest. (<https://www.verywellmind.com/types-of-nonverbal-communication-2795397>)

**Artifacts:** De Vito (2005:34) states that artifacts “are physical objects, such as clothing, homes, and cars that indicate to others a person's personal and social beliefs and habits. Messages are thus conveyed in a nonverbal manner”. Objects and images like (clothing, jewelry, body piercing and tattoos, and space decoration) serve as effective means of nonverbal communication.

Uniforms, for instance, can convey a significant amount of information about a person. A soldier wears fatigues, a police officer sports a designated uniform, and a doctor dons a white lab coat. Just by looking at these outfits, others can quickly identify their professions, social class, and attitudes making them a potent form of nonverbal communication.

**Written communication:** this refers to the act of conveying messages through written words. Effective written communication is practiced across various languages. Examples include emails, text messages, reports, articles, and memos, which serve both business and personal purposes. One benefit of written communication is that it can be revised and edited multiple times before being sent to the intended recipient. Writing is a human invention, historically; written communication began with pictograms etched on stone (Yule, 2010:61). Over time, writing evolved to appear on paper, papyrus, clay, and wax. Today, communication occurs through the transmission of information via controlled waves and electronic signals. While the four language skills; listening, speaking, reading, and writing are all integral to communication, writing is considered the most complex.

**Visual communication:** It is the use of visuals to convey information for effective communication. Aarti states “This is a visual display of information such as topography,

photography, signs, traffic codes, symbols and designs. Television and video clips are the electronic form of visual communication” (Aarti, 2012:52).

Individuals use visual communication to express emotions to the audience, making the message more relatable. Additionally, it enhances the audience's comprehension of the presented concept and can be effective for a diverse range of individuals. It is a strong means of communication that exceed language barriers, enhance understanding, conveying experiences and captivates audience in a visually compelling manner. Visual content preserve and attracts attention more effectively than text alone. There are various forms of visual communication: videos, graphics, maps, slide presentation, photographs and print.

### **What is shared language?**

As mentioned earlier, the use of language is an integral part of being human. Language is also a tool of self-expression and served as a tool to show their identity as well. Interacting with others is a critical part of healthy living, as we develop our understanding of the world and the surrounding community, it is the responsibility of each one in the community or group to ensure that they are understood in the way they planned.

There are more than 7,000 languages spoken worldwide. In Iraq, people communicate in more than 2 languages Arabic and Kurdish which are the official language of Iraq whereas the other three languages, Turkmen, Armenian, and Syriac are minority languages with varying accents and dialects. Developing and creating a shared language between members from different backgrounds is an essential element to enhance communication and collaboration.

Shared language “refers to individuals developing understanding among them based on language (e.g. spoken, text, body language or visuals) in a way that helps them communicate more effectively”. (Thomas J and McDonagh D., 2013:6)

Shared language plays an essential role for promoting effective social interactions, allowing individuals to collaborate for collective efforts. It acts as a common framework that includes specific terms, vocabulary, and jargon relevant to a particular social group or environment. Variations in language influence communication within social settings. A shared language enhances inclusivity, fosters a sense of shared identity, and creates belonging, enabling individuals to connect more easily. In contrast, the absence of a common language can hinder collaboration, increase power imbalances, and weakens solidarity and trust. Effective communication and mutual understanding depend on the establishment of shared language through ongoing dialogue and consistent interaction. (Mohammed & Kamalanabhan, 2019:765)

A lack of shared language between actors can be a significant barrier to effective communication. Barriers to effective communication are challenges or factor that breakdown the communication process because they distort the flow of information between speakers. They indicate difficulties that two people from different linguistic background and do not have a mutual language, encounter when they are trying to build bridges of communication.

“A language barrier is any linguistic limitation that creates confusion or prevents comprehension. A barrier could refer to national and cultural languages but may also include specialized knowledge or speech impairments”. (Gratis,2024:2)

For example, a Kenyan man comes to Iraq. Obviously he cannot understand Arabic, and most people in Iraq do not understand English or Swahili. So, when he speaks, communication is worthless as the Iraqis do not comprehend it. Language barriers can significantly impede communication creating miscommunication such as misunderstanding, misinterpretation of messages, mistrust, confusion, tension, frustration, weak and wrong feedback. In the given

scenario, people must develop techniques or strategies that enable them to deliver their ideas and ensure others are on the same page. (I.A.S BUARQOUB,2019:74)

### **Ways to communicate- Multi-modal communication**

For many people, speaking is often seen as the viral method of communication because it might be fast or easy to be used and understood, but most communication is silent. Gestures, tone of voice, shaking hands, laughs, blinks, shrugs, nods, waving, crossing arms and legs tells us far more than words. Conversely, not everyone prefers to communicate verbally. Individuals might combine speaking with other forms of communication. Communication is always more than words and more than speaking. Actually it doesn't matter which way we communicate. What really matters is exchanging meaning with each other, so multimodal communication is defined:

“**Multimodal communication** is a method of communicating using a variety of methods, including verbal language, sign language, and different types of augmentative and alternative communication (AAC)”.

“**Multimodal communication** is the approach that an individual can communicate through a variety of methods; this may include using a combination of speaking phrases, writing words down, and using a high tech AAC device. It may also include using drawings, gestures, facial expressions, symbols, pictures, and more to communicate messages”.

There are many different modes of communication, from verbal language to written language to sign language to the use of speech-generating devices. You can also communicate through gestures and body language. Nearly everyone communicates multimodally.

Individuals with no shared language are unable to use spoken language to meet their communication needs due to lack of understanding. They may not have the ability to speak in a way that is understood or communicate effectively. They often use alternative ways to assist them communicate. (<https://communicationhub.com.au/WaysWeCommunicate>)

- 1- Body language and sign language can convey messages effectively when words fail.
- 2- Use visual methods of communication like chat apps, videos and slide presentation, diagrams, graphics and charts to help the receiver understand complicated concepts the sender is trying to explain. "A picture is worth a thousand words."
- 3- Using language translation apps and AI-powered interpreters that can assist in overcoming language barriers.
- 4- Improve language proficiency by joining online or in-person learning classes.
- 5- Pointing to objects around us in the context to make the meaning clearer.

### **3. Methodology**

**3.1 Research design:** This research employed a qualitative methodology, characterized by the use of explanatory and descriptive frameworks to gain insights into the subject matter. This approach intentionally prioritized in-depth understanding and rich contextual detail, rather than relying on statistical analysis or numerical data. Hence, this research adopts a multimodal approach to analyze the data, integrating Knapp and Hall's (2002) Model of Nonverbal Communication, this model can be thought of as a framework for understanding the integration of verbal and nonverbal communication including (holistic understanding, contextual analysis ,and dynamic interaction) and Facial Action Coding System FACS, developed by Paul Ekman and Wallace V. Friesen in the 1970s, FACS provides a systematic way to observe, describe, and quantify facial expressions, making it an invaluable tool in psychology, behavioral studies, and emotional research. The procedures of analysis will be as follows:

1. Clarification of the context: the first step of the analysis is to identify the context of each video focusing on the participants and their roles, cultural backgrounds, the setting, and the aim of the interaction.
2. Identification of patterns: the researchers will categorize the patterns of nonverbal communication, in addition to paralinguistic elements. This step involves focusing on the reoccurring patterns and modes of communication such as facial expressions, gestures, body posture, and the tone of the voice.
3. Assessment of effectiveness: The last step of the analysis is to determine the effectiveness of the nonverbal interaction in delivering the intended message to determine if the message was successfully conveyed and understood despite the absence of a shared language.

**3.2 Data collection:** to gather data for this research, the researchers observed YouTube videos showcasing nonverbal communication specifically from the television show *Arabs Got Talent*. Contestants from different regions participate in this show and the judges are native Arabs. Five videos were selected as samples for analysis in this research. The videos highlight cases of communication with no shared language among the contestants and the judges. In these scenarios, communication relies on facial expressions, body language, tone, and limited usage of words.

### 3.3 Data Analysis

Communicating without a shared language, particularly through non-verbal cues, has been a topic of interest in various studies across fields like psychology, linguistics, and communication. Here are some notable studies and contextual examples that highlight this phenomenon:

- Birdwhistell (1970): Edward T. Hall and Ray Birdwhistell explored the role of non-verbal communication and kinesics in face-to-face interactions. They documented how individuals use gestures, posture, and facial expressions to convey meaning in the absence of spoken language
- Kendon (1990): Adam Kendon examined the use of gesture in various cultural settings, emphasizing how non-verbal communication varies across cultures and can convey different meanings.

When dealing with human communication, it is essential to adopt a multi-model approach to examine all its aspects, both verbal and nonverbal. The data for this research has been selected from the television show *Arabs Got Talent*. This show receives contestants from all over the world to show their talents in front of celebrity judges. Typically, the four Arab judges speak Arabic, French, and limited English. However, in cases when foreign contestants don't know Arabic, the judges implement different techniques to communicate with them. Hence, the aforementioned approaches will be followed to analyze these techniques.

Sample

- 1: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1SeArVuA0-cCRn8w8IIFB0cX2Nu-Swoky/view?usp=sharing>
  - a. The context: In the first video, a foreign contestant enters the stage wearing white feathers. One of the judges welcomes him in Arabic but the participant does not understand, consequently, another judge suggests using body language as a means of communication.
  - b. Facial expressions: One of the judges starts pointing to the contestant to ask about his talent. At first, the contestant raises his eyebrows, which are generally associated with surprise or attentiveness upon recognizing the intended message, he smiles confirming an agreeable or positive expression.

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- c. Body language: In this video, the contestant interacted with two judges. The first one, which will be referred to as **sender (A1)** points at the contestant **B (the receiver)** asking him in Arabic if he is going to dance ballet. However, he fails to interact due to the absence of a shared language. consequently, the second judge (A2) suggests using body language to communicate. First, he points at the contestant repeatedly until B nods his head down to approve. After that, he shrugs his shoulder to refer to dancing, shrugging the shoulder is a common gesture of Arabic dance. A2 repeats that twice then, he opens his hand to question which type of dance (B) is going to perform. In response, the contestant (B) crosses his legs, opens his arms, and leans down to acknowledge the type of dance he is performing, along with nodding his head down and smiling before starting to dance. At this point, the judges understood and asked the contestant to start dancing
  - d. Assessment of the communication: Based on the analysis above, it is concluded that the interaction was successful even with the absence of any verbal communication, they were able to communicate using facial expressions and body movements.

Sample

2: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1QxGiOE40IPzP6BxmT7HxvueR94-x1Ifb/view?usp=sharing>

- a. The context: similar to the first sample, the second sample highlights the necessity of nonverbal communication due to the language barrier. A contestant enters the stage and starts dancing. Upon finishing, he waits for the feedback from the judges. However, the communication fails because the contestant does not speak Arabic.
- b. Facial expressions: the contestant keeps eye contact, has a neutral face, and occasionally smiles. At the end of the video, the contestant presses his lips which might indicate disappointment.
- c. Body language: The judge points to the contestant and asks ‘Do you speak English?’ the contestant answers by saying ‘little’ and shrugs his hand with the palm faced downward to signal little knowledge of English. Then the judge smiles confirming that little English is enough to communicate and he uses the ‘pinching gesture’ which means holding the fingers close together as an indication of something small. Using different gestures to convey the same message refers to the influence of culture on nonverbal communication. After that, the judge tries to mix his limited English with body movements to give feedback on the contestant’s performance. He starts by pointing to the contestant and saying “your dancing..” at the same time shrugging his body which as mentioned earlier features dancing in Arabic culture. Next, the judge shrugs his hand and says “Not too much” to suggest that the judges are not pleased with the dance.
- d. Assessment of the communication: initially, the lack of a shared language caused difficulty in communication however, later when the judge used a mix of basic English with body movements, the contestants showed signs of understanding the intended message. first, he stands with a neutral face, then he smiles but at the end when the judge criticizes the performance, the contestant’s expression becomes more serious and he closes his lips while pressing them. These reactions indicate the effectiveness of nonverbal communication in delivering the message despite language barriers.

Sample

3: [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1gHkDvuiq6nbqXlhzN8hey-9bIY\\_Z\\_WKL/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1gHkDvuiq6nbqXlhzN8hey-9bIY_Z_WKL/view?usp=sharing)

In this video the researcher tries to analyze how the judge communicates with the contestant by using verbal and non-verbal communication.

1. The context: in this video, the contestant attended, and then the judge asked the contestant about her name in Arabic. She responded with the word “sorry”, so based on this, the receiver would understand that she doesn’t understand Arabic. Consequently, the judge immediately asked her name in English and also about her age. After that the judge said” that’s enough” which means he knows a limited English words. So, he tries to continue communicating by using non-verbal communication.
2. The facial expression: in this video, when the judge asks the contestant for her name in Arabic, she responds with the word “sorry”. Along with a smile and a raised eyebrow the receiver will understand that the contestant didn’t comprehend the question through her facial expression.
3. Body language: in this video, due to the lack of a shared language between the judge and the contestant , the judge tries to convey the idea through some body movements. To tell the contestant to start playing the oud, he gestures forward with his hand and makes a strumming motion, then repeats the forward gesture. These movements signal to the contestant to begin playing, as a result, she laughs and says “ok” which means that she understand the judge’s intention and immediately starts playing.
4. Assessment of the communication: Based on the analysis above, we can observe how body language plays a crucial role in communication when there are language barriers. In this scene, the judge used gestures and body movement to compensate for the lack of a common language. This situation highlights the importance of non-verbal communication in understanding between people, as gestures and facial expressions can clearly convey meaning even in the absence of a shared language . the contestant’s response, laughing and saying “ok” reflects a moment of realization and understanding, demonstrating the judge’s success in delivering his message in an indirect yet effective way.

Sample

4: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1-XCbS1S0InjSj9LOGAhOcX4JIZyu9j3Q/view?usp=sharing>

In this video, the judge tries to express his opinion about the contestant's talent by using some English word with some body movements.

- 1.the context: in this segment, the judge tries to express his positive opinion about the contestant’s talent saying, "You are great in Arabic." However, the contestant's facial expressions show that he didn’t understand. So, the judge asks if he would like him to speak in English. The contestant replies, "up to you." Then, the judge uses some simple English words to clarify his opinion to the contestant
- 2.the facial expression: in this segment, when the judge says, "You are great in Arabic," the contestant's facial expression is stiff. The judge immediately understands that the contestant didn't understand what he said because, generally, when someone receives praise for their performance, they smile right away.
3. Body language: At the end of the segment, the judge uses simple words along with hand gestures to convey his positive opinion about the contestant's performance.
4. Assessment of the communication: Based on the analysis provided, it can be concluded that the judge was trying to communicate positively with the contestant. When the judge noticed that the contestant did not understand, he used simple body language and easy English words to clarify his opinion and encourage the contestant. This shows the judge's effort to create a

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supportive environment and mutual understanding with the contestants, as well as the importance of non-verbal interaction in communication.

Sample

5:

[https://drive.google.com/file/d/1VszBmUgkYcX7toDhwGOBom05iUN\\_yyo5/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1VszBmUgkYcX7toDhwGOBom05iUN_yyo5/view?usp=sharing)

1. Context: In this video, there are two contestants from Morocco. One of them starts by greeting in Arabic and introducing their names. After that, they talk about themselves and their talents in French, speaking quickly. One of the judges tells the contestant to talk slowly to understand what he is saying. However, the contestant continues speaking in French quickly. as a result, communication is not achieved.
2. Facial expression: When the contestant speaks quickly in French, one of the judges slightly turns his head, accompanied by a surprised facial expression. This is generally a clear indication that he hasn't understood anything the contestant said. also, when the judge asks the other contestant to speak. when the other contestant speaks quickly in French, the judge's reaction is a loud laugh, which indicates that nothing has changed and the judges still haven't understood anything.
3. Body language: in this segment, the judge gestures with his hand and fingers, signaling to the contestant to slow down. Also, when the contestant continues speaking quickly in French, the judge put his hands on his head, which means he is frustrated due to the lack of understanding and the failure to reach a solution for effective communication.
4. Assessment of the communication: Based on the analysis, it can be concluded that there are challenges in communication between the contestants and the judges due to language differences and the speed of speech. Despite the judges' attempts to clarify the situation through gestures and body language, the contestants continued speaking quickly, which confused the judges and prevented mutual understanding. This highlights the importance of slow and clear communication to ensure effective understanding.

## **Conclusion**

Based on the above explanation, it can be deduced that the language we use can hinder effective communication and result in miscomprehension. Language barriers can be challenging and prevent people from understanding each other. They are factors that block or significantly distort effective communication and can create problems of miscommunication and misunderstanding. The best way to promote successful communication and convey thoughts across is to bridge the language barriers by primarily utilizing body language and other non-verbal signals.

For some individuals, alternative communication methods can be employed if verbal communication is restricted. A multi-modal approach is crucial, enabling people to express themselves in various ways, including spoken phrases, hand movements, tactile gestures, facial expressions, symbols, images, and other tools to foster genuine connections. Subsequently, it is concluded that non-verbal communication cues hold multiple meanings and can convey a range of interpretations based on context. For example, head-shaking can indicate either agreement or disagreement, shrugging shoulders may suggest indifference or a lack of knowledge, and raised eyebrows typically express surprise or disbelief. These variations underscore the complexity of non-verbal communication and the necessity of context in understanding these cues effectively.

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