

THE ROLE OF PARALINGUISTIC UNITS IN COMMUNICATION

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ABSTRACT

Paralinguistics are the aspects of spoken communication that do not involve words. These may add emphasis or shades of meaning to what people say. Some definitions limit this to verbal communication that is not words. Paralinguistic features of language are extremely important as they can change message completely. Tone and pitch of voice is commonly dealt with at all language levels.

Key words: *paralinguistics, body language, gestures, facial expressions, tone, pitch of voice, paralinguistic features of communication.*

АННОТАЦИЯ

Паралингвистика – это аспекты устной коммуникации, не связанные со словами. Они могут добавить акцент или оттенок значения к тому, что говорят люди. Некоторые определения ограничивают это вербальным общением, которое не является словами. Паралингвистические особенности языка чрезвычайно важны, поскольку они могут полностью изменить сообщение. Тон и высота голоса обычно рассматриваются на всех языковых уровнях.

Ключевые слова: *паралингвистика, язык тела, жесты, мимика, тон, высота голоса, паралингвистические особенности общения.*

INTRODUCTION

Paralanguage is a form of nonverbal communication that allows people to add layers of meaning to their spoken utterances through the manipulation of the manner of speech, or the way they say things. Paralanguage refers to the conveyance of meaning through non-lexical tokens (or non-words, such as "huh," "hmm," or "well") such as qualities of prosody (or the rhythm, stress, and sound of speech). Various aspects of linguistic communication are conveyed through different components of language, like words (lexemes), grammatical structure (morphosyntactics), and sound (phonology). These components, however, do not fully encapsulate the depth or

nuance of human communication because the way we say things greatly influences how others interpret us. Paralanguage, therefore, is the term used to discuss these other vocal elements of communication that factor into our speech and interpretation. In other words, paralanguage refers to *how* something is said rather than focusing on *what* is said.

Because paralanguage refers to a broad category of meta-communicators, or secondary communicating functions, it includes many components. For example, volume is a component of paralanguage because it indicates important aspects about an utterance: Speaking louder commands attention, whereas speaking quieter can indicate discretion. It is also an important indicator for others to interpret the speaker because someone who talks quietly can be viewed as shy, or conversely, someone who always speaks loudly can be viewed as overly excited. Paralanguage can also engage in intonation, pitch, rhythm, pauses, or vocalic interjections. Many of these components are intentionally manipulated by a speaker to indicate their meaning, but paralanguage can also surface unintentionally.

DISCUSSION AND RESULTS

Paralanguage is sometimes also called vocalics because it often involves vocal elements that fall outside the governance of phonology. In linguistics, phonology refers to the study of the structure of sound to convey meaning. Every spoken language contains sounds that carry meaning (phonemes) when assembled correctly. Paralinguistic communication, however, does not employ the normal phonemic systems of a language, and can even involve the violation of these sound rules. In this way, paralanguage is a form of non-phonemic communication: Paralanguage does not use the same phonemic structures to convey meaning. For example, the phrase "*You like coffee*" appears ambiguous when read, but if spoken with an upward intonation, it becomes a question: "*You like coffee?*" In English, using the upward intonation in a phrase like this conveys a question through the paralinguistic quality of changing the pitch at the end of the end of a semantically ambiguous phrase.

There are many examples of paralanguage, and the ones discussed here are those that apply to English. Some paralinguistic communicators are language dependent, meaning that they are directly linked to a language (e.g. different languages convey elements of irony or sarcasm using different methods), while others are more universal (e.g. in many languages a gasp indicates a surprise because it is a physiological response to pain). Some paralinguistic communicators are also dependent on a person's own anatomy and therefore differ between individuals (e.g. vocal pitch depends on the development of the voice box, giving children and adults

with smaller voice boxes a higher pitch voice than those with larger ones). With this in mind, paralanguage in English can look like:

- An audible gasp indicates surprise
- An audible sigh indicates frustration or listlessness
- The tokens "mm-hm" (to indicate agreement) or "mm-mm" (to indicate disagreement)
- Emphasis of a single word to alter the meaning of an entire phrase (emphasized token italicized): "I didn't say *she* took it" (meaning it was not specified that "she" was the actor) vs. "I didn't say she *took* it" (meaning her motives or actions are unclear)
- Pace of speech: Faster pace indicates excitement or nervousness; slower pace indicates boredom or uncertainty
- Pauses and hesitations that indicate uncertainty: Tokens sometimes called hedges (such as "um," "uh," or "mm" that allow a speaker to stall) and halting speech signal that a speaker does not know what they are talking about
- Physical communicators that indicate the underlying meaning of an utterance, such as a smile to indicate an association with positive emotions

Even though paralanguage is most often vocalic and relates to spoken language, paralanguage can also be indicated through other modes of communication. For example, a popular way to indicate actions in text is by using asterisks, which can indicate the same meanings carried out in spoken conversation. For example, the text "*When I see headlines like this, I just *sigh**" indicates that the writer feels exhausted by seeing a certain type of news. Were this phrase spoken aloud, the meaning of the sigh would be consistent with this written form.

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