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## **“Number Of Nonverbal Delivery Techniques”: Innovative Approaches to Gestures, Movement, and Vocal Delivery**

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### **Abstract**

Through this activity, students consider to what extent gestures, movement, and vocal inflection affect a speech. Using the same speech content as the rest of their group, each student is provided a prompt requiring them to adapt their speech delivery differently. Through these differences, students can better understand how to incorporate nonverbal speech delivery that is natural, balanced, communicates emotion, and effectively communicates the message of the speech. Students discover the importance of nonverbal delivery while using an entertaining speech they may have seen in a television show. Overall, students learn how planned versus natural speech delivery can alter nonverbal delivery and to what extent their delivery influences their credibility with their audience.

## **“Number Of Nonverbal Delivery Techniques”: Innovative Approaches to Gestures, Movement, and Vocal Delivery**

### **Recommended Courses**

Introduction to Communication; Public or Professional Speaking; Introduction to Performance; Persuasive Speaking

### **Introduction and Rationale**

While students often have the perception that they can stand in front of an audience and deliver a speech, this activity demonstrates how nonverbal delivery can influence a speaker's effectiveness and credibility. Through this activity, students consider to what extent gestures, movement, and vocal inflection affect a speech. Using the same speech content as the rest of their group, each student is provided a prompt requiring them to adapt their speech delivery differently. Through these differences, students can better understand how to incorporate nonverbal speech delivery that is natural, balanced, communicates emotion, and effectively communicates the message of the speech.

Through this activity, students can discover how nonverbal communication during a speech can affect its meaning. Since "proper gesturing can be a concern for the inexperienced public speaker" (Rothwell, 2013, p. 406), this activity provides a great way for students to practice a variety of gestures and movements. Additionally, gestures "are supposed to be non-conscious...And when we do consciously think about gestures, they become uncomfortable and inhibited" (Motley, 1995, p. 99). As a result, students can compare and contrast the planning of gestures and movements with spontaneous and natural ones. In addition, Neumann and Strack (2000) found that audience members who heard a speaker, perceived that speaker's message as

happy or sad based on the speaker's vocal delivery. After this activity, students should better understand the value and relevance of effective vocal delivery.

### **Objectives of Activity**

By completing this activity, students should be able to:

- Identify constructive and effective gestures during a speech
- Recognize constructive and effective movement during a speech
- Demonstrate constructive and effective vocal delivery during a speech
- Recognize the distinctions between planned and spontaneous nonverbal delivery techniques
- Understand how nonverbal delivery corresponds with a speaker's message and credibility

### **Description of Activity**

This activity is an adaptation of an improvisational game from the television show *Whose Line Is It Anyway?* The show aired in Britain and the United States throughout the late 1990s and early 2000s; it was revived in 2013. Four performers are given games/ situations in which they need to respond by creating characters, storylines, and dialogue. One of the games included on *Whose Line Is It Anyway?* is called "Number of Words," in which the performers must adapt their dialogue to the number of words they are given. In the class activity, however, students are given a speech in which they must adapt to the number of nonverbal delivery prompts they are given. Thus, this activity embodies connecting Communication scholarship with a popular media example to observe how an improvisational television show and speech delivery have common

characteristics. As a result of participating in this activity, students can transform their speech delivery techniques.

### **Procedure/ Steps**

Before class, students should read the chapter in their textbook covering speech delivery. Consider utilizing chapter 10 of Rothwell's (2020), *Practically speaking, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition*. Instructors should print copies of Appendix A and Appendix B (of this G.I.F.T.S.); cut up each prompt so every student receives one prompt from each appendix but be sure to keep them separated between gestures/movement (Appendix A) and vocal delivery (Appendix B). Instructors should print copies of transcripts from popular television show speeches. For example, see Sheldon's speech from *The Big Bang Theory* season 12, episode 24, "The Stockholm Syndrome" (Lorre et al., 2019). Instructors could consider using Michael's speech from *The Good Place* season 1, episode 1 "Pilot" (Schur & Goddard, 2016).

Once class begins, facilitate a discussion about nonverbal delivery; for this activity, be sure to include gestures, movement, and vocal inflection. Discuss how these components of speech delivery can be interpreted as part of the speaker's message, how they enhance credibility, reduce physical barriers, and convey emotion during a speech.

After the review, introduce a video clip from *Whose Line Is It Anyway?* Consider showing students the season 3, episode 37 example in which the performers demonstrate "Number of Words" using a *Star Wars* theme (Forrest, 2001). The video clip involves the game "Number of Words" and requires the improvisational performers to only speak in a certain number of words. For example, the first performer can only speak four words at a time; the

second performer can only speak two words, etc. Inspired by this video clip, students can now adapt a similar game, but this time with speech delivery.

Divide the class into groups of four students. Give each group a speech to utilize during the activity (see *The Big Bang Theory* or *The Good Place* noted above for sample speech examples). Sample speeches include speeches given by television characters. Instructors can decide if they want all groups to use these speeches or different examples. However, all group members should have a copy of the SAME speech. Students can now read through the speech and analyze how they will incorporate speech delivery techniques into the speech. But before they can deliver their speech, they need to receive a nonverbal delivery prompt related to gestures/ movement (see Appendix A). The prompts are 4 gestures, no movement; 6 gestures, 1 movement; 8 gestures, 2 movements; and 10 gestures, 3 movements. Give students time to plan how they would deliver the speech they have been given if they had to incorporate a set number of gestures and movements into that speech.

Once students have had time to prepare, have each student deliver their speech to the rest of the group. The other group members should serve as audience members. Allow enough time for each student to present.

### **Debriefing**

After students have completed the activity with gestures and movement, debrief the activity using the following questions:

- 1) After watching three speeches and delivering one of your own, how do you perceive the gestures influenced the speech? Which ones appeared more natural, and which ones were clearly planned?

- 2) After watching three speeches and delivering one of your own, how do you perceive that movement influenced the speech? Which ones appeared more natural, and which ones were clearly planned?
- 3) Which speaker included the most credible number of gestures and movements? Why do you perceive that?
- 4) Which moments of nonverbal delivery were the most effective within the speech? Why do you perceive that?

After you have completed the activity one time with gestures and movement, complete the activity again utilizing vocal inflection techniques. Distribute the prompts from Appendix B that specifically focus on vocal delivery. The prompts are 1 pitch change, 1 volume change; 3 pitch changes, 3 volume changes; 5 pitch changes, 5 volume changes; and 7 pitch changes, 7 volume changes. Give students time to plan how they would deliver the speech they have been given if they had to incorporate the set number of vocal inflections into that speech.

Once again, tell students to deliver their speech to their fellow group members. When students have completed the activity with vocal delivery, debrief the activity using the following questions:

- 1) After watching three speeches and delivering one of your own, how do you perceive that vocal inflection influenced the speech? Which ones appeared more natural, and which ones were clearly planned?
- 2) Which speaker included the most credible number of vocal inflections? Why do you perceive that?
- 3) Which moments of vocal delivery were the most effective within the speech? Why do you perceive that?

Facilitate a discussion about students' answers. Previous students have commented on the distinctions between the frequency of gestures and movement versus their quality and meaningfulness. Some students have remarked on how vocal variety influences the enthusiasm and credibility of the speaker's message. Students have observed the clear distinction between excessively planned gestures, movement, and vocal delivery and those that were meaningful to the speech content.

### **Appraisal**

Students are often enthusiastic about this activity, particularly because it is an informal way to deliver a speech. Students can embody the characters they have seen on television while learning to incorporate nonverbal speech delivery techniques. This activity could easily be adapted to include any film examples as well. By utilizing television and movie clips, students create connections between the communication concept and its real-world applications. Students tend to recall these examples on exam and quiz questions; therefore, there is a stronger retention rate.

### **Conclusion**

Through the application of this activity, students explore the importance of nonverbal delivery in their speeches while using an entertaining speech they may have seen in a television show. Students can discover how different gestures, movements, and vocal inflection influence the content of their speech. Since each student uses the same speech example, their nonverbal delivery is the only difference. Overall, students learn how planned versus natural speech



delivery can alter the nonverbal delivery and to what extent their delivery influences their credibility with their audience.

Moreover, this activity utilizes active learning techniques through the prompts given to students. Active learning activities are those which “involve students in doing things and thinking about what they are doing” (Bonwell & Eison, 1991, p. 1). Because this activity requires students to critically think about their incorporation of gestures, movement, and vocal delivery, they are taking an active approach to the creation of their speeches. Instructors should consider doing this activity early in the semester, so students can informally experiment with their nonverbal delivery before giving any class speeches. As a result of using an improvisational television show, students can explore the similar characteristics between performance and speech delivery to improve their nonverbal communication techniques to effectively and credibly communicate their message to their audience.

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**Appendix A**

4 gestures, no movement

6 gestures, 1 movement

8 gestures, 2 movements

10 gestures, 3 movements

**Appendix B**

1 pitch change, 1 volume change  
changes

3 pitch changes, 3 volume  
changes

5 pitch changes, 5 volume changes  
changes

7 pitch changes, 7 volume  
changes