

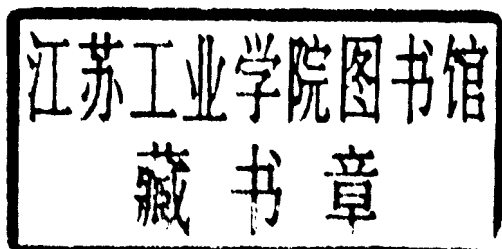


# Nonverbal Communication across Disciplines

Volume II: Paralanguage, kinesics, silence,  
personal and environmental interaction

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## Preface

This is the second of the three volumes which, as I mentioned in the first, sums up, while enlarging upon different aspects and adding new topics and perspectives, most of the communication and interaction topics I treated in the last thirty years in books and articles, mainly within linguistics, cultural anthropology, sociology, social psychology, semiotics, and literature, besides some related areas. It is, therefore, a work not easy to classify in any one field, although linguistics seems to predominate in the first four chapters of this volume, while the rest fall within other areas of communication and interaction. At any rate, this volume continues to pursue the interdisciplinary approach I also sought when organizing symposiums and in other academic activities in many countries, which provided me with much cross-cultural material.

If the readers are first acquainted with the first volume, they will profit more from this one, as they will appreciate better the new areas developed here.

Fernando Poyatos

Fredericton, 1998

Algeciras, 2001

## Introduction

### 1. Paralanguage and kinesics as basic areas for a personal and multidisciplinary study of communication

Like Volumes I and III, this second one deals with many manifestations of communication and interaction. In Volume I — to whose introduction I refer the reader — I traced my personal work of thirty-some years on the nature of culture and intercultural problems, within which functions language itself with the audible and visual components of interactive speech, and the structure of conversation as the catalytic factor of all communicative elements. In this volume I maintain that integrative and interdisciplinary approach to communication as the only realistic avenue to follow in any type of study of communication.

- 1.1. There are five main topics in this second volume which constitute five areas of study in themselves: paralanguage, the communicative sounds beyond paralanguage, silence, kinesics, and interaction. The importance of *paralanguage* as a component of the basic triple structure of speech, language-paralanguage-kinesics, incited me since the early 1970s to devote to it enough attention to contribute to its development — beyond several incomplete but pioneering papers which I cite with gratitude — while full attention was given to it by the phonetician John Laver, with whom I shared that area at the 8th International Congress of Phonetic Sciences (Miami, 1977). For that congress I also organized a symposium on paralanguage, similar to the one I had had for the Northeast Modern Language Association (Boston, 1972), to which I invited (after sharing with him several activities at the 9th International Congress of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences [Chicago, 1973]) the linguist Philip Lieberman, because of his work on the phylogenetic development of voice (Lieberman 1972, 1975). But it was at the Miami Phonetics congress that Konrad Koerner invited me to prepare a whole book on paralanguage (abridged here in four chapters) for his Current Issues on Linguistic Theory series. Being much too busy with other projects, and due to the variety of materials and areas I had to delve into, I did not begin work on it until he asked me again in Japan in 1982, and was not completed until much later (Poyatos 1993a). At this point, it was indeed long due in the field of linguistics (and bound to be), as Mary Key wrote in her review, “the most amplified description of paralanguage available today” (Key 1995: 378), though still susceptible of elaboration.

1.2. As for *kinesics*, it is of course much more popular, even at the level of observation and serious research — along with the person's general immediate visual environment — (see the psychologically-oriented multidisciplinary collection of 48 Spanish papers on observation edited by Anguera (1999a, 1999b, 1999c, 1999d, 1999e), and her own work (Anguera 1978) — since, as will be seen, it is much more difficult to tackle paralanguage than gesture and other visual systems, regardless of how complex it can become too and how many difficulties may confront the researcher. That is why kinesics is the only thing many tend, erroneously so, to associate with the concept of 'nonverbal,' due above all to an abundant pseudoscientific literature dealing with "body language." That my sole or main interest is not kinesics, as so many times I heard and read, should be quite evident, I hope, since it is only an integrative part of the whole array of communicative systems on which I have always based any study of discourse, intercultural and cross-cultural communication, social interaction, or the literary work. What is true is that from the beginning I realized the need to develop certain theoretical principles and certain perspectives without which kinesic research may ignore or neglect very important realities; and there is no doubt that both paralanguage and kinesics have been, in greater or lesser degree, areas I have tried to promote not only in writing (e.g. 1976a: Chapter 5, 1977a, 1983, 1993a; in Spanish, e.g. 1975c, 1986a, 1986b, 1994a, 1994b, 1994c), but also by organizing symposiums at international congresses of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences (Chicago, 1973; New Delhi, 1978), of Linguists (Vienna, 1977; Tokyo, 1982) and Applied Linguistics (Stuttgart, 1975; Thessalonika, 1990), as well as in my own and in some guest courses (e.g. Universidad Internacional Menéndez Pelayo de Santander, 1975, 1977; International Christian University, Tokyo, 1982; Murcia, 1984, 1991; Vaasa, 1991) and lectures (e.g. Linguistic Circle of Copenague, 1981; Hungary's Linguistics Society, 1981; Universities of Lyon, Sorbonne, Mons (1989), and Heidelberg and Germersheim (both in 1987 and 1990), besides other international symposiums I organized in different disciplines and in different countries to promote nonverbal communication studies (e.g. sociology, psychology, anthropology, semiotics, linguistics, Hispanic Studies).

The field of kinesics will take a great stride if, of all that is said in this volume on paralanguage and kinesics, the researcher responds specifically to the great need to elaborate cultural paralinguistic and kinesic inventories and atlases that would improve on most of the existing books on 'gestures.' But we should not neglect its multiple applications in social or clinical interviews, intercultural communication, literary recreation in reading, or their decisive role in the theater and the cinema.

1.3. What here is included as *sounds of interaction* (Poyatos 1988b, 1993a:Chapter 1) and the discussion of *interaction* complement and complete the last chapter of Volume I, on conversation, as they both identify its broader context. As for personal and person-

environment interaction, the importance of its many different components for the multidisciplinary development of communication and social interaction studies was rapidly unfolding before me as I identified the various nonverbal sign systems, first the bodily ones, later those intimately associated to it, and finally and unavoidably, the ones found in the environment surrounding the two. Besides devoting to the topic of interaction several symposiums at international congresses (e.g. Psychology [Leipzig, 1980], Applied Psychology [Edinburgh, 1982; Jerusalem, 1986; Madrid, 1994]), I have also dealt with it in some publications (e.g. Poyatos 1985b; in Spanish, 1986b, 1994b: Chapter 7) — sometimes applying it to specific areas (e.g. Poyatos 1997b, to interpretation) — and in faculties or departments of psychology (e.g. Barcelona, Valencia, Lubjiana, Amsterdam, Tilburg, Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Istanbul), philology (e.g., Berlin, Essen, Murcia, Oviedo Alicante Seville), commerce (mainly Copenhagen and Jutland), information sciences (País Vasco), nursing (Barcelona), tourism and hotel (Istanbul), etc., all of which was providing me with much incentive to deepen my study of the more complex levels of interaction and with invaluable cultural and cross-cultural data.

## 2. On Volume II

- 2.1. After outlining in *Chapter 1* the development of paralinguistic studies and identifying the primary qualities, that is, the basic components of our voice and their communicative and grammatical functions, *Chapter 2* tries to make both specialized and average readers aware of the great number of voice types, or paralinguistic qualifiers, that operate normally as well as abnormally due to cultural, circumstantial and personal reasons. *Chapter 3* acknowledges the communicative relevance of many physiological and emotional reactions traditionally regarded as mere curiosities, from laughter and crying to sighing and panting, shouting, coughing, yawning, hiccuping and spitting, maintaining the cross-cultural comparative approach that characterizes all three volumes. *Chapter 4* offers the first systematic treatment of paralinguistic alternants, that veritable vocabulary mostly beyond the official dictionary, formed by so many nonverbal voice emissions, the majority of which lack both names and written representation; the latter a problem, for which reason comic books and strips constitute a most interesting challenge to our most logical inventiveness. Attention is then focused on kinesics in *Chapter 5*, which — limited to my own contribution due to the vastness of that area today — offers a series of basic principles (still basically ignored in cultural, psychological, clinical or literary research) and proposes a much needed elaboration of cultural and subcultural inventories of gestures, manners and postures and of what would be a kinesic atlas responding also to the reality of discourse as a kinesic-verbal-paralinguistic atlas. Having completed, therefore, the study of the two great verbal and nonverbal components of discourse, *Chapter 6* directs the attention of



both the serious reader and the researcher toward a level sometimes hidden to consciousness in the flow of speech and of personal and environmental interaction: that of the sounds beyond language and paralinguage, produced or somehow conditioned by the body, by the objects we manipulate and by the totality of the environment, since they can act as eloquent components of an interaction due to their great communicative value. It is then, having identified in Volume I all those components and auxiliaries of speech that always occur within a given cultural frame, that *Chapter 7* brings together all those areas of observation and research by presenting a theoretical, and therefore methodological, model of what truly constitutes our interaction with people and with whatever surrounds us; which, as with each of the other chapters, offers a great number of perspectives for any aspect of communication and interaction in any discipline or occupation dealing with sign exchanges and, therefore, with communication at any level, exploring the communicative problems that arise between persons naturally or pathologically lacking any of the transmitting or receiving channels.

### 3. Editorial features of this volume

Readers are asked to kindly peruse the more detailed comments made in Volume I regarding editorial features. As in the other two volumes, the *Figures* offer at a glance a visual illustration as a working model for the discussion and research of the different topics and areas. The *Literary quotations* in this Volume 1854 from 154 authors and 271 works (especially from narrative texts, but also the theater), offer again much cultural, subcultural and even regional and truly dialectal information, at times revealing the reasons for the development of paralinguistic and kinesic behaviors (e.g. etiquette, dress, furniture, certain tasks), as well as of quasiparalinguistic sounds evoked by the words, and of whatever qualifies as nonverbal in the characters' environment, all of great importance within anthropology, sociology, psychology, social psychology, etc. A list of twenty-five suggested *Topics for interdisciplinary research* at different levels closes each chapter. The *Scientific references* — followed by their *Name index* — offer the more representative research, with no aim at exhaustibility. The *Literary References* list the authors and works quoted, while an additional *Index of literary authors and works quoted or cited* allows the reader to locate each instance. Finally, the *Subject index* identifies the many topics and subtopics and specific aspects either treated at length or merely suggested.

I hope that, as with Volume I, the readers will continue to discover the multiple applications of nonverbal communication studies in each of their fields of specialization, as well as the need to create interdisciplinary university courses on nonverbal communication similar to the ones whose outlines appear As Appendix I in Volume I.



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## CHAPTER 1

### Paralanguage, I

#### Primary qualities or basic personal voice features

“It doesn’t matter,” Cyrus said [...] and his tone said, “Shut your mouth. This is not your affair.” (Steinbeck, *EE*, III, IV)

“Oh, it doesn’t matter,” she said, in a tone which suggested that it decidedly did matter (Lewis, *B*, VIII)

as the The Primer Minister became the first Western leader to visit Moscow since the coup failed and then flew on to Beijhing, the London *Times* perceived “a different air” about Major, “a lower, more authoritative timbre to the voice, a slick smartness in the dress, an extra confidence in the demeanor.”

(*Time*, 16 sept., 1991, 53)

#### 1.1 The development of paralinguistic studies and the definition of paralanguage and its categories

- 1.1.1 Without going into details regarding the development of paralinguistic studies and my own efforts in this field — as I have done in the introduction of a monograph on paralanguage (Poyatos 1993a) — I must acknowledge with gratefulness, however, the incentive that were for me the first pioneers, not only for what they had done, but because of the many lacunas I was finding in both linguistics and phonetics and in other fields, particularly psychology, with respect to what was vaguely termed “tone of voice.”<sup>1</sup> By contrast, I was doing much of my work in kinesics, but what we do about our voice in interaction appeared as something much less tangible and offered too many stumbling blocks. The two efforts carried out in psychiatry to transcribe the audible and visual data of the interviews, *The First Five Minutes* (Pittenger *et al.* 1960), and the still unpublished *The Natural History of an Interview* (McQuown *et al.* 1971),<sup>2</sup> allowed me to recognize what the phonetician Abercrombie (1968) called the “unfortunate separation of the visible and the audible” (58), naturally agreeing with him that “fact-finding, not theorising, is what is wanted at this juncture” (58), which I understood as the need to identify our paralinguistic repertoires in any realistic and in-depth study of paralanguage and interpersonal communication.<sup>3</sup>

Putting together the few audible phenomena recognized at that time beyond language and the many still unidentified ones, I defined *paralanguage* (and approached it this way since then) as:

the nonverbal voice qualities, voice modifiers and independent utterances produced or conditioned in the areas covered by the supraglottal cavities (from the lips and the nares to the pharynx), the laryngeal cavity and the infraglottal cavities (lungs and esophagus), down to the abdominal muscles, as well as the intervening momentary silences, which we use consciously or unconsciously supporting, or contradicting the verbal, kinesic, chemical, dermal and thermal or proxemic messages, either simultaneously to or alternating with them, in both interaction and noninteraction (Poyatos 1993a:6)

Based, then, on this realistic definition, I adopted the classification — which I have modified only slightly — shown in Fig. 1.1, ‘Paralanguage.’

## 1.2 Primary Qualities: Personal voice features

- 1.2.1 These are the voice characteristics that differentiate individuals: timbre, resonance, intensity or volume, tempo, pitch (level, intervals, range), intonation range, syllabic duration, and rhythm, which allow us to recognize a person without knowing what he or she is saying:

the walls were too thick for the words to be heard but the pitch and timbre and intonation [of Mr. Schultz] came through clearly (Doctorow, *BB*, X)

These fundamental qualities are conditioned by different factors: *biological* (e.g. sex and age for timbre, due to vocal band size), *physiological* (e.g. certain long-term malfunctions or traumatized states, such as pitch disorders due to abnormal vocal-fold growth or hormonal therapy), *psychological* (mostly due to personality or long-term causes like the loudness of extroversion or the manic phase of manic-depression), *sociocultural* (e.g., the drawling of United States southerners), and *occupational* (e.g., the use of higher pitch by many nurses when talking to patients). Naturally, they also respond to the speaker’s *attitude*, for sometimes it is precisely because of them that someone, unable to pinpoint the reason for his judgement, can say, ‘It wasn’t what she said, but how she said it’:

Something in the tone, even more than in the words, went straight to my heart. It was only after pausing a little first that I was able to go on (Collins, *M*, ‘Third Narrative,’ VII)

It is fascinating how some nonhuman sounds (discussed and amply illustrated in Chapter 6) can acquire human qualities when they evoke these paralinguistic primary qualities and some of the other paralinguistic utterances. It happens with certain natural sounds, musical instruments, sounds that are rhythmically repetitive or



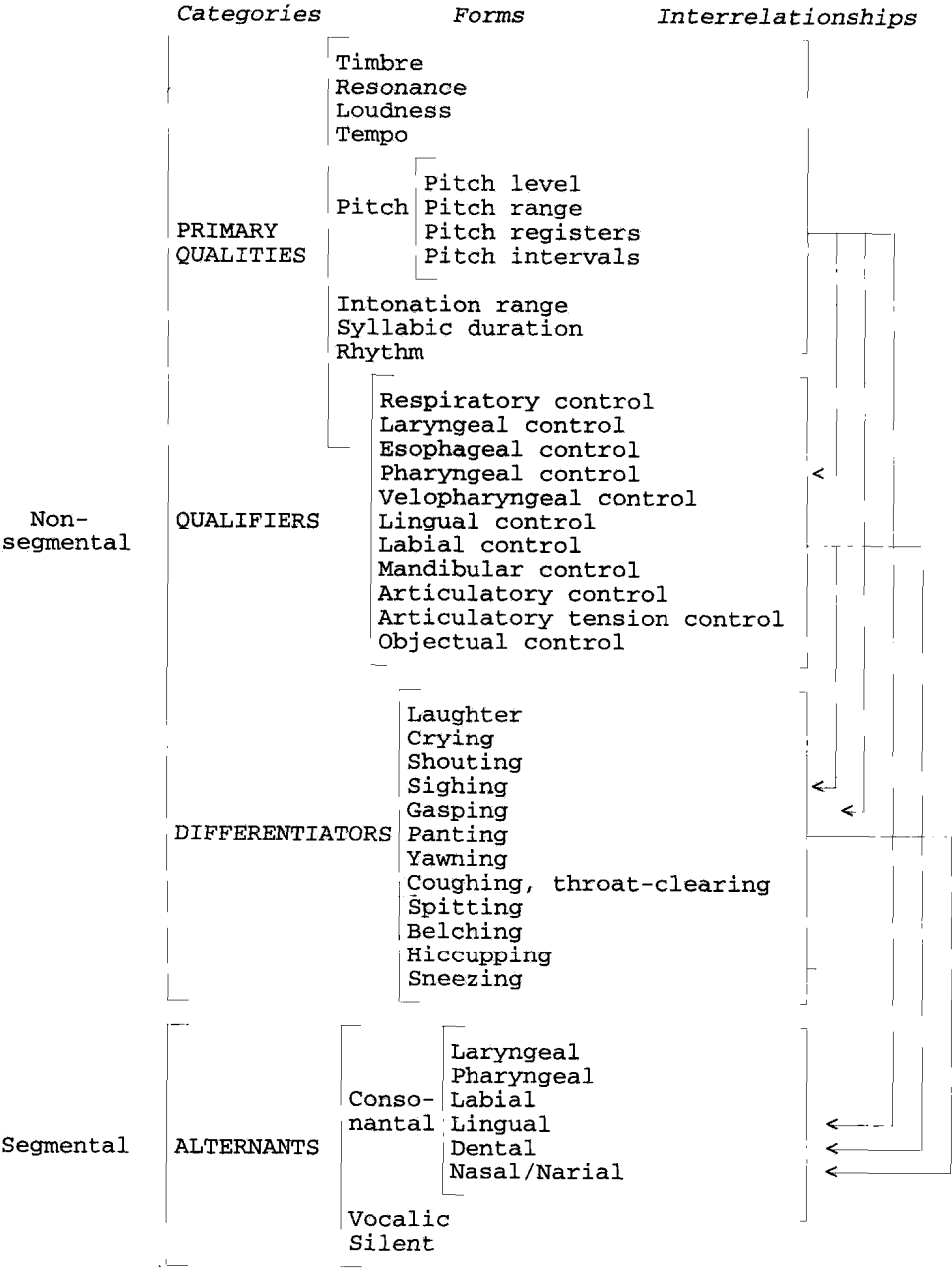


Figure 1.1. Paralanguage

mechanical sounds: the murmuring rivulet, the howling wind, the squeaking door hinges, the crumbling or crackling of some materials, etc.

a nondescript clatter and chatter — of china partly; [...] sound of rain falling, and the gutters chuckling and burbling as they sucked up the water (Woolf, Y, 1880).

### 1.3 Timbre

Timbre is the organically-determined permanent voice register or pitch that, as in musical instruments, sets individuals apart and allows us to distinguish them ('Listen! That's Henry next door!'). It is determined by the length and thickness of our vocal bands: the longer and thicker they are, the slower their vibrations or frequency (i.e. the lower the timbre, as happens in general with males), and the shorter and thinner they are, the greater their vibrations (i.e. the higher the timbre, as with females and children). There are also some geographic differences, for instance, in males: the lower timbre of Americans as compared to Spaniards, who in turn tend to have it lower than Latin-Americans, as do Spanish Castilian males as compared to Andalusians in the south; very high in the Fulani tribe of northern Nigeria and lower in the southern tribes, etc. We assume the man with a deep voice over the telephone to be of large build and strong because "there seems to be general correlation between a person's size and physique and the size of the larynx and vocal tract" (Laver 1972: 196), but it often proves to be an ambiguous cue as to size, and even sex and age.

*Social perception* of timbre, however, can assign negative connotations to a permanent register that contradicts our expectations when it may be due to abnormal social development, although in other cases it has no abnormal correlates, but can become a true stigma nevertheless. Accompanied by positive qualities (e.g. soft loudness and a balanced pitch variation), it can be perceived as definitely pleasant:

La hizo hablar [doña Paula to Teresina] para apreciar el tono de la voz, como el timbre de una moneda (Alas, R, XI).

As a *pitch disorder*, the worst timbre types psychosocially are the chronically high 'juvenile voice' of the late adolescent or adult male (identified also as "mutational falsetto" [cf. Perelló and Salvá Miquel 1980: 1–27]) — due to organic causes like insufficient growth of the vocal folds or excessive approximation — as it suggests lack of masculinity; and the female's abnormally masculine low pitch can be caused by organic factors or by male hormone therapy (cf. Moore 1971: 539–540).

### 1.4 Resonance

Resonance can be pharyngeal, oral or nasal, depending on where the vibrations from the vocal bands find their greatest resonator according to the size and shape of the pharyngeal cavity, oral cavity or nasal cavity. Its *social perception* covers a wide range