

## A Study on News Anchors' Meta-Language and Non-Verbal Factors and their Impact on Audiences

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**Abstract:** *Non-verbal communication or body messaging occurs when facial expressions, tone of voice, head and neck movements, smiling and ... affects others; which may be intentional or unintentional. Farhangi in non-verbal communication: the art of using movement and sound" defines this field as such: "Non-verbal communication is phonetic and non-phonetic messages which have been explained by other than language and linguistics means." (P. 22) News presenters while informing, use nonverbal communication alongside verbal. Because of Announcers' final role in news production process, they play an important role in influencing minds, persuasion and public opinion shaping. News as the most important output of media need formidable speakers so that the end result can be satisfying. This paper's aim is studying the nonverbal and non-phonetic factors of presenters in news processes; and its' influence in shaping and directing the public opinion, understanding the intended agenda of media and its' role in running tactics and strategies. In this research the survey method was used. The study population was 300 master students of the Tehran central branch of Islamic Azad University. The sample population was 168 students which were calculated through Cochran's formula. Among the 168 distributed questionnaires, 150 responses were received and the results of the research are based on this quantity. The results of this study show that the audiences of news programs believe that the news presenters face attraction is top priority, and they believe that the face can affect the audiences' absorption by the program. Other non-verbal variables studied in the study are Phonetic signs. The students believe that the presenters can grant positive or negative orientation to the News keywords through phonetic signs and specific tones. Hence convey media's desired meaning to the audience. According to the survey, respondents believe that news presenters know about the non-verbal factors affecting the audience; and they use meta-linguistic and non-verbal factors consciously, deliberately to influencing the audience.*

**Keywords:** *Meta-linguistic factors, non-verbal messages, presenters, news.*

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### Introduction

Michael Argyle believes that "non-verbal communication or body messaging happens when a person affects another one via facial expressions, tone of voice, or any other communication channel. Which can be intentional or unintentional; In this case we can call it non-verbal behavior or in some cases excitation process (Argyle, 1999: 12). News presenters are often experts in non-verbal behavior and by appealing they convey a world of concepts to their audience. In communication interaction with the audience, news presenters use meta-linguistic factors to persuade, influence and direct the minds. Presenters in news programs are effective in attracting the audience just like headlines in the newspaper. Non-verbal gestures, meta-languages, moods, behaviors and reactions at runtime are all attempts to influence the audience. Many believe that non-verbal communication is always preferable to verbal communication in terms of accuracy. Because non-verbal signals emanate from human intentionality and cannot be often controlled or hidden. (Farhangi, 2005: 274)

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### **Problem Statement**

News is the major product in a media organization; presenters who are in the final stages of the production process play an important role in communication interaction, messages transfer and audience absorption. In many cases, presenters at news programs use non-verbal meta-linguistic factors in addition to speech tactics for understanding, facilitating and sharing their ideas. Phonetic researcher Don Archer noted that “often in a relationship, it is the mood of expression that conveys the real concept and not that which is said.” (Richmond and McCroskey.1999:236). The speakers use meta-languages and non-verbal cues in presentation in addition to speech and verbal content. These signs are decoded and interpreted by audiences and affect their perceptions of the news content. Word expression, pauses, eye movements, hand gestures, presenter’s voice genre, face and appearance attractiveness and non-verbal factors affect the audience. According to some studies, more than half of face to face communications are non-verbal. The language of gestures represents the feelings and attitudes of the parties. Body and facial expressions, eye contact, method of calling, each one evokes a message and among them facial expressions are more efficient than the others (Hargie, Sanders, Dixon, 1998: 63). It should be noted that effective communication begins when a speaker’s nonverbal communication, is in line with his/ her verbal communication. According to the previous text and keeping in mind the importance of non-verbal communication, the main issue in this research is to study the importance and quantity of the speaker’s meta-linguistic factors. Furthermore determine the role of the speakers’ nonverbal actions on the attractiveness of news programs, meaning transfer and stronger influence of the message.

### **Research Purpose**

Unlike the past, today news program audiences satisfy their needs through selecting their favorite media among domestic or international news channels. Video news media such as TV news networks can absorb the audience using the news announcers’ capabilities and their ability in use of scenarios and phonetic signs, and motions, there by taking advantage of sound and implementing interactive communication. News announcers can affect audiences in emotions transmission based on their ability in non-verbal communication and therefore contributing to the goals and policies of the media. The aim of this study was to evaluate the effects of metalinguistic factor usage at runtime; and to Study the role of speakers in directing the news by expressing specific tones words and also to evaluate the extent of which they consciously use metalinguistic factors to guide the news. The other objective of this study is to investigate the effectiveness of speaker’s charisma and their non-verbal was gestures in audience absorption and intimacy creation.

### **Research Methodology**

In this study, subject survey and questionnaire were employed as the preferred method of data collection, analyzing and interpretation of results.

### **Statistical population and samples**

The population included 300 Masters Students in the Tehran Central branch of Islamic Azad University's Media Studies. In this study, the sample size is 168 MA students in the news Faculty which are calculated through Cochran's formula. Out of the 168 distributed questionnaires, 150 responses were received and the result of the research is based on these responses. Most of the researches in the field of non-verbal communication have been done in relation to movies and Literary Fiction.

### **Non-verbal communication semiotics among Hollywood classic comedian Selected Works:**

- Charlie Chaplin, Buster Keaton, Harold Lloyd and Oliver Hardy (1920-1950) based on content analysis methods and its application in silent comedies, Islamic Azad University, Science and Research branch, Gholamreza Azari, 2004
- A content analysis of non-verbal communications of Mohammad Reza Forutan’s acting style on the red tape and the Yalda night, Islamic Azad University of Tehran, Azar Maleki, 2011 this research was conducted using qualitative content analysis. The results of this study indicate that in both films Forutan has non-verbal gestures that are conveyed throughout the

film. Actors use non-verbal gestures to help the Characterization realisation and atmosphere creation of the movie for the audience to better understand the content of the work. The researcher concluded that Mohammad Reza Forutan micro-managed his with body language to communicate with the audience and to influence them.

- Semiotics and narratology in verbal and nonverbal communication of BBC Farsi News, Tehran University, author: Mary Bourghani 2010. The aim of this study was to investigate the role of non-verbal communication transmission; such as the media ideology of BBC Persian; and the extent that this goal is aligned with the cultural properties of Iranian spectators. This study used qualitative methodology to check the semiotic and narrative cognition.
- 60 announcements of the BBC television network news reports in a were browsed for Two-month period (January and February 2011) The results show non-verbal communication (body language features, clothes, hair and images) accompany verbal communication in the transmission of messages; and the process takes place in accordance with the audience's cultural features. News stories often lead to multiple narrations and conclusion which may be all bitter on tragic. (<http://www.iribresearch.ir/sanjesh/fehrest.aspx?id=80>)

In recent decades much research has been done in the field of nonverbal communication. Shulman begins non-verbal communication topics in his book recalling gestures of Charlie Chaplin in his memorable silent films; and proclaims that in the silent films era, Charlie Chaplin could communicate with his audience without words. His hands, face, grotesque gait, and clothing all transmit messages. Shulman adds: we regularly send non-verbal messages such as Winks, snoots, movement of hands, pointing, dance of feet and etc. these non-verbal messages in human interactions can be much more important than we have supposed (Mohsenian Rad, 2011: 244).

Ali Akbar Farhangi writes in his human communication book about the basic functions of non-verbal messages. Generally, non-verbal messages act through three approaches:

1. Are replaced with the verbal messages.
2. Reinforce verbal messages and
3. Act in the opposite of verbal messages and reject them. (Farhangi, 2007).

Actors and actresses many often dominate non-verbal behaviors and transfer many concepts by appealing them. They can convey broad and complex concepts that normally take hours in a few minutes (Farhangi, 2005: 272). The speakers take advantage of meta-linguistic factors in addition to verbal communication to convey understanding and facilitating message transmission. Anchorman has the first touch point with the audience; and is involved in the communication process with the audience from the beginning to the end; and all speakers' gestures must be in line with the meaning conveyed to influence the audience and transmit the media's intended agenda.

### **Face and its' Impact on Audiences**

The face of News broadcasters is one of the most effective tools in attracting the audience. Faces are highly regarded for their visibility and due to this they are one of the main pillars of non-verbal transmission. Mark Knapp writes in one of his writings: The face has a high capability and potential in the process of interpersonal communication. It is also the first hit at the emotional state of people, which have tremendous impact on interpersonal attitudes. And some say the most important source of information next to eloquence and speech is the correct face configuration and communication (Farhangi, Human communication. 2005: 291). The main reason that the face is important in human relationships is that it is usually visible during interaction. When we talk with others we may be very observant, but most of us look to the face and other parts of the body are often overlooked. When people ask us to describe an attractive man or a woman, we often describe a person's facial features more than anything. The face is a Cover that shows emotion, mood and the attitude of the individual (Richmond and McCroskey, 2009: 192-3). The graph below shows the opinion of the students regarding the charm of news announcers. While among 150 students, 92.7 percent believe the news anchors charm, only 6.7 percent believe otherwise.

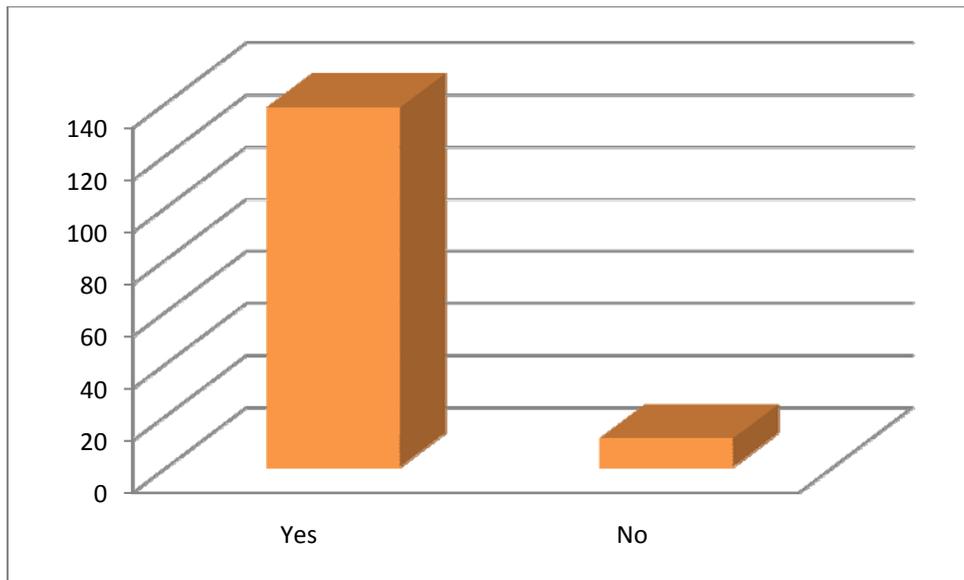


Figure (1): The charm of news announcers

Research has shown that pleasant people have more success in persuasion or forcing others to do what they want to do; especially attractive women are better at altering the attitude and behavior of men. (Richmond and McCroskey2009: 117).

Table (1): Students' agreement about the amount of anchors charm on the audience

		Frequency	Percent	Real Percent	Cumulative Percent
value	Very high	46	30	30.7	30.7
	High	77	51	51.3	82
	Moderate	26	17	17.3	99.3
	Low	1	0.7	0.7	100
	Total	150	100	100.0	

The table above and graph below represent the impact of speaker's charm on the audience.

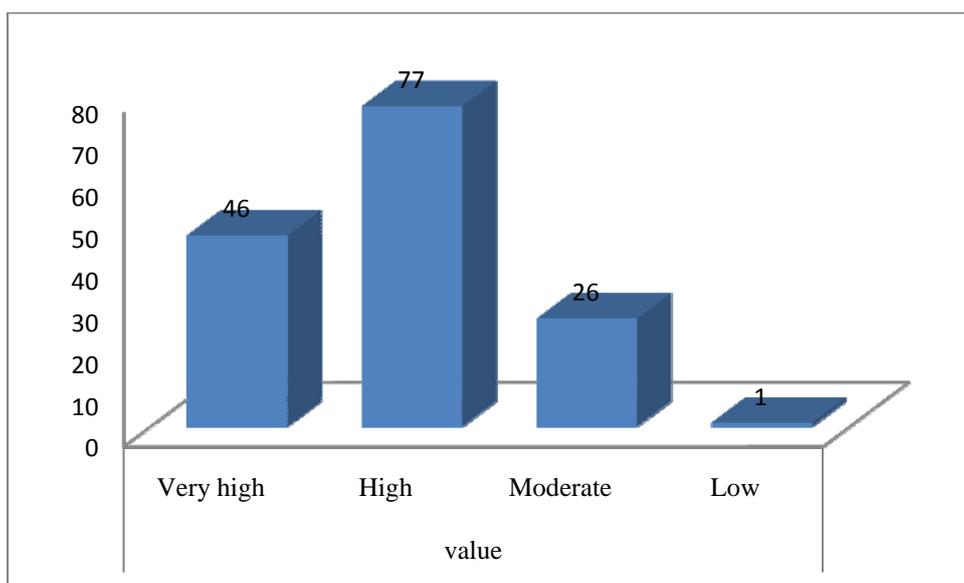


Figure (2): Students' belief about the effect of the news announcers charm on the audience

Based on this research 51.3% of the students believe that the speaker's facial attractiveness is highly effective in attracting audience; and 30.7 percent of them think this effect to be very high.

Many messages are inducing to the audience via face; such as: fear, sadness, happiness and surprise which are transmitted to the audience through the eyes, eyelids, cheeks, eye brows and the corners of the mouth A research program was designed to answer the question: do all parts of the face have the same power in sending a message? To explore this, in Ekman laboratory, they chose photos of faces that stated six different conditions. Any photo cut into several pieces; then the participants were asked to explain and interpret the parts of six different face conditions and guess them. Results showed that “the fear” was well received through the eyes, eyelids and ears. Sadness was received precisely through the eyes and eyelids. Happiness was almost always seen on the cheek, mouth or eyes and eyelids or cheeks and mouth simultaneously. Albert Mehrabian, tested people’s reactions in Confrontation with a happy face but a sad voice and vice versa. He found 55% of people’s judgment is related to the face and 39% judgment depends on sound and 7 percent by the content of what was said (Mohsenian Rad. Ertebat shenasi: 272-5).

### Phonetic Signs and Impact on Audiences

The vocalic behavior conveys a lot about the feelings which may be different from the actual content. Phonetic sense expression can be seen in the verbal content of speech rather than phonetic sign language. Oral skills with free content are often used to investigate the expression of phonetic feelings. This means that the listener is asked to judge the sound of others indicate what they feel while the actual content of speech, is in practice blurred (Richmond and McCroskey, 2009: 253).

News anchors while reading the news are manifesting intended meaning and orientation of the media in the minds of their audiences through phonetic signs. Announcers reading news with a certain tone pass special feelings to the audience. Nervousness, sadness, happiness, anger, and hatred are emotions which are expressed to the audience through phonetic signs and are interpreted. Sometimes we may intuitively feel judgments about words and their expression in a message which is received. Perhaps each of us throughout our life has repeatedly heard that: “Do not speak to me in that tone” In such cases, Bad temper and anger are clear in behavior. All these cases have originated from this that we encounter a kind of opposition or uncomfortable feeling in regard to ourselves which originates from the tone of voice of the opposite person. We react to this feeling embodied in the tone of the speaker (Farhangi, 2005: 312-3).

Studies on the influence of speaker's tone at runtime and phonetic signs in directing the news are shown in the diagram below.

*Table (2): The influence of speaker's tone at runtime and phonetic signs in directing the news*

Specific tone of words	Frequency	Percent	Real Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes	135	82	90.0	90.0
No	15	18	10.0	100.0
Total	150	100	100.0	

The survey results show that 90% of students believe news anchors use phonetic signs at runtime in directing positivity or negativity to the words and the other 10 percent have opposed this.

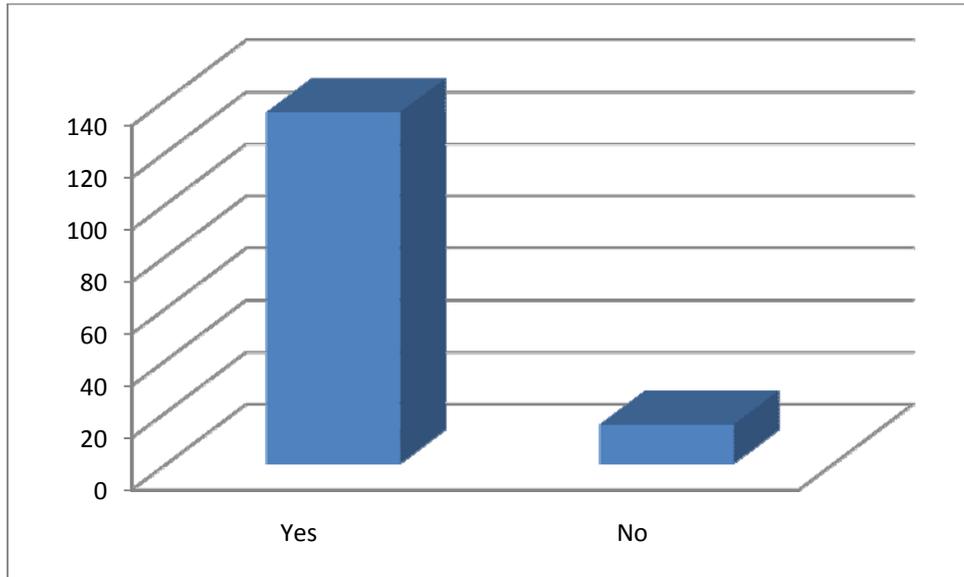


Figure (3): Does specific tone of words effects the audience?

Also students believe in the impact of speakers’ specific tone in the orientation and direction of news and on the audience’s attention.

Table (3): The influence of speaker’s tone at runtime and phonetic signs in directing the news

Specific language of words		Frequency	Percent	Real Percent	Cumulative Percent
Value	Very high	39	26	26.2	26.2
	High	92	61	87.9	87.9
	Moderate	18	12	12.1	100
	Total	149	99	100	
Missing	1	0.7			
Total		150	100		

The chart below examines this variable as shown in the diagram 61.3 percent of respondents’ believe that the tone of the speaker and the phonetic signs of them highly affect the news bias; also more than 26 percent think this is very highly effective.

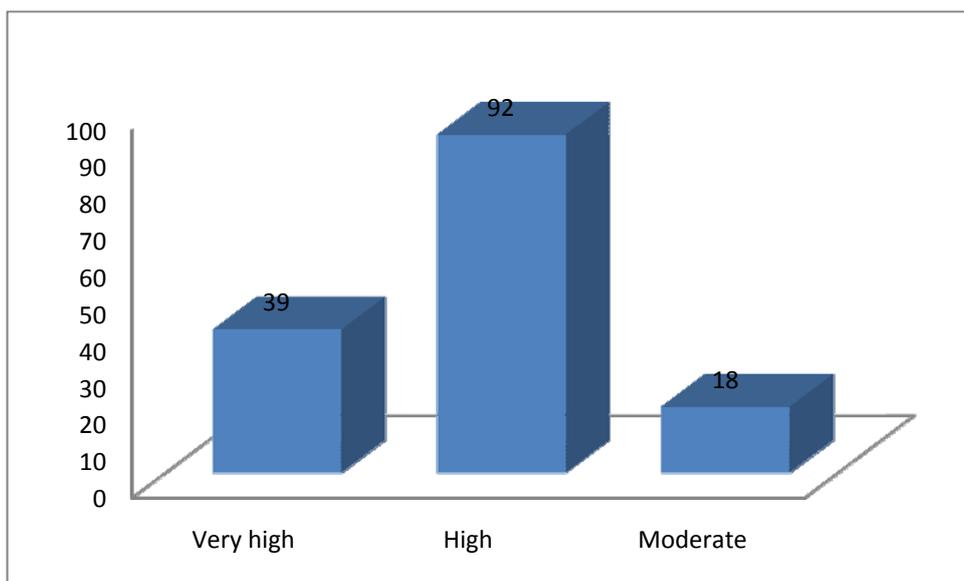


Figure (4): Students belief about the amount of Specific tone of words effects on the audience

People act intelligently in gathering information about others based on their voices. Don Archer and others reinforce the theory that we can retrieve a great deal of information through a man’s voice such as: feeling, physical situation, trustable traits in as well as cheating traits, age and sex. Archer and many phonetic researchers point out: "In a relationship, the wording style often conveys the real concept and not what is said." The real message has a little sense for the recipient's, without phonetic signs. In many cases, the meaning of the speaker can be determined with his expression. In one study it has found that only 7% of the message, conveyed through verbal speech and 38% through other phonetic signs have been moved. The importance of phonetic behavior as a form of nonverbal communication is because of the impact on the perception of theological content of our messages (Richmond and McCroskey, 2009: 235). Functions of verbal communication are often executed with phonetic signs. For example, phonetic sign reinforce speech and also phonetic symbols can violate the verbal message. When saying something that phonetic signs say against it, we have spoken sardonic. (Richmond and McCroskey, 2009: 236- 235)

**Deliberation in non-verbal communication**

One opinion is that our non-verbal behavior in this respect is divided into three categories:

1. Non-verbal behavior may be done at a high level of knowledge and planning.
2. We do some nonverbal behaviors without the intention.
3. And some of them may also be very common; so that we are not aware of it. ((Mohsenian Rad. Ertebat shenasi, 2011: 272-5).

When a speaker uses simultaneously verbal and nonverbal communication; he/she is aimed at sending the message and impact on his audience with such an action. Surveys about the deliberation in non-verbal behavior of news announcers were studied among students.

Deliberation in non-verbal communication		Frequency	Percent	Real Percent	Cumulative Percent
Value	Yes	123	82	82	82
	No	27	18	18	100
	Total	150	100	100	

Based on the table about the deliberation and consciousness of nonverbal actions by news anchors; 82% of 150 respondents believe on that the anchors use nonverbal actions deliberately and consciously to effect on audience. In contrast, 18% of respondents do not think the use of non-verbal gestures by speakers is deliberately.

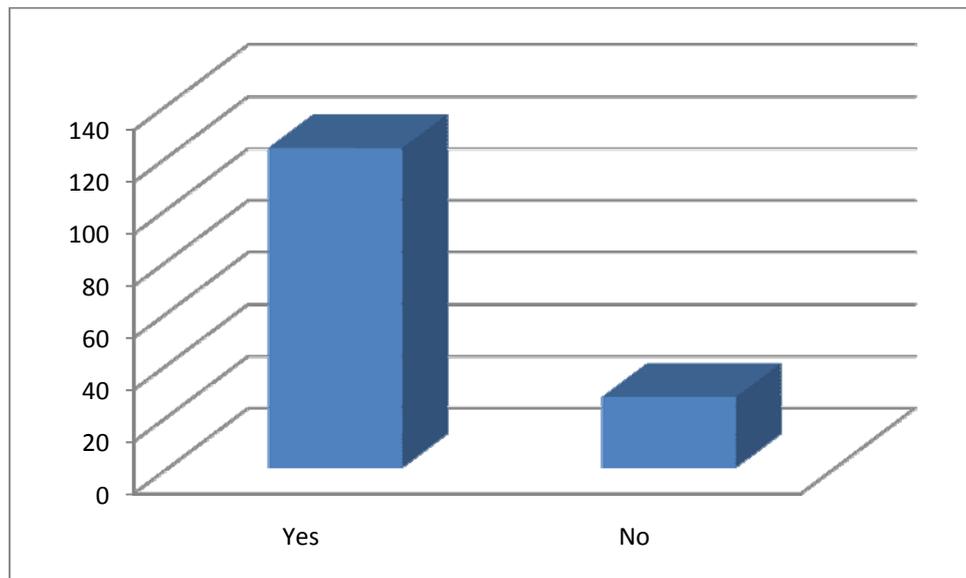


Figure (5): Does anchors use nonverbal actions deliberately and consciously to effect on audience?

We sometimes deliberately, sometimes accidentally / inadvertently send messages. Source aimed at sending a message does a non-verbal behavior and the receiver interprets the behavior as a message, when that happens, nonverbal communication has taken place. Of course, it does not mean the receiver, interpreted the message in such a way that the source wants, but what it means to be induced or not, the connection has been occurred. Therefore, the source with the aim of sending a message does a type of behavior, and the receiver interprets the behavior as a message. For example, the source with the aim of sending a respect message to the recipient, "smiles", and the receiver interprets the smile as a message. And when the source is sending a deliberate message (smile), but the receiver did not interpret it as a message, thus, any non-verbal communication has not happened (Richmond and McCroskey, 2009: 88-9).

### **Conclusion**

Non-verbal actions and reactions are continually going and have no stop. If we look carefully, we will see very powerful effects of metalinguistic signs, gestures and behaviors which lead us to a wide range of silence and mute messaging in communication actions and reactions. News announcers as the provider of the most important media product play an important role in influencing the audience. The anchors by verbal and nonverbal communication actions to the audience can be easily manifest the mean of media in the mind of them. Based on the acquired results, face is one of the non-verbal factors affecting the audience's attention. As absorbing headline with appropriate words is effective in the mind of audiences; an anchor with attractive face and appropriate physical body is effective in attention of the audience. And 92.7% of respondents in this study believed that the attractive face is one of the important factors affecting on the audience and 51% of them think that the impact of Announcer attractiveness is much. In fact, attractive speaker can enhance the power and effectiveness of message. Also his/her face can be imprinted on the minds of the audience for a long time and a lot of non-verbal messages transmits through face to the audience, sadness, hatred, joy and ... all are messages that appear at the face. News audiences are affected by phonetic signs In addition to the figure. Announcers reading the news with a certain tone deliver several feelings to the audience. Nervousness, sadness, happiness, anger and hatred are emotions conveyed through phonetic signs. Speaker phonetic signs can be associated with biases and can orient the positivity and negativity of the news, message or media which is manifested in the mind of the audience. 61/3 percent of the students in this study believe that the speaker's tone in the news impacts a lot. The survey results show that 90% of students believe news anchors direct the positivity and negativity of the words and 10 percent oppose this. Since the first touch point between the audience and news group is the anchorman, the audience can be influenced by metalinguistic and deliberate actions that can lead to a change in judgments made by the audience regarding the news events. 82% of respondents believe that news broadcasters are deliberately and consciously using non-verbal gestures during runtime impact the audience and 18% of respondents believe non-verbal gestures are used unconsciously by the speakers. The news anchor may influence the audience interest by using meta-linguistic factors deliberately. The speakers' art is appropriate and targeted use of non-verbal signs and gestures help create an intimate relationship with the audience intelligently and apply them to establish trust and intimacy with the audience.

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