



THE IMPACT OF BODY LANGUAGE (TONE OF VOICE) ON COMMUNICATION OUTCOMES

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Cite this article:

Mamman-Muhammad Abubakar (2026), The Impact of Body Language (Tone of Voice) on Communication Outcomes. British Journal of Mass Communication and Media Research 6(1), 95-106. DOI: 10.52589/BJMCMR-UVIJZ0EH

Manuscript History

Received: 17 Apr 2026

Accepted: 18 May 2026

Published: 19 Jun 2026

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ABSTRACT: *This study explores the impact of body language, specifically tone of voice, on communication outcomes. Tone of voice is a crucial aspect of nonverbal communication, conveying emotions, attitudes, and intentions through vocal cues. The relationship between tone and meaning is complex, influenced by cultural and social factors, context, and relationships. Effective communication relies heavily on the ability to convey intended meaning and emotions through tone, and speakers who master this skill can build trust, foster stronger relationships, and achieve more successful interactions. This research examines the significance of tone awareness in communication, highlighting its importance in avoiding miscommunication, promoting cultural sensitivity, and facilitating global understanding and collaboration. By prioritizing tone awareness and cultural sensitivity, individuals can foster more effective, empathetic, and meaningful communication.*

KEYWORDS: Body language, cultural sensitivity, effective communication, emotional expression, nonverbal communication, tone of voice.



INTRODUCTION

Body language plays a significant role in communication, influencing how messages are perceived and interpreted (Kucuk, 2023). Body language enhances and amplifies the verbal message (Schirmer, Croy, Liebal, & Schweinberger, 2024) being portrayed through hand signals, gestures, and postures. It helps us to convey emotions and intentions that may not be adequately expressed through words alone (Kelly & Ngo Tran, 2023). Tone of voice refers to the way in which something is said, conveying emotion, attitude, or personality (Barattin & Latusi, 2026). It can greatly impact how a message is received and interpreted. A positive tone can build rapport, convey enthusiasm, and show empathy, while a negative tone can cause offense, create distance, or escalate conflicts (Karkala, 2025).

Existing research establishes that communication relies heavily on nonverbal cues, with body language and tone of voice shaping how messages are understood and received. Studies show that body language amplifies verbal content through gestures and postures, conveying emotions and intentions that often remain implicit in speech. Similarly, tone of voice carries affective and attitudinal information, influencing whether a message builds rapport or creates conflict. However, most studies treat body language and tone of voice as separate channels, focusing on their individual effects rather than how they interact in real-time communication. Less attention has been paid to how mismatches or alignment between tone and body language affect interpretation, particularly in cross-cultural and high-stakes professional contexts. This gap limits our understanding of how audiences synthesize multimodal cues to form judgments about credibility, intent, and emotional state. To address this, the present study examines how congruence and incongruence between tone of voice and body language influence message interpretation and audience response.

Research question: How do variations in tone-body language alignment shape perceived sincerity and message effectiveness in professional communication settings?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Nonverbal communication is a vital aspect of human interaction, enabling us to build stronger relationships and engage more meaningfully with others (Karkala, 2025). Understanding nonverbal cues enables us to enhance our ability to connect with people and convey our intended message, thereby fostering more effective and meaningful interactions (Camichael & Mizrahi, 2023). The strategic deployment of paralinguistic elements, such as facial expressions, body language, and tone of voice, can significantly influence the interpretation and reception of verbal communication (Muhammadiyeva & Sharafutdinov, 2025). By leveraging these nonverbal cues, individuals can add depth, nuance, and emotional resonance to their messages, ultimately facilitating more accurate and engaging communication. Furthermore, a nuanced understanding of nonverbal communication can also enable individuals to better navigate complex social interactions, build stronger relationships, and cultivate a more empathetic and responsive communication style.

Tone of voice refers to the way in which something is said, conveying emotion, attitude, or personality through vocal inflections, pitch, volume, and pace. A person's tone of voice can significantly impact how their message is received, influencing the listener's emotional response, perception, and interpretation (Cingi, Muluk, & Cingi, 2023). A warm and friendly



tone can create a sense of rapport and trust, while a harsh or monotone tone can lead to misunderstandings or conflict (Hale, 2024). By being mindful of our tone of voice, we can communicate more effectively, build stronger relationships, and convey our intended message with greater clarity and impact.

Tone of voice conveys emotion, attitude, or personality through various vocal characteristics, including:

Vocal characteristics

1. **Vocal inflections:** Rising or falling pitch at the end of sentences can convey excitement, questioning, or finality (Mudassir & Jafar, 2025).
2. **Pitch:** High or low pitch can convey enthusiasm, boredom, or authority (Koponen, Polvinen, Vasanen, & Isotalus, 2024).
3. **Volume:** Loud or soft volume can convey emphasis, confidence, or intimacy (Rahman & Marzal, 2024).
4. **Pace:** Fast or slow pace can convey excitement, urgency, or thoughtfulness (Ballard, 2025).

Emotional expression

1. **Emotional tone:** Tone of voice can convey emotions like happiness, sadness, or frustration (Lawson & Meyer, 2022).
2. **Attitudinal tone:** Tone of voice can convey attitudes like confidence, sarcasm, or empathy (Stone, 2023).

Personality revelation

1. **Personality traits:** Tone of voice can reveal personality traits like extroversion, introversion, or optimism (Arsani, 2022).
2. **Authenticity:** Tone of voice can convey authenticity, sincerity, or insincerity (Unnsteinsson, 2023).

By varying these vocal characteristics, individuals can convey a wide range of emotions, attitudes, and personality traits, influencing how their message is received and interpreted.

Consequently, tone of voice significantly influences an individual's emotional response, perception, and interpretation of a message, as it conveys emotions, attitudes, and intentions through subtle variations in pitch, volume, and pace (Cingi, Muluk, & Cingi, 2023). A warm and empathetic tone can evoke feelings of trust and comfort, while a harsh or dismissive tone can lead to defensiveness or hurt. The tone of voice can also shape perception, with a confident tone conveying authority and expertise, and a hesitant tone suggesting uncertainty. Furthermore, tone of voice can alter interpretation, adding nuance and context to the message, and influencing how the listener understands the speaker's intended meaning (Muhammadiyeva & Sharafutdinov, 2025).



Emotional Response

1. Emotional contagion: A speaker's tone can evoke emotions in the listener, such as enthusiasm, calmness, or anxiety (Hanel & Paulmann, 2026).
2. Mood induction: Tone of voice can induce a specific mood or atmosphere, affecting the listener's emotional state (Lopez & Rubio, 2024).

Perception

1. Speaker's intention: Tone of voice can convey the speaker's intention, such as seriousness, sarcasm, or humor (Jegede, 2025).
2. Credibility and trust: A speaker's tone can influence the listener's perception of their credibility, trustworthiness, and expertise (Maltezou-Papastylianou, Shcherer, & Paulmann, 2025).

Interpretation

1. Message meaning: Tone of voice can alter the interpretation of the message, adding nuance and context (Fatihi, 2025).
2. Contextual understanding: Tone of voice can provide contextual cues, helping the listener understand the message in relation to the situation or topic (Cingi, Muluk, & Cingi, 2023).

By being aware of the tone of voice, speakers can tailor their communication to achieve the desired emotional response, perception, and interpretation from their listeners.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Emotional contagion theory: Emotional Contagion Theory (ECT) suggests that emotions can be transferred from one person to another through various means (Wen, 2025), especially through the following key aspects:

1. Emotional transmission: Emotions can be transmitted through facial expressions, body language, tone of voice, and other nonverbal cues.
2. Mimicry: People tend to mimic the emotions they observe in others, which can lead to emotional convergence.
3. Empathy: Emotional contagion is often accompanied by empathy, allowing individuals to understand and share the emotions of others.

Mechanisms

1. Automatic processes: Emotional contagion can occur automatically, without conscious awareness or intention.
2. Neural basis: Research suggests that emotional contagion is associated with neural mechanisms, including mirror neurons and the default mode network.



Implications

1. Social interactions: Emotional contagion can influence social interactions, relationships, and group dynamics.
2. Emotional intelligence: Understanding emotional contagion can help individuals develop emotional intelligence and improve their relationships.
3. Well-being: Emotional contagion can impact mental health and well-being, particularly in situations where individuals are exposed to negative emotions.

By recognizing the power of emotional contagion, individuals can become more aware of the emotions they transmit and receive, leading to more effective and empathetic communication (Wen, 2025).

The relationship between Emotional Contagion Theory (ECT) and tone of voice is significant, as tone of voice can be a powerful means of transmitting emotions and influencing others' emotional states.

The correlation between tone of voice and emotional contagion can be examined through the following:

1. Emotional transmission: Tone of voice can convey emotions, such as enthusiasm, calmness, or anxiety, which can be transmitted to others.
2. Mood induction: A person's tone of voice can induce a specific mood or emotional state in others, such as excitement or relaxation.
3. Empathetic connection: When a speaker's tone of voice conveys empathy or understanding, it can create an emotional connection with the listener.

Impact of tone of voice on relationships

1. Building rapport: A warm and friendly tone of voice can build rapport and create a positive emotional atmosphere.
2. Conflict resolution: A calm and empathetic tone of voice can help resolve conflicts and reduce tension.
3. Emotional support: A supportive and caring tone of voice can provide emotional support and comfort to others.

By being aware of the tone of voice and its potential impact on emotional contagion, individuals can use their voice to build stronger relationships, convey empathy, and create a positive emotional atmosphere (Hanel & Paulmann, 2026).



METHODOLOGY

Semiotic analysis: Semiotic analysis can be applied to tone of voice to uncover the underlying meanings and implications conveyed through vocal cues. Tone of voice can be seen as a sign system that conveys emotions, attitudes, and intentions, influencing how messages are interpreted (Cingi, Muluk, & Cingi, 2023).

Tone of voice as a sign system

1. Emotional expression: Tone of voice can convey emotions, such as enthusiasm, boredom, or frustration, which can be analyzed as signs (Barattin & Latusi, 2026).
2. Attitudinal cues: Tone of voice can convey attitudes, such as confidence, sarcasm, or empathy, which can be interpreted as signs (Muhammadiyeva & Sharafutdinov, 2025).
3. Contextual influence: Tone of voice can be influenced by context, culture, and relationships, thereby affecting its meaning (Cingi, Muluk, & Cingi, 2023; Barattin & Latusi, 2026).

By applying semiotic analysis to tone of voice, researchers can gain a deeper understanding of how vocal cues convey meaning and shape our perceptions of others. When analyzing tone of voice as a means of emotional expression, several aspects can be considered:

Emotional cues in tone of voice

1. Pitch: Variations in pitch can convey emotions like excitement (high pitch) or boredom (low pitch) (Chen, Du, & Yang, 2026).
2. Volume: Changes in volume can express emotions like enthusiasm (loud) or sadness (soft) (Oliver, 2025).
3. Pace: The speed at which someone speaks can convey emotions like urgency (fast pace) or relaxation (slow pace) (Muhammadiyeva & Sharafutdinov, 2025).
4. Inflection: The rise and fall of pitch when speaking can convey emotions like questioning (rising inflection) or finality (falling inflection) (Mudassir & Jafar, 2025).

Analyzing Emotional Expression

1. Identifying emotional cues: Recognizing the specific tone of voice characteristics that convey emotions.
2. Interpreting emotional meaning: Understanding the emotional message being conveyed through tone of voice.
3. Contextual consideration: Considering the context in which the tone of voice is being used to interpret the emotional message accurately.

Tone of voice can convey attitudes, such as confidence, sarcasm, or empathy, which can be interpreted as signs. A firm, assertive tone can convey confidence and authority, while a tone laced with irony or mocking can convey sarcasm and skepticism. A warm, gentle tone can convey empathy and understanding, and a genuine, heartfelt tone can convey sincerity and



authenticity. When interpreting these attitudinal cues, it's essential to consider the context, nonverbal cues, and relationship dynamics to accurately understand the intended message. By being aware of these nuances, individuals can build trust, convey authority, and avoid miscommunication, ultimately leading to more effective and empathetic communication (Karkala, 2025).

Furthermore, tone of voice is shaped by various factors, including context, culture, and relationships, which can significantly impact its meaning (Cingi, Muluk, & Cingi, 2023; Barattin & Latusi, 2026).

Contextual influence

1. Formal vs. informal settings: Tone of voice can vary depending on the setting, with formal settings often requiring a more professional tone (Cingi, Muluk, & Cingi, 2023).
2. Emotional state: The tone of voice can be influenced by the speaker's emotional state, such as being more subdued in a somber setting (Nfissi, Bouachir, Bouguila, & Mishara, 2025).
3. Purpose of communication: The tone of voice can be adjusted based on the purpose of the communication, such as being more persuasive in a sales pitch (Koponen, Polvinen, Vasanen, & Isotalus, 2024).

Cultural influence

1. Cultural norms: Tone of voice can be shaped by cultural norms, with some cultures valuing directness and others valuing subtlety (Bharati, 2023).
2. Idioms and expressions: Cultural idioms and expressions can influence tone of voice, with certain phrases or words carrying specific connotations (Sadiqzade, 2025).
3. Power dynamics: Cultural norms around power dynamics can impact tone of voice, with some cultures using more formal language when speaking to authority figures (Bharati, 2023).

Relationship influence

1. Familiarity: Tone of voice can vary depending on the level of familiarity with the listener, with closer relationships often allowing for a more casual tone (Cingi, Muluk, & Cingi, 2023).
2. Power dynamics: The tone of voice can be influenced by power dynamics in relationships, with those in positions of authority often using a more assertive tone (Hale, 2024).
3. Emotional connection: The tone of voice can be shaped by the emotional connection with the listener, with a stronger connection often leading to a more empathetic tone (Hanel & Paulmann, 2026).



Impact on Meaning

1. Misinterpretation: Tone of voice can be misinterpreted if the context, culture, or relationship is not considered (Alexander, 2025).
2. Cultural sensitivity: Being aware of cultural differences in tone of voice can help avoid misunderstandings and offense (Mohammed, Yi, & Dedong, 2025).
3. Effective communication: Understanding the impact of context, culture, and relationships on tone of voice can lead to more effective and empathetic communication (Karkala, 2025).

Semiotic analysis of tone of voice

Signification: Signification in tone of voice refers to the process of creating meaning and conveying emotions, attitudes, and intentions through vocal cues (Cingi, Muluk, & Cingi, 2023). Analyzing signification in tone of voice involves examining how speakers use tone to convey meaning beyond the literal words.

Creating Meaning

1. Emotional expression: Tone of voice can convey emotions like happiness, sadness, or frustration, adding depth to the message (Lawson & Meyer, 2022).
2. Attitudinal cues: Tone can convey attitudes like confidence, sarcasm, or empathy, influencing how the message is received (Hale, 2024).
3. Intentionality: Tone can convey intentions, such as persuasion, comfort, or warning, shaping the listener's response (Jonah, 2026).

Analyzing Signification

1. Vocal characteristics: Analyzing vocal characteristics like pitch, volume, and pace can help understand how tone creates meaning (Dash, 2022).
2. Contextual consideration: Considering the context in which the tone is used can help disambiguate meaning and intention (Kerfaoui, 2024).
3. Cultural and social factors: Understanding cultural and social factors that influence tone can provide insight into the intended meaning (Liu, 2024).

Signifier and signified

The relationship between the tone of voice (signifier) and the meaning it conveys (signified) is complex and influenced by various factors.

Signifier: Tone of voice

1. Vocal characteristics: Pitch, volume, pace, and inflection can all contribute to the tone of voice (Cingi, Muluk, & Cingi, 2023).
2. Emotional expression: Tone can convey emotions like happiness, sadness, or frustration (Lawson & Meyer, 2022).



3. Attitudinal cues: Tone can convey attitudes like confidence, sarcasm, or empathy (Stone, 2023).

Signified: Meaning conveyed

1. Emotional interpretation: The listener interprets the emotional tone and responds accordingly (Stone, 2023).
2. Attitudinal understanding: The listener understands the attitude conveyed through tone, influencing their perception of the message (DeMarree, Chang, Lee, & Venezia, 2023).
3. Intentionality: The listener infers the speaker's intention based on the tone, shaping their response (Jonah, 2026).

Relationship between signifier and signified

1. Arbitrary relationship: The relationship between tone and meaning is often arbitrary, relying on cultural and social conventions (Jonah, 2026).
2. Contextual influence: Context can significantly influence the meaning conveyed by tone, with the same tone having different meanings in different situations (Sagala & Ristia, 2025).
3. Cultural and social factors: Cultural and social factors can shape the meaning conveyed by tone, with different cultures and social groups assigning different meanings to the same tone (Hanel & Paulmann, 2026).

Implications of tone of voice on communication outcomes

Effective communication: Understanding the relationship between tone and meaning is crucial for effective communication, as it enables speakers to convey their intended message and emotions accurately. By being aware of how tone influences the interpretation of their words, speakers can tailor their tone to suit their purpose, whether it's to persuade, comfort, or inform. This awareness helps to avoid miscommunication and ensures that the message is received as intended, fostering stronger relationships and more successful interactions. By mastering the nuances of tone, speakers can convey empathy, confidence, or enthusiasm, and build trust with their audience, ultimately leading to more effective and meaningful communication (Jitendra & Poonam, 2026).

Miscommunication: Failure to consider the relationship between tone and meaning can lead to miscommunication and misunderstandings, as the intended message may be lost or distorted. When speakers neglect to control their tone or are unaware of its impact, their words can be misinterpreted, leading to confusion, offense, or conflict (Alexander, 2025). A tone that is perceived as insensitive, aggressive, or dismissive can undermine the message and damage relationships, while a tone that is perceived as friendly, empathetic, or enthusiastic can enhance the message and build trust (Rharouity, 2023). By neglecting the relationship between tone and meaning, speakers risk conveying a message that is opposite to their intention, highlighting the importance of tone awareness in effective communication (Jitendra & Poonam, 2026).

Cultural sensitivity: Recognizing cultural differences in tone and meaning is essential for promoting cultural sensitivity and effective communication across cultural boundaries



(Alexander, 2025). Different cultures assign varying meanings to tone, pitch, and volume, and being aware of these differences can help avoid unintended offense or miscommunication. By understanding the nuances of tone in different cultures, individuals can adapt their communication style to suit their audience, fostering greater empathy and cooperation. This cultural awareness enables more effective interactions, builds trust, and promotes successful relationships in personal and professional settings, ultimately facilitating global understanding and collaboration.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the implications of tone of voice on communication outcomes are multifaceted and far-reaching. Effective communication is heavily reliant on the ability to convey intended meaning and emotions through tone, and speakers who master this skill can build trust, foster stronger relationships, and achieve more successful interactions (Hale, 2024; Fatihi, 2025). On the other hand, failure to consider the relationship between tone and meaning can lead to miscommunication, misunderstandings, and conflict. Moreover, cultural differences in tone and meaning highlight the importance of cultural sensitivity in communication, and adapting to these differences can facilitate global understanding and collaboration (Alexander, 2025).

The significance of tone awareness in communication cannot be overstated. By understanding the nuances of tone and its impact on communication outcomes, individuals can tailor their communication style to suit their purpose, audience, and cultural context. This awareness can help avoid unintended offense, build trust, and promote effective interactions. Furthermore, recognizing the importance of tone in communication can also help individuals develop more empathy and self-awareness (Karkala, 2025), allowing them to navigate complex social situations with greater ease and effectiveness.

Ultimately, the effective use of tone in communication is a skill that requires practice, self-awareness, and cultural sensitivity. By developing this skill, individuals can enhance their personal and professional relationships, achieve greater success in their endeavors, and contribute to a more harmonious and understanding global community. As communication continues to play a vital role in shaping our personal and professional lives, the importance of tone awareness will only continue to grow, making it an essential skill for individuals to master in order to thrive in an increasingly interconnected world. By prioritizing tone awareness and cultural sensitivity, we can foster more effective, empathetic, and meaningful communication, leading to stronger relationships, greater understanding, and a more collaborative global community.

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