Vocalics refers to anything that is spoken or heard except for the actual words. There is more to a message than just what is being said.  By 5 years old children are interpreting emotion by voice. Their ability increases up to age 12. Vocalics consists of five key components. Tone and pitch, or how the voice sounds, is the first component. Saying something with a different tone or pitch can change the meaning of what is said. A soft tone communicates friendliness and openness, while a harsh tone communicates dominance and anger. A low-pitched voice is usually associated with strength and maturity. A higher pitched voice is usually associated with nervousness and helplessness. Volume, or how loud the voice is, is the second component. Loud speakers are often seen as aggressive and overbearing. Quiet speakers are usually seen as polite or afraid. Raised volume can also be used as a sign of importance, lowered volume as a sign of closeness or intimacy. Speed, or how fast someone is talking, is the third piece. Rate of speed in talking can often indicate how much a person knows about a subject. If a person is talking fast they often are very knowledgeable on their topic. Likewise, a person who speaks slowly may not be well informed. We can hear and comprehend up to 3 times faster than we can speak. Rate of speech also varies in people while speaking in front of large groups. The rate of speech is capable of projecting a person’s confidence level. For example, a person who talks quickly is usually nervous. When confident of topic, speakers use faster rates, shorter pauses, and louder volume. This allows them to be perceived as more forceful, active, competent and self-assured. It has also been proven that males fit this speaking pattern more frequently than women. Component number four is characterizations, or laughing, crying, or moaning for examples. Usually represent the emotions that the speaker is feeling. Laughing means they're happy, crying indicates sadness, ect. The final component of vocalics is fillers. Fillers are words such as “uh-uh”, “uh-huh”, or “um”. These are generally used when the speaker is nervous and/or lacking knowledge of the topic of conversation. Although talk time is not mentioned as one of the key components of vocalics, I personally believe it plays a very important role. More talk leads to perceptions of more credibility (to a point). It is said that if you talk 80% of the time, you will be seen as domineering, outgoing and selfish. If you talk 50% of the time, you will be seen as likeable and warm. If you talk 20% of the time, you are perceived as submissive and unintelligent. Positive feedback that is exchanged by the sender and receiver usually increases the length of interaction.

The purpose of using vocalics is to help strengthen a message. This is demonstrated most frequently during times of persuasion or deception. People who are trying to persuade someone else talk louder and faster. This allows them to seem more credible. Deception is best projected from voice. When someone is trying to deceive, they make more speaking errors and speak at a slower rate.

To retrieve information on peoples understanding of vocalics, we were instructed to find a partner to interact with. I chose my girlfriend because I feel like our close relationship would make this easier. During the interaction, we were to make the following statements: “I love eating onions and anchovies for breakfast. They taste wonderful early in the morning.” and “I feel great when I flunk a major exam.” While saying these statements, we were to use different vocalics to see if our partner was able to identify them correctly. In addition to changing my voice, I changed my facial expressions and hand movements. When I am looking to identify emotions that someone is trying to send, these are the three things I look at. During the interaction, I felt like it was easiest to communicate happiness, surprise, sadness, and anger. It seems to me like these are the most extreme of the six that we were instructed to use. It was difficult for me to vocalicize fear for either statement and disgust for the second. These two seem to almost be branches of sadness and anger. When I asked her to identify my emotions, without giving her choices she correctly identified happiness, surprise, and disgust for the first statement and happiness, sadness, and anger for the second statement. I then told her the other emotions that she had guessed incorrectly on and asked her why she thought otherwise. She said that due to the statements, it was difficult to see some of these emotions simply due to the context of the message.

Even though some of these emotions were not easily communicated during the interaction, I believe that they could be more easily portrayed. In real life, the situations that will arise will have natural vocalics to go with them. People don’t have to “try” to portray their emotions with the messages; they just speak with the emotions they really feel. People then listen to the message and it helps narrow down the emotions that someone could be sending.

When it comes to vocalics as an overall, emotions do play a role. The five key components and talk time are all examples of how vocalics are impacted.

By listening to how someone says something, rather than what is being said, a better understanding of the message that is being sent. There are particular things that people look for when trying to decode messages. The five components of vocalics are as good of a place to begin as any. By using these components, people can better their process of understanding how or why someone may project these particular behaviors.

# REFERENCES

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