

Body Language in Interviews

The following quiz will ask you a variety of questions about your non-verbal communication in interviews. Don't take it too seriously, but it should provide some useful pointers on what to do and what not to do.

1. In a job interview, a student being interviewed in posture A suddenly moved to posture B. Give a possible explanation.

- ☐ A. The interviewee feels defensive
- ☐ B. The interviewee feels cold
- ☐ C. The interviewee is becoming more relaxed

2. A piece of research showed that when people meet for the first time, there are three important factors. These are given below. Which is the most important?

- ☐ A. **Content** - what they say.
- ☐ B. **How they sound** (tone of voice - accent, pitch, variation and tempo of speech).
- ☐ C. **Appearance.**



3. Another piece of research found that certain non-verbal behaviours (e.g. not including dress and appearance) showed a statistically significant correlation with job interview success.

Name ONE of these behaviours from the list below:

- ☐ A. Firm handshake
- ☐ B. Regular eye contact
- ☐ C. Sitting up straight
- ☐ D. Smiling



☐ E. Head nodding

☐ F. Loud voice

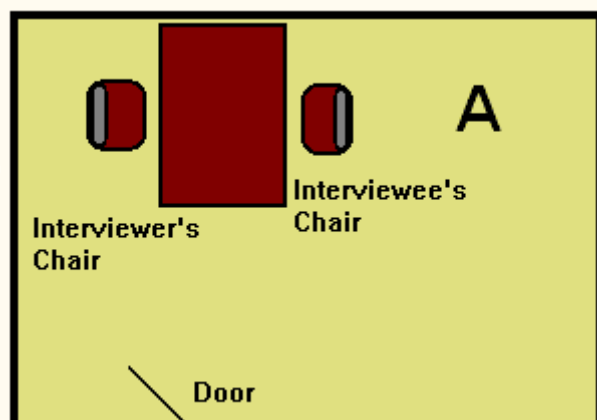
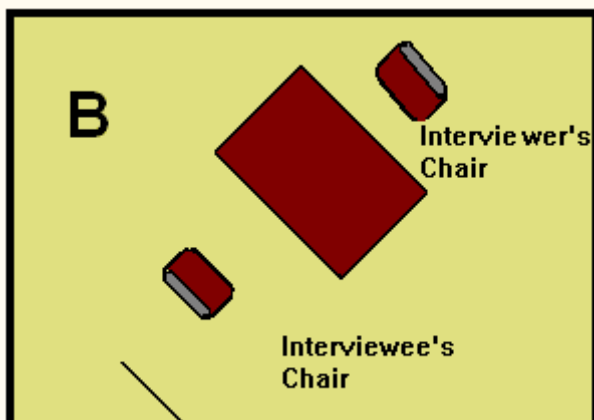
4. Which of the following statements are likely to be true about the two people here?

☐ A. They are of similar status. They agree with each others views.

☐ B. They are of different status. They disagree with each other.



5) Based on the positions of the desk and chairs as you enter the room, which of these two interviews are likely to be the more formal?



☐ A.

☐ B.

6). Whilst on holiday in Greece, you end up one day at a little out of the way Greek village where nobody speaks

English. You decide to study job opportunities at the local taverna with your 4 companions and try to order a round of 5 drinks signing with your hands. What happens next?

- ☐ **A. You are treated like a long-lost relative**
- ☐ **B. You wake up in hospital with 2 black eyes, and a bruised ego.**

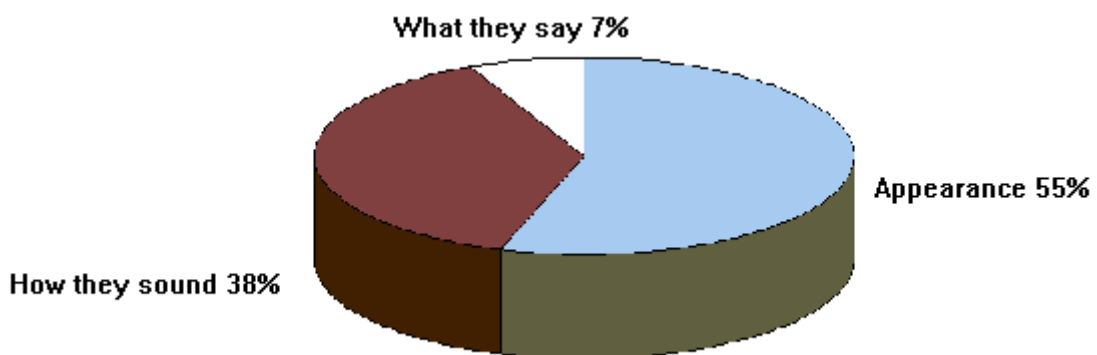
ANSWERS

1. The posture with arms and legs crossed (POSTURE B) is called a CLOSED posture. It usually signifies a defensive or negative attitude, but beware of misinterpretation - the person may just be cold. The other posture with arms and legs uncrossed (POSTURE A) is called an OPEN posture and usually suggests a more relaxed, open attitude.

Give yourself 2 points for answer A.

2. Research suggested that appearance

was the most important, followed by how you sound, with what is actually said being the least important!



Give yourself 2 points for answer C

3. Although all of these (except perhaps a loud voice) probably do contribute towards a good impression at interview, the three that had a statistically significant correlation were found to be eye contact, smiling, and surprisingly nodding your head! To complicate matters further, some recent research found that head nodding was seen as positive in women, but not in men, whereas too much eye contact was seen as negative in women candidates!

Give yourself 2 points for any of B, D or E

4. When people copy each others posture, it is called postural echo or mirroring. e.g. in a pub, friends will often pick up their drinks at the same time. It occurs subconsciously when people have similar views, the same status, or like each other. Strangers often studiously avoid mirroring each others postures.

In research on this an actor played an interviewee and mimicked the posture of the interviewer. Interviewers showed no awareness of this mimicry but rated the interviewer more favourably considering that he thought more like they did and identified with them. However, beware of consciously mirroring interviewers to try to make them like you - most personnel managers will probably know far more about this than you do!

Give yourself 2 points for A

5. Position B is called the "throne" position. It reinforces the interviewers sense of control he/she can see everything that goes on in the room. Old fashioned managers often use this type of arrangement. Also the interviewees chair is a long way from the desk increasing the formality. Position A with the desk touching the wall allows for a more informal and less dominating encounter. Sitting side on to the door allows for ease of approach. Sometimes the desk may be absent completely. Doctors and lecturers often use this arrangement. However be careful not to read too much into desk positions, the interviewer may have just borrowed the office for the interview and may not be able to influence the arrangement!

Give yourself 2 points for answer B

6. Putting your hand up with five spread fingers is an insult gesture in Greece! Be aware that people from other cultures have different distances they stand apart, loudness of voice, gaze behaviours etc. which can easily be misinterpreted by people of a different culture.

Give yourself 2 points for answer B

Key Points for an interview

- **Smile**
- Be prepared to **shake hands firmly**, but don't break the interviewers wrist. Similarly a "wet fish" (weak) handshake will suggest a weak character.
- Wait to be invited to sit down.
- Try to **relax** - don't sit on the edge of your chair, but don't slouch or fidget. Don't sit with your arms crossed.
- Keep up **good eye contact** with the interviewer (according to research this apparently is especially important for men) but don't eyeball them all the time!
- **Speak clearly but not too fast:** a deeper calm voice suggests authority, whereas as excitable high-pitched voice suggests a nervous personality.
- **Head nodding** to show agreement can help, especially for female candidates.
- **Postural echo** (mirroring the interviewer's posture) can show empathy and agreement but needs to be don't **very subtly** or it might backfire if the interviewer notices that you are doing this!