

# 6A

## Body language



'Act natural' is always good advice. But, remember, when you present, you're not speaking face to face, but face to faces. To reach out to your audience you need to be just a little bit larger than life. You are your most important visual aid.

*Begoña Arsuaga, partner, Comunicadia*

When your body language is out of alignment with your verbal message, people believe what they see – not what you say.

*Carol Kinsey Goman, Kinsey Consulting Services*



1 Think about the comments of the communication experts above and discuss the following questions with a partner:

- a How easy is it to 'act natural' in front of an audience? How could you make your body language 'just a little bit larger than life'?
- b How far do you agree that your main visual aid is you?
- c When you present, in what ways do your actions 'speak louder than words'?

2 1.23 Listen to four business people from different cultures talking about body language in presentations and answer the questions.

- a What does the Brazilian say about the age of the audience? Is it the same in your country?
- b What point does the Australian make about words and body language? Is it good advice?
- c What is the Finn's intercultural recipe for success? Do you agree with his point about content?
- d What does the Kuwaiti say about private and public speaking? Would you take his advice?

3 When presenting, the body language of the sexes tends to be a little different. Which do you associate with men and which with women?

|   |                                |   |   |                                    |   |   |   |   |   |                              |   |
|---|--------------------------------|---|---|------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|------------------------------|---|
| a | Move around the room more      | M | b | Hold eye contact four times longer | M | c | Gesture towards themselves              | M | d | Gesture away from themselves | M |
|   |                                | W |   |                                    | W |   |   | W |   |                              | W |
| e | Point and wave their arms more | M | f | Smile and nod while listening      | M | g | Tilt the head and frown while listening | M | h | Keep bodies fairly rigid     | M |
|   |                                | W |   |                                    | W |   |   | W |   |                              | W |



I speak two languages – body and English.

*Mae West, Hollywood legend*

4 How typical are you of your gender? How could you be a bit more gender-neutral?

5 Look at the statements below and match them to the gestures that would best reinforce them. Are all these gestures acceptable in your culture?

1

I think there are three main issues here.



a

2

I ask you, what are we supposed to do?



b

3

I wonder what the answer is here.



c

4

OK, let's take these points one at a time.



d

5

This really isn't good enough!



e

6

Let's just remember one thing.

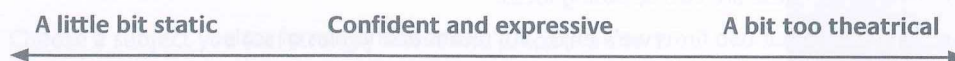


f

6 Work with a partner. Memorise the short presentation extracts below, one at a time, and then take turns to present them. What gestures feel natural for you?

- a As you know, the project has been a huge success.
- b On the one hand, it's very high quality. But on the other hand, it's expensive.
- c I think we can eliminate Option B straight away.
- d But this isn't about me. It's about you, every one of you here today.
- e So, what's the long-term trend? Frankly, who knows?
- f It just isn't working. And there are two main reasons for this.
- g We're aiming to expand our product range by 25%.
- h So, our goal is to increase productivity whilst cutting back on costs.
- i For us at the moment R&D is a top priority.
- j The whole thing has been a disaster from start to finish.
- k Profits have gone up from six to eight million dollars.
- l Firstly, it's highly effective. Secondly, it's highly efficient. And thirdly, it's high time we did it.
- m And it's powered by the tiniest microchip you've ever seen.

7 How do you rate your partner's body language overall? How does it compare with yours?



## 6B Body language



It has been well established by researchers that those who can effectively read and interpret non-verbal communication, and manage how others perceive them, will enjoy greater success in life than individuals who lack this skill.

*Joe Navarro, former FBI Special agent and author of What Every BODY is Saying and Louder Than Words.*

- 1 Do you think it's possible to show the following qualities through your body language?

leadership   charisma   honesty   enthusiasm   confidence   conviction

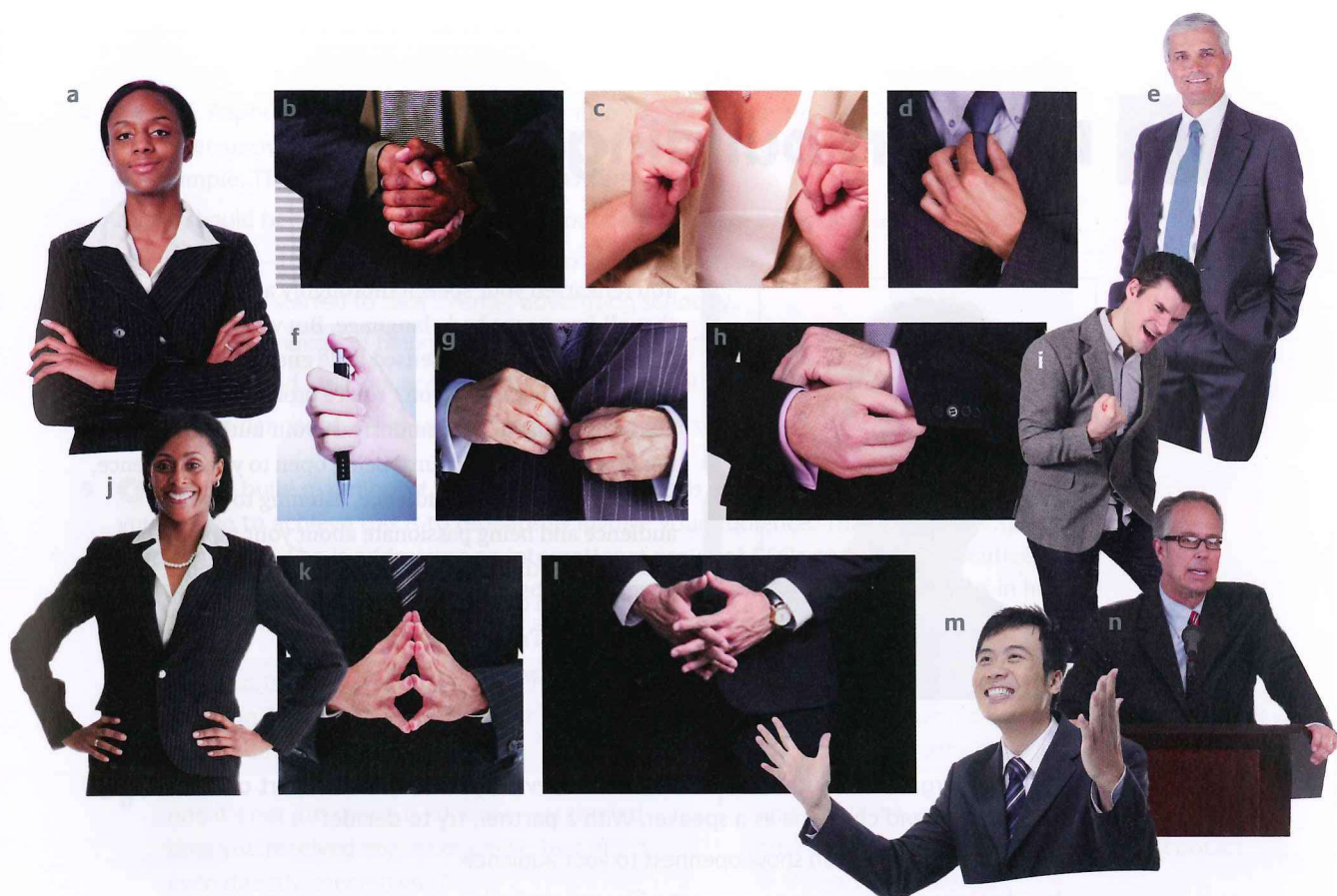
- 2 Research has shown that people can send and receive up to 10,000 non-verbal clues in less than a minute. What postures and gestures might signal the qualities in 1? How would you know the speaker lacked these qualities?

- 3 Divide the following behaviours into those which convey a sense of authority and those which create rapport. It's not just about body language, but the body plays a crucial part.

wait   maintain lots of eye contact   use subtle gestures   talk slowly  
 look slightly above the audience   ask lots of questions   stand still   use humour  
 listen   imagine you're talking to a small group of friends  
 imagine your presence fills the room   say less   talk low   get excited

| Authority | Rapport |
|-----------|---------|
|           |         |

- 4 Which is more important to you when you speak in public – authority or rapport? Is it possible to have both?
- 5 Work in groups. Just for fun, deliver one of the following using appropriate body language – speak the words with your lips, but silently. Can your group guess what you are saying?
- Our technological lead gives us an enormous advantage.
  - What we're experiencing is a period of steady decline.
  - In a sense, these are two opposing ideas.
  - By merging our two firms we'll enjoy significant economies of scale.
  - You can see that the new model has a much simpler, sleeker design.
  - I'd like to talk you through the different stages of the process.
- 6 Work with a partner. Look at the examples of presenter body language opposite. In what ways could they be distracting or create the wrong impression? Are you guilty of any of them?



7 1.24 Now listen to four short extracts from a presentation about body language and discuss these questions with a partner.

- Why are hands so important? What makes a particular gesture distracting?
- Why isn't folding your arms the answer to the 'hands problem'? How is it similar to standing behind a podium? What's the solution to 'the podium trap'?
- What makes a 'hands problem' even worse? How can you guard against this?
- What are the signs of being too energetic and too relaxed? What should you do?

8 Give a short, simple presentation to your partner – perhaps on where you'd like to be in ten years' time. Make some of the annoying gestures above as you speak and see how many they can spot!

9 Pictures a–e illustrate more examples of unhelpful body language in a presenter. Can you work out what they are?

10 Choose a subject you feel strongly about and prepare a short presentation on it. Spend 10 minutes making some notes. The template on page 87 may help. Try to make your main points as graphic and dramatic as possible. When you're ready, present your opinion and let your body follow your words. You can evaluate your performance using the feedback form on the website.

