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Schaefers works to facilitate better communication

Communication between people is obviously at the core of human behavior, affecting everything we do. But what is it, exactly, that affects the way we communicate with each other, and how can we improve our ability to do so? These are questions that Schaefers, an assistant professor of communication at SIUE, has been exploring in his research.

In a recent study published in the journal "Human Communication Research," Schaefers and his colleagues investigated how people use and perceive the use of different types of nonverbal communication, such as touch and gaze. The study found that people tend to interpret nonverbal cues as more important than verbal cues when they are ambiguous or conflicting with each other. This is important, Schaefers says, because it means that people are more likely to rely on nonverbal cues when they are unsure of what to say.

"The more ambiguous or conflicting a message is, the more people are likely to rely on nonverbal cues," Schaefers explains. "This is because nonverbal cues can provide additional information about the speaker's intention or feelings."

The study also found that people are more likely to respond positively to speakers who use nonverbal cues that are consistent with their verbal message. This is important, Schaefers says, because it means that people are more likely to trust speakers who are consistent in their communication.

"If a speaker uses nonverbal cues that are consistent with their verbal message, people are more likely to perceive them as trustworthy," Schaefers explains. "This is because people tend to see nonverbal cues as more reliable than verbal cues, which can be easily misleading."

Schaefers says that his research is important because it sheds light on how people communicate and how they can be more effective communicators. "We need to understand how people communicate in order to improve our ability to do so," he says. "This is especially important in today's world, where we are constantly communicating with each other through social media and other digital platforms."