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Body Language Expert Reacts to Bush's State of the Union Address
Is the "Cowboy" Gone?

President Bush's body language during the State of the Union Address in 2003 clearly indicates he is passionate in his dislike of Saddam Hussein and confident we must take action against him. But most everyone could tell that. It's Patti Wood, the national body language expert's ability, [who](#) can define for us *which Bush mannerisms* make us feel that way.

We could only see Bush from the waist up and saw very little of his hands as he rested them on the podium most of the time. So what did his mouth, eyes, head, etc. *tell* Patti about how he felt and maybe what he might have been thinking?

Here are some of Patti's observations:

"Bush entered the room with handshakes, double-handed handshakes and hugs. The few smiles he gave as he entered were *downward* smiles. They were smiles that masked his true feelings. We smile with a downward turn of the mouth to mask unpleasant feelings, aggression, displeasure, tension. From other cues I believe he was tense.

"He started the speech with his *mouth in a straight thin line*. For Bush that is about as neutral and calm as his mouth cues get. For most people that would convey displeasure or anger.

"Bush has a habit of giving many mouth cues. He holds his lips in tight, he brings his chin and lower lip up in an *ape-like* grimace, he presses his lips together and moistens his lips and most often he sticks out his tongue. In fact, during this one-hour prepared state of the union address, he showed his tongue briefly or he gave tongue thrusts, sticking his tongue out of his mouth more than *56 times*. Again this is something Bush does habitually. So, what does this mean?

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“If the eyes are the windows to the soul, I believe the mouth is the window to the truth. In Bush’s case his mouth cues show *when he lacks confidence and when he has strong feelings for what he is saying*.

“Most of his mouth cues occurred during the first half of the speech when he was giving the typical laundry list of statements. He would say a phrase or the first sentence of a single point, pause - most likely to read the teleprompter- give a mouth cue, usually a tongue thrust, then continue. Typically, tongue thrusts are signs of *aggression*. Little kids stick out their tongue when they are mad. In adults, tongue thrusts are rare, usually only given when someone is under great *stress*, particularly when they feel under attack, and are usually not noticeable at a conscious level in real time. That is, we only see them when someone is taped and we slow down or pause the tape. For example, Nixon gave many microfacial (very quick) tongue thrusts during his questioning over the Watergate hearings. Gary Condit gave two viewable tongue thrusts during the famous *Connie Chung* interview. (See my Condit article on my web site www.pattiwood.net.)

“Why does Bush do this? My read is that he feels under attack. **In addition, he** may not feel as confident with the words that are written for him in these speeches and so he counteracts with his tongue to gain self confidence. Again, this has become a habit. It also may just be a converting habit the way some speakers put their hands in their pockets or hold a pen.

“Bush seldom smiled during this speech, which made the **reasons for** his few smiles very clear. He smiled when he got the longest and loudest applause. That made him happy several times, even making his *eyes crinkle up, get moist and sparkle*. He smiled after making strong statements about affordable health care, children born today driving hydrogen run cars someday, and feeding the hungry.

“He gave what may have looked like a strangely extended smile after saying we needed to end partial-**birth** abortions; but if you heard the very loud applause on that issue and saw him look over at the Republicans, you could tell he was pleased that he was being rewarded for speaking strongly on that issue.

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“His most confident speaking was in the final half of his speech, when he spoke on AIDS assistance to Africa and aggression toward Hussein. He gave some of his strongest and most believable statements since the post 9-11 speeches on these issues. He also gave out few tongue shows. He played with his speech papers, flipping through the papers nervously only once, just before saying his most powerful response to the world of terror: ‘*We accept this responsibility.*’ This is a statement that indicated that we would go to war, if need be, by ourselves.

“*Paralanguage* is voice tone, tempo, speaking rate and volume level. Bush’s loudest statement in his whole speech occurred while saying the words ‘I will defend the security of America.’ He may have been coached, but he *executed the statement beautifully*. And, *he remained strong and confident through the rest of the speech.* However, he was *not confident* in his statements about the human cost. He not only protruded his tongue, but he brought it out and up to touch his upper lip

“He then ended his speech saying, “*God bless the United States of America!*” with his tongue out.”

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