

STATEMENT ANALYSIS

Techniques For Detecting Truth And Deception



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- the Statement Analysis techniques
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STATEMENT ANALYSIS

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Statement Analysis is the process of analyzing a person's words to see if he is being truthful or deceptive. Statement Analysis will also provide you with additional information by showing you exactly what the person is saying. This is achieved by carefully looking at the subject's language such as pronouns, verb tenses, unique words, etc.

Statement Analysis is not nonverbal communication; detecting deception through someone's body language. Statement Analysis only considers the words used by the subject. With Statement Analysis, you do not need to see the person, hear the person, or know anything about the person in order to determine if the person is being truthful.

OBJECTIVES

- 1. Identify methods of analyzing subject's verbal and written statement to detect deception.**

As we listen to or read someone's statement we need to know if the person is being truthful. This is especially true if you are conducting an interview. If the subject is misleading you and you do not recognize this, then you may be headed down a dead end road. You may conclude the interview without obtaining much truthful information.

- 2. Learn how to recognize what a subject is telling you based on the language used.**

Often people tell us one thing but we hear something different. This is because we have the tendency to interpret what people are saying. However, you should not interpret because people mean exactly what they are saying. By paying attention to each word used in the statement, you will be able to recognize what a person is saying and gain additional information from the subject.

PREPARING FOR THE INTERVIEW

Before you begin an interview, there are several things you should remember. These will help you to obtain information and will assist you in determining if the person is being truthful.

1. **What a person does not want to tell you will influence what he tells you.**

People's words will betray them. Information that a person does not want to share will affect how he phrases his statement.

2. **A change in language means a change in reality.**

When a person changes their language by using synonyms, different verb tenses, different pronouns, etc. this means there has been a change in reality. Something happened that caused him to alter his language.

3. **People do not want to lie.**

In an open statement in which a person can say anything, most people will not tell a lie. Telling a lie causes internal stress and this stress may surface in the form of a body movement. People know that these nonverbal signals may give away the fact they are lying. Therefore, out of the fear of having their emotions betray them most people will choose not to lie.

Another reason people will not lie in an open statement is because they do not know what the interviewer knows. If they tell a lie that the interviewer knows is a lie, then they are in trouble. So, the safest way for them to play it is to not tell any lies. However, the subject may withhold some crucial information. Therefore, we should also consider what the subject has not told us.

4. **Believe what people tell you.**

A lot of times when we interview someone who we think is being deceptive we look for the lies. However, since people rarely lie in an open statement you may be wasting your time. While you are looking for something that is not there you miss the other important information the person is giving you. The key is to believe what people tell you. That does not mean you are gullible but very discerning in what people are saying.

If a person says, "I didn't do it" believe him. He probably didn't do it. If a person says, "I wouldn't do that" believe him. However, recognize he has not told you he didn't do it. The same thing applies if the person says, "I couldn't do that." Belief in the subject helps you to recognize exactly what the person is saying and it provides you with additional information.

OBTAINING A STATEMENT

1. **Ask the subject an open-ended question that requires an extended response.**

After asking personal data questions, you want to get a statement from the subject. This can be done by asking an open-ended question such as, “What do you know about...” The question could be better phrased by ending it with an exclamation point; “Tell me what you know about.....!” With this type of question, the subject should give a lengthy answer.

If you ask specific questions that require a “yes” or “no” answer, you will have little information to analyze. The more the person talks, the more information you gain and the easier it is to determine if the subject is being truthful. Save your specific questions for later in the interview.

If the subject gives you a short answer, he is being deceptive. You know he is withholding information because you asked him an open-ended question.

2. **If the subject is writing a statement, his statement should be written with a pen.**

If you give the subject a pencil, he has the ability to erase any portion of his statement. This would be lost information. He may also be able to erase so cleanly that you do not realize he made a change to his statement. Giving him a pen will prevent this. The subject should be told if he makes a mistake he should draw a single line through it. We can sometimes glean information from what the subject has crossed out. Even if the subject crosses out the mistake to the point where it cannot be read, this change of thought can sometimes be valuable information.

ANALYZING A STATEMENT

To detect deception and to gain more information in a verbal statement, you must be a good listener. Remember that everything a person says has a meaning. When you combine this with the fact that people mean exactly what they say, you can begin to recognize what a person is telling you.

There may be times when one word will let you know if the person is being truthful or deceptive. However, in most statements you are looking for clusters. If the person is being deceptive, there will probably be several signs of deception in his statement.

1. Look at the subject's language.

Listen to the specific words used by the subject. Ask yourself, "What is this person telling me based on the words he is using?"

Hillary Clinton's statement concerning the Rose Law Firm billing records.

"I tried to be as helpful as I could in their investigative efforts."

January 1996

Mark Hacking statement concerning his wife Lori Hacking's disappearance.

"It's hard because when I'm searching, I'm not looking for somebody sitting on a rock or walking around. I know I'm searching for someone who is hurt."

July 2004

What is the difference between these two statements?

"I went Christmas shopping with my wife."

vs

"My wife and I went Christmas shopping."

2. Listen for unique words.

a. *Never*

The word “never” does not mean no. Therefore, you cannot substitute the word “never” for the word no.

Candidate Bill Clinton when he was running for President was asked:

Question: “Have you ever used illegal drugs?”

Answer: “I have never broken the laws of my country.” March 1992

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice was asked:

Question: “Would you consider running for President in 2008?”

Answer: “I have never wanted to run for anything. I don’t think I even ran for class anything when I was in school.”

March 2006

b. *Three – 3*

Three is a liar’s number. If the number three appears in a subject’s statement, there may be deception in the story.

“There were three men that attacked me.” “I left the house at 3:00.”

Brian Wells was a pizza deliveryman who on August 28, 2003 robbed a bank in Erie, PA. When the police stopped him they discovered Wells had a bomb locked around his neck. Wells told the police that "three black men" placed the bomb around his neck, started the timer and forced him to rob the bank. Before the police could remove the bomb, it detonated killing Wells. The case went unsolved until July 2007 when the U.S. Attorney's Office alleged that Wells was involved in the planning of the botched crime. Two co-conspirators, none of which were black males, were indicted by a federal grand jury on charges of bank robbery.

If people are uncertain of a number, they may choose the number three.

Al Michaels interview in November 2005 on HBO Real Sports with Bryant Gumbel.

“I’ve been doing Monday Night Football for 20 years. It feels like it’s been about three.”

3. Listen for unusual words or phrases.

Everything a person says has a meaning. Ask yourself why did he say it that way? Or why did he include this in his story? Sometimes this will be the most important information in his story.

In August 2002, David Westerfield was convicted of killing Danielle Van Dam. In his interview on June 12, 2002, he stated the following:

Question: “So did you stop and sleep?”

Answer: “Well, no. I stopped and ate and stuff like that. And took a shower. I was pretty wasted. You know, working on the almost had a heart attack. I think.”

Joran van der Sloot’s interview with Greta Van Susteren.

Question: “Any discussion between Carlos ‘n Charlie’s and the car between you and Satish or you and Natalee?”

Answer: “No, just between me and Natalee. We were speaking English to each other and I asked her if she wanted to go back to her hotel.....”

March 2006

4. Examine all of the pronouns.

a. We - Us - They

Pronouns such as “we” “us” and “they” indicate more than one person was present. You should find out what other people were involved.

“We” and “us” indicates a partnership between the participants. We would not expect to find “we” or “us” in a kidnapping or rape statement.

“He forced me into his car and drove me to an abandoned house. We went into the house and he raped me.”

The “we” in this statement indicates the subject knew her abductor and probably went along with him. It may also indicate that she is making up the story.

b. Changing pronouns.

When a person changes his pronouns it is an indication of deception. You should try to determine why the person did this.

“When I was at John D. Long Lake, I had never felt so scared and unsure as I did then. I wanted to end my life so bad and was in my car ready to go down that ramp into the water, and I did go part way, but I stopped. I went again and stopped. I then got out of the car and stood by the car a nervous wreck.”

October 1994

c. Detecting admissions.

Many times you can detect admissions by looking at the pronouns in a statement. This is because pronouns give us responsibility. People will sometimes unknowingly take responsibility for what happened.

Can you find the confession in Steven Truscott’s statement?

“As to ‘clever and devious’ had I intended to rape and murder Lynne Harper would I not rather have been stupid beyond belief to drive my victim minutes prior to killing her past innumerable witnesses? This fact occurred to no one not even my counsel.”

October 1971

5. Listen for words or phrases that indicate untruthfulness.

In an effort to get you to believe their answer, people will sometimes use words or phrases designed to emphasize their truthfulness. However, studies have shown that when people use these words or phrases they may be giving you a deceptive answer.

“I swear on my mother’s grave”	“To be honest”
“I swear on the Bible”	“To be sure”
“God as my witness”	“Believe me”
“To tell the truth”	“Honestly”
“I swear to God”	“Frankly”
“Honest to God”	“Really”

“I swear to God officer I do not know who did it.”

SPECIFIC QUESTIONS

After obtaining a statement from the subject and analyzing the statement, you then should ask specific questions. These questions will be about areas where the subject displayed possible deception. Your specific questions should be short. Most of these questions will require a “yes” or “no” answer. By asking these direct questions, you give the subject a chance to tell the truth.

1. Did the subject answer your specific question?

Most people will give an answer. What you need to decide is did the subject answer your specific question. If the subject does not answer the specific question, then the subject is withholding information. This is probably crucial information that you want.

On August 23, 2001, Connie Chung interviewed Rep. Gary Condit on the ABC News show *Prime Time Thursday*. The interview centered on his relationship with Chandra Levy and her disappearance. Here are the first six questions Chung asked.

Chung: “Congressman Condit, do you know what happened to Chandra Levy?”
Condit: “No, I do not.”
Chung: “Did you have anything to do with her disappearance?”
Condit: “No, I didn’t.”
Chung: “Did you say anything or do anything that could have caused her to drop out of sight?”
Condit: “You know, Chandra and I never had a cross word.”
Chung: “Do you have any idea if there was anyone who wanted to harm her?”
Condit: “No.”
Chung: “Did you cause anyone to harm her?”
Condit: “No.”
Chung: “Did you kill Chandra Levy?”
Condit: “I did not.”

2. Did the subject answer your question with a question?

This is another tactic people will use to avoid telling you certain things. When a person answers your question with a question it means you have asked a sensitive question. You want to find out why your question was sensitive.

This is a stall tactic giving the subject time to think about his answer. What you should ask yourself is why does he need time to think about his answer.

Question: “Did you take the money?”
Deceptive: “Did I take the money? No.”

REVIEW

When giving a statement people usually will not lie. However, they may choose to withhold some information. People’s words will betray them. Therefore, by analyzing a person’s words and by asking the right questions you will be able to ascertain the truth.

Some things to look for in a person’s verbal and written statement.

- 1. **Look at the language.** “I think John was there too.”
- 2. **Listen for unique words.** “There were three men in the car.”
- 3. **Listen for unusual words or phrases.** “I put the, everything was in the safe.”
- 4. **Examine all of the pronouns.** “We drove around for an hour.”
- 5. **Listen for words or phrases that indicate untruthfulness.** “Honestly I don’t know who did it.”
- 6. **Did the subject answer your specific question?** “I would never do that.”
- 7. **Did the subject answer your question with a question?** “You think I did it?”
- 8. **Interpret deceptive signals in clusters.**