

Turnbull v Shorten rated in battle of body language

Patrick Durkin

Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull needs to shake-off the pressure of the election and let his natural charm and wit shine to connect with voters during the marathon election campaign, according to two speaking coaches.

Opposition Leader Bill Shorten, on the other hand, needs to drop the script and robotic zingers to convince voters he is the real deal, the experts say.

Louise Mahler, who coaches politicians and global corporate leaders on "vocal intelligence" and body language says Mr Turnbull is an attractive man with a "great neutral pose" who "works a soft blink and exudes an easy, attractive smile" but has lost his mojo with the recent slump in the polls.

"Where is the fun loose relaxed, on-form Mr Turnbull of the February 2014 takedown of Senator Conroy? His recent fumbling interview on the 10-year tax cut was awful. He is dissolving before our eyes, now he is in a straitjacket," Ms Mahler said.

"Recently, while finally wearing his glasses up on his eyes, his eyes glance downwards giving an impression of depression. He seems bored and tired and uses inane repeat scooping gestures towards himself or sometimes clasps the fingers into what looks like a claw to make a point. Like Hillary Clinton desperately trying to find reserves of energy, he seems tired," she said.

She suggests Mr Turnbull needs to flirt and find the fun, stop dwelling on the weaknesses and get happy.

"He needs to analyse the current gesture patterns, for instance, keep the glasses play, remove the claw hand and find alternative congruent gestures for clarity. This would also help him come back to life," she said.

"Like Tom Cruise in the scene from *Knight and Day*, you need to gesture large and clear when people need to understand fast."

Body language and speech expert Michael Kelly agrees Mr Turnbull's 2015 speech challenging Tony Abbott for leadership was a standout.

"His projection of certainty through measured speaking, 'ownership' and occupying of the physical space, facial expression, voice tone and the shift in delivery from the gravity of the situation, to that of an optimistic future," was a 10 out of 10 performance, he said.

"In his media appearances of late, Mr Turnbull has appeared irritated. He has taken to repeating rehearsed slogans, which dilute his leadership impact.

"He has not projected the higher attributes, the calm and bearing, of a leader of state."

Mr Kelly agrees Mr Turnbull needs

to recapture his earlier performances. "He needs to 'rise above the fray' and not project irritation through his facial expression and voice. He needs to excise rote repetition of slogans and increase the clear explanation of his policies."

Ms Mahler complained she can't get past Mr Shorten's vocal timing of a grade 7 debater.

"It's about pitch, pace, pause, but that is the experience of the listener, not the speaker's recipe for engagement," she said. "An attractive man not so many years ago, he has developed a technique of raising his upper lip over his top teeth and snarling with a furrowed brow."

Ms Mahler suggests Mr Shorten makes the most of his "soft eyes", avoid reading and even try singing or reading symbols to break the habit.



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"It is not a matter of faking it to make it, but in finding a less aggressive approach within his natural breathing patterns, reflecting his own musicality."

Mr Kelly agreed that Mr Shorten relied too much on rote slogans.

"What Shorten needs to do to win over voters is to stop reciting from a pre-rehearsed script in his head when he speaks. He needs to scrub off the unctuous delivery veneer. He needs to thoroughly process his own thoughts and speak them in a simple, direct manner."