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Non-Verbal Communication

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Non-verbal behaviour whether of the hands, the eyes, or the muscle tone of the entire body, are normally accompanied by other non-verbal behaviour that reinforce and support each other. It can appear interwoven. We do not express fear in our eyes, when the rest of the body is relaxed. It is difficult to express an intense emotion with only one part of the body. Speech is an important part of communication. It serves a number of different functions. There are four basic functions of human speech - to teach, to please, to move, and to defend oneself. Five elements are behind this. Each of these components has a specific category of speech associated with it.

Types of speech and their Functions

1. **Poetic speech-** It serves to structure the messages to which it had its primary orientation.
2. **Phetorical speech-** It is also referred to as directive or connotative.
3. **Meta-Lingual speech-** It is used to talk not about the objects and events in the real world but about speech itself.
4. **Phatic speech-** It creates social relationships.
5. **Cognitive speech:-** It makes reference to the real world and frequently referred to as referential, denotative or informative.

Non-Verbal Communication Introduction and Meaning

This type of communication is known as „Non-Verbal Communication“ because there is an absence of words. It is more universal i.e. it is generally understood all over the world in same sense as against verbal communication but signs and symbols have the same meaning in almost every part of the world. Today, in the twenty first century human civilization has made tremendous progress. Opinion, feelings or messages can be expressed in gestures, signals in no time.

According to Charles Darwin “The power of communication between the members of the same tribe by means of language has been of paramount importance in the development of man, and the course of language is much aided by the expressive movements of the face and the body.”



Various forms of Non-verbal communication

Visual Signs-We see a number of visual signs which convey the same meaning to all of us eg. Traffic signals, sign boards, pictographs etc. It helps in entertainment and immediate response.

Audio Signs-These signals involve sounds of sirens, bells, rings etc.

Body Language -It expresses internal feelings very clearly. Effect of motions, ideas, thoughts, attitudes and feelings is reflected in human behavior.

Proxemics- It involves mainly space language, time language, surrounding etc.

Para Language- Here the word „Para“ means „like“, intonation of voice, manner of speaking etc. are included. It is used to bring a special effect in the communication.

Silence- When a person speaks something and the other person responds by being silent, it conveys the message that the latter does not agree with the former.



Let's study these in detail

Kinesics or Body Language-Nature has gifted human beings with the body that has a surprising versatility of expressions. It keeps on communicating endlessly, round the clock, with an infinite variety of abstract signals, that too without getting tired.

Body language gives listeners important clues about thoughts and feelings of a speaker, confirming or contradicting the words he / she speak. We achieve complete communication when our body works with our ideas. Body language should be taken in a broader perspective of personal appearance and grooming, posture, gestures, facial expressions, eye contact, paralinguistic aspects of speech and ace (proxemics) and touch. Some important aspects are as follows.

Appearance and Dress –Appearance and dress are part and parcel of the message that we transmit to the listeners. The first impression is a lasting impression and the first thing we communicate about ourselves is through our appearance. Right from your hair style to your footwear, appearance speaks a lot about you. Well groomed people are generally regarded as people with skills, intelligence and professionalism.

Posture –Posture plays an important role in communication and it can be positive or negative according to the situation. Good posture is a natural alignment of the body gait appears confident if a person walks straight and squared shouldered with stomach in. Not only this, holding the head awkwardly puts a lot of strain on the neck and shoulders, extending the tension throughout the body, while an unnatural posture makes the body a mass of stresses resulting in an undue strain on our vocal cords. Similarly leaning away from the speaker most likely shows opposition, while leaning forward means that a person is open, honest and

interested. A slumped posture presents a person in low spirits while an erect posture shows his / her high spirits. With energy and confidence, sincere and determined efforts one can get rid of inappropriate traits and develop the right way of walking sitting and standing.

Gestures –Gestures refer to the movements made by hands, arms, shoulders, head and torso. Sincere and meaningful gestures not only drive a point home but also add greater value to what is being said. Gestures clarify ideas and reinforce them; too many gestures make a person look theatrical. For example, hand movements should be used to add emphasis to what is being said without waving arms around all over the place. Playing with earrings, wrist watch, jumbling with rings, crocking knuckles not only distracts the listener but also indicates hesitation, nervousness or lack of confidence. Dr. Alan Hirsch of St. Luke’s Medical Centre, Chicago, explained when “Blood rushes to the nose when people lie. This extra blood may make the nose itchy”. People who stretch the truth tend to either scratch their nose or touch it more often. Conscious effort and practice is required to develop the right gestures. Gestures are the original form of expression that clearly depicts that the person is interested in your talks or no.

Facial Expressions-Face is the index of the mind; it conveys warmth and sincerity and is the most expressive part of our body. Expressions that cross our face send out signals which can be encouraging as well as discouraging. A smile stands for friendliness, a frown for discontent, raised eyebrows for disbelief, tightened jaw muscles for antagonism, etc. facial expressions are subtle as the face rarely sends a single message; rather it communicates a series of messages anxiety, recognition, hesitation and pleasure. Facial expression should be encouraging. Let your expressions be natural and you should be careful enough not to display negative signs such as consistent frowning. At the same time, expressions should match the content of the verbal message.



Eye Contact-Eyes are considered to be the window of the soul; hence, eye contact is a direct and powerful form of bio-verbal communication. Eyes are a rich source of feedback as a speaker at the listeners to find how they are reacting – are they bored, asleep or interested? The listeners may search for truthfulness, intelligence, attitude and feelings of the speaker. Maintaining eye contact with only one part of the audience gives thistle a feeling of neglect amongst the rest. Consistent eye contact indicates that the person is thinking positively of the speaker. If a person looks at the speaker but makes the arms crossed chest signal, the eye contact could be indicative that something is bothering the person. Fiddling with something while looking at the speaker but makes the arms-crossed, chest signal, eye contact could be indicative that something is bothered the person. Fiddling with something while looking at the speaker means that the attention is somewhere else. The attention invariably wonders if a person is not being convinced by what the speaker is saying. So, we should be able to analyze the situation, particularly in the professional world and should make pleasant eye contact with the listeners to show that we are confident, concerned and interested.

Touch –Touch is an important element of body language. It goes beyond and forges a bond that is more on an emotional and spiritual level than on the physical one. Children instinctively seek physical contact whenever they are disturbed. As one grows older, one tends to suppress this desire possibly due to fear of social embarrassment. Touch can also convey negative feeling if it is used unwillingly.

The voice of Silence –Silence can be a very effective means of communication. The age old saying „Speech is silver; silence is gold,“ undoubtedly refers to the superiority of silence over verbal communication. A well timed silence has more eloquence than speech. In face to face communication, it can communicate a number of messages. However, with the help of a right posture and proper facial expressions, silence can be highly effective.

Cultural variations in Body Language –These aspects of body language are an integral part of oral interaction and we should try to develop them for effective communication. Social status, age, occupation and ethnic back ground also influence non-verbal signs. We should know the variations that could cause failure in communication. In a country like India, there can be regional cultural variations too. For example, it has been observed that North Indians like to talk in a more informal to than the people of the parts of the country. A handshake, an embrace, a kiss on cheek and lips in public may be a traditional form of greeting in many western countries but in Asian countries such as India such gestures are frowned upon. Therefore, one can see that it is not safe to assume that gestures used with all innocence in one country are accepted in the same manner throughout the world.