

# **NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION**

## **SEMINAR ON BUSINESS COMMUNICATION**

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## **CONTENTS**

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Page No.</b>
<b>1) Introduction</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>2) Nonverbal Communication</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>3) Advantages &amp; Disadvantages</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>4) Conclusion</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>5) Bibliography</b>	<b>18</b>

## INTRODUCTION

The word “*communication*” is derived from the Latin word “*communis*”, meaning common. It stands for a natural activity of all human beings to convey opinions, feelings, information and ideas to others through words (written or spoken, body language, or signs). Communication is the exchange of message meaning within a person and between people. It is a continuous process that occurs in various contexts and uses cultural symbols. It is a process that purposefully uses spoken nonverbal and visual symbols. Communication involves and affects nearly every disciplinary field including business.

*“Communication is the sum of all the things one person does when he wants to create understanding in the mind of another: it involves a systematic and continuous process of telling, listening, and understanding.”*      *-Allen Louis*

### *COMPONENTS OF COMMUNICATION PROCESS*

#### ■ **Ideas & Encoding**

Ideas are generated at a point of perception, which occurs when sensory information from the environment or from inside your mind stimulates and arouses your attention. As you initially perceive information, you begin to generate raw thoughts and ideas. In processing the thoughts, you begin to transform them into verbal, nonverbal, or visual symbols. The transformation of ideas into symbols is referred to as *encoding*, which is the design of the communication message. Encoding involves formulating your thoughts into meaningful symbols to think about or to share with others if you intend to share thoughts with others, the encoding process involves determining what symbols will be most appropriate for your receiver and how to transmit the message to reach high fidelity.

#### ■ **Communication Sender and Receiver**

Each person in the communication process is both a message source and a message receiver throughout a given interaction. A message sender is the originator and transmitter of the message. The receiver is the recipient of the message, or destination

point we constantly transmit message verbally and nonverbally, and we also receive aural and visual message from others concurrently.

### ■ **Message**

When ideas are encoded and designed into one or more symbols they become messages used to communicate meaning. we think about these messages internally; formulate them into words, behaviours, or visual images and send them to other people.

### ■ **Communication Channels**

A channel is a medium that carries message within and between people. Thinking is an intrapersonal channel that allows us to send and receive messages within ourselves. Because verbal communication includes both spoken and written messages, the voice is a verbal channel of communication, as is a written memo, business letter or a mission statement. Nonverbal behaviour such as body movements or vocal sounds also carry messages. Channels enable us to transmit message to other people and to communicate within ourselves.

### ■ **Decoding**

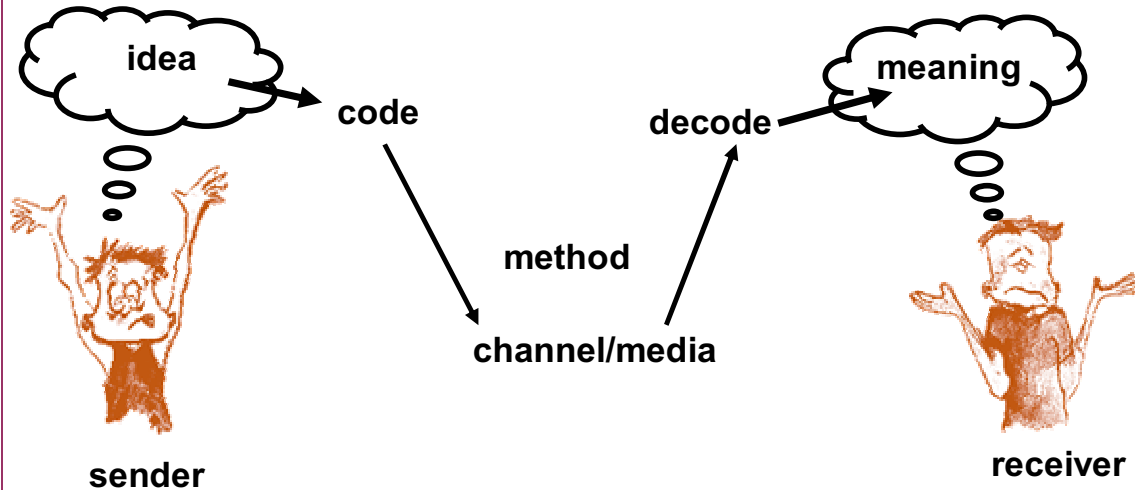
To decode means to perceive, translate, and interpret information received in a message. Decoding is listening, reading or observing a message transmitted through a channel. Once a message is received and information is translated in the brain, it can be interpreted. The interpretation stage of decoding involves attaching meaning to symbol based on the conveyed message content and emotional tone. Interpretation also involves your attitude, level of knowledge, and experience as the message receiver. Thus, not only is the intention of message source important, but the experience and the perspective of the receiver are as well. Because different people may interpret symbols and meaning in slightly different ways. The message received is not necessarily identical to the one transmitted.

### ■ **Message feedback**

Feedback is a special type of a message designed as a response to a received message. Feedback is a critical component in communication because it enables us to gauge

how the messages we sent were interpreted and aids in design of the future transmissions.

## Communications elements



### *TYPES OF COMMUNICATION*

Communication can be divided into the following types:

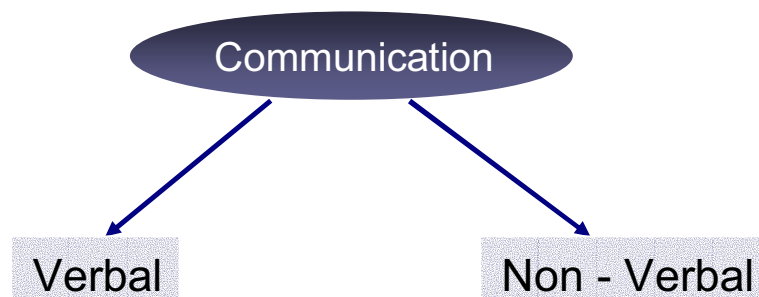
- Verbal
- Nonverbal

#### **Non verbal:**

Nonverbal communication refers to body movements or vocal variations that communicate without words. Nonverbal communication includes using of signs, gestures, and facial expressions for exchanging information between persons.

#### **Verbal:**

Verbal communication encompasses the use of both spoken and written language to accomplish message goal. Verbal communication consists of speaking, listening, writing, reading, and thinking.



## NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION

‘Not to watch a person’s mouth but his fists’ was a celebrated aphorism of Martin Luther, the 16th century Protestant reformer. The term *nonverbal communication* was popularized in the 20th century, although it is not always clear exactly what it means. Because the term *nonverbal* only excludes communication through words, the features it may include are virtually limitless. It can refer to communication through touch or smell, through various kinds of artifacts such as masks and clothes. It has also sometimes been used to include vocal features such as intonation, stress, speech rate, accent and loudness, although this is more contentious. In addition, it can refer to different forms of body movement – to facial expression, gaze, pupil size, posture, gesture and interpersonal distance. For communication to occur, nonverbal behaviour does not have to be intended as such. A member of a lecture audience might well try hard to appear attentive, but still be incapable of suppressing the occasional yawn. To the speaker, the listener may still communicate boredom, despite the best intentions not to do so! Communication can also take place without conscious awareness, in the sense that neither encoder nor decoder can specify the nonverbal cues through which a message is transmitted. Nonverbal communication can also be idiosyncratic. Hand gestures, for example, may take their meaning from their visual resemblance to objects or actions which they seek to depict, or from the way in which they are used in conjunction with speech.

### *BODY LANGUAGE*

#### **If the eyes are the windows of the soul, then the body is the mirror of our feelings**

Body language is a helpful communication tool. To make a good impression, it is important to understand that you are always communicating through body language, whether it is intentional or not. Studies done in the field indicate that:

- 55% of the communication consists of body language,**
- 38% is expressed through tone of voice (paralanguage) and only
- 7% is communicated through words.

There are four types of body language to be aware of:

- Facial expression
- Gestures
- Posture
- Movement
- Voice and sound

**Be warned:** body language is very much open to interpretation. Many signals have different meanings depending on the person/situation. If a person is cold, they will cross their arms in the same way they would if they were not interested. In some cultures, people are taught to look down when talking to adults – in body language this could mean the person is not telling the truth. Consider all sides to the situation when reading body language.

**If you see this...**

**It could mean this...**

Avoiding eye contact, looking away

Discomfort, disagreement, embarrassment

Crossed arms

Anger, defensiveness

Head in hands

Defeat, fatigue, thoughtfulness

Moving away, tilting a chair back

You are too close, space is invaded

Fidgeting, tapping foot or fingers

Nervousness, boredom

Hands covering eyes or mouth

Sadness, shame

## *FACIAL EXPRESSION.*

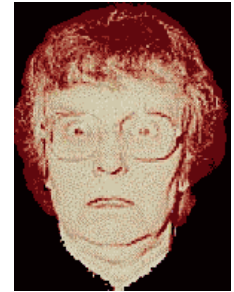
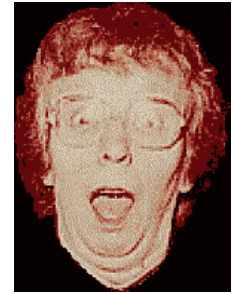
The face is the most expressive part of the body. A facial expression results from one or more motions or positions of the muscles of the face. They are closely associated with our emotions.

Facial expressions continually change during interaction and are monitored constantly by the recipient. There is evidence that the meaning of these expressions may be similar across cultures. Facial expressions are essential to the establishment of relationships with others

There are seven principal facial expressions, which we are generally quite good at recognizing and which appear to be so universal that even children who have been blind and deaf from birth display them:

- ☞ Anger
- ☞ Disgust, contempt
- ☞ Fear
- ☞ Happiness
- ☞ Interest
- ☞ Sadness
- ☞ Surprise

These appear to involve configurations of the whole face, though the eyebrows and mouth carry much information. The importance of the area around the eyes and mouth is shown by observations which demonstrate that when we examine a photograph of a person's face, we scan the whole face, but concentrate primarily on the eyes and mouth for example, :) or :-), the original smiley, means something like 'I'm happy', only one dominating part is the mouth that express the whole meaning of smiley. The opposite of that smiley is :( or :-( that means something like 'I'm sad' that's only due to the mouth.



## *GESTURES*

Gestures bring the words to life. It also indicates the nervousness level and reveals a lot about the personality of the speaker. Gestures are unavoidable when we speak. Our hands move freely to emphasis or indicate the meaning of our words. Some gestures gives strength to our others and some also





provide weakness. So there are two broad categories of the gestures:-

☐ **Positive Gestures.**

☐ **Negative Gestures.**

*Positive gestures* are the body signals which make you look relaxed, confident, and polite.

Positive listening gestures include leaning a little toward the speaker, tilting the head, eye contact, and gently nodding the head as the sign of agreement with what is said. Good speaking gestures include keeping your hands open. Avoid clutching them or folding them across the chest.



*Negative gesture* involves non-verbal activities, which distracts the listeners or indicate your nervousness or considered aggressive by the listener. Such as pointing finger, pounding fists on table, playing with your hands, playing with paper clips, pens, rubber band etc.

Gestures can be further classified into:

☐ **Emblems**

Behaviour that has a direct verbal counterpart such as the thumb upward for hitchhiking; the arms wave for hello or goodbye.

☐ **Illustrators**

As compared to emblems, illustrators do not have a verbal counterpart. E.g. pointing finger to emphasize on a specific point.

☐ **Regulators**

Speakers use body movements to their audience to search out responses to their messages. E.g. the listeners nodding their heads etc.

☐ **Adaptors**

These are often the unintentional movements to a physical or psychological state. E.g. scratching a nose and twisting a pencil etc.

Why we use gestures

- |                 |                 |
|-----------------|-----------------|
| i. to emphasize | ii. to point    |
| iii. to reject  | iv. to describe |



The way you hold yourself, your posture, makes a big contribution to your body language and conveys your level of self-confidence. By orienting your body towards someone, you show attentiveness. By falling away from them or leaning back, you show a lack of interest and some level of reserve. When we are feeling low in confidence and want to hide away, we

hunch our shoulders and keep our heads down. When we are feeling aggressive or are trying to defend our space, we puff ourselves up. A relaxed body posture will help you to appear and feel more relaxed and confident. Your posture gives signals about your interest in something, your openness, and attentiveness. It also gives clues as to your status within a group.



Body posture can be closed or open. Interested people always pay attention and lean forward. Leaning backwards demonstrates aloofness or rejection.

A firm handshake will give the impression of assertiveness or honesty, too firm can seem arrogant or challenging. Folding arms across your chest or body is protective and will give the impression of a character who's closed, guarded and defensive. People with arms folded, legs crossed and bodies turned away are signaling that they are rejecting messages. People showing open hands, both feet planted on the ground are accepting. A head held straight up signals a neutral attitude. A head tilted to the side indicates interest. A head down is negative and judgmental.

## *MOVEMENT*

Taking a few steps during a presentation helps hold attention, as does any moving object. Following are the reasons why we should make movement while communicating:

### **Move to hold attention**

At large session's lecterns restrict your movement. One should move more often from side to side rather than back and forth. We should avoid moving continuously.

### **Move to get rid of nervousness**

A way of decreasing stage fright is to move about especially in the beginning of your talks. Even the manner in which you approach the lectern tells something about you non-verbally.

### Move to suggest transition

Cues for transition in writing includes headings, words and numerical hints such as (1,2,3 or a,b,c) in your talk, you visually supplement the oral words of transition by physically moving when making a direction shift. The audience follows you more easily.

### Move to increase emphasis

In writing we use exclamation points following empathetic statement. In speaking, a movement toward the audience, accompanied by gesture can imply you are stressing a point. Emphasis through movement suggests idea importance and holds group attention.

## *VOICE & SOUNDS (Paralanguage)*

Is the content of your message contradicted by the attitude with which you are communicating it? Researchers have found that the tone, pitch, quality of voice, and rate of speaking convey emotions that can be accurately judged regardless of the content of the message.

### **Pitch**

A low-pitched voice is pleasing and comfortable. High-pitched voices can sound harsh and shrill. A high pitch is usually due to shallow breathing and nervousness. Deep, steady breathing and a deliberate attempt to lower the pitch will help's reduce nerves. Variations in pitch can be effective. For example, pitch could be raised to add emphasis to a question. Variations in pitch should be used carefully, as too frequent use of high pitch can irritate an audience.

### **Tone**

Tone is the vocal quality which expresses feeling. It can lend warmth and sincerity to your voice or reveal how strongly you feel about a topic. This can evoke a similar response from the audience. In academic presentations, a harshly critical or judgemental tone should be avoided.

### **Volume**

High volume or loudness is not the same thing as shouting. The voice should only be loud enough to be heard comfortably. You can also vary volume to make your talk more lively and interesting.

### **Rate**

Rate is the speed at which the message is being conveyed to the receiver.

The important thing to gain from this is that the voice is important, not just as the conveyor of the message, but as a complement to the message. As a communicator you should be sensitive to the influence of tone, pitch, and quality of your voice on the interpretation of your message by the receiver.

## *EYE CONTACT*

Eye contact is direct and powerful. The eyes are always talking. From the moment of birth we respond to our mother's eyes as if programmed to do so.

A poet and writer of 19th- century France wrote,

‘Eyes are so transparent, that through them, one sees the soul.’

“AANKHOON SEY DIL ME UTTAR JANE DO”

Nothing builds trust and rapport as effectively as eye contact. Eye contact is something that good communicators use all the time. Your eyes show how you feel more than your words or body language. Get eye contact with someone before you start talking to the person. That way, you know that person paying attention to you. The way you look into people’s eyes tells people what you think about them and how comfortable you are with them. Eye contact is powerful, so use it carefully.

**Staring** at someone is threatening. It makes people uncomfortable. Eye contact is NOT staring. People glance at each other from one to seven seconds, then look away. The listener looks at the speaker more than the speaker looks at the listener.

If you are wearing sunglasses, take them off so that you can make eye contact. Sunglasses hide the communication signals. If you’re talking to someone and you want to keep talking, you can avoid making eye contact. That’s a signal that you’re still



"Do we see eye to eye on this matter?"

taking your conversation turn. Don't do this often, or people will think you're too bossy or controlling.

## *APPEARANCE*

Appearance conveys nonverbal impressions that affect receiver's attitude toward the nonverbal message even before they read or hear them.

In case of written messages, the format, neatness and language send a non verbal message to the reader. The envelope's appearance, the letter, report or title page often communicate nonverbally even before its contents are read. Similarly language should be carefully worded and correct in spelling, punctuation and grammar.

Whether one is speaking to one person face to face or to a group in a meeting personal appearance and the appearance of your surroundings conveys non verbal stimuli that affects attitude towards the spoken words. *Physical appearance* includes clothing, hair style, neatness, jewelry, cosmetics, posture etc. they convey impressions regarding occupation, age, nationality, social and economic level depending upon the circumstance. *Appearance of surroundings* includes room size, location, furnishing, architecture, wall decorations, floor, lighting, windows and other related features where ever people communicate orally. It varies from culture to culture.

## *SILENCE, SPACE & TIME*

### **Silence**

Silence can be a positive or negative influence in the communications process. It can provide a link between messages or sever relationships. It can create tension and uneasiness or create a peaceful situation. Silence can also be judgmental by indicating favor or disfavor - agreement or disagreement.

For example, suppose a manager finds a couple of his staff members resting.

If he believes these staff members are basically lazy, the idleness conveys to him that they are "goofing off" and should be given additional assignments.

If he believes these staff members are self-motivated and good workers, the idleness conveys to him that they are taking a well-deserved "break."

If he is personally insecure, the idleness conveys to him that they are threatening his authority.

### **Time**

Time can be an indicator of status. How long will you give the staff member who wishes to speak to you? How long will you make him wait to see you? Do you maintain a schedule? Is your schedule such that your subordinates must arrange their schedules to suit yours? In a healthy organization, the manager and his subordinates use time to communicate their mutual respect to each other.

### **Personal Space**

Personal space is your "bubble" - the space you place between yourself and others. This invisible boundary becomes apparent only when someone bumps or tries to enter your bubble.

How you identify your personal space and use the environment in which you find yourself influences your ability to send or receive messages. How close do you stand to the one with whom you are communicating? Where do you sit in the room? How do you position yourself with respect to others at a meeting?



All of these things affect your level of comfort, and the level of comfort of those receiving your message.

There are three basic principles that summarize the use of personal space in an organization:

The higher your position (status) in the organization,

- (a) the more and better space you will have,
- (b) the better protected your territory will be, and
- (c) the easier it will be to invade the territory of lower-status personnel.

# **ADVANTAGES & DISADVANTAGES** **OF** **NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION**

## **Advantages:**

- ☑ Knowledge of nonverbal skill strengthens your communicative competence as a professional.
- ☑ By gaining a fuller understanding of message, you are better equipped to fulfil your purpose
- ☑ There are comforting body gestures such as touching ear lobes or back of the neck or stroking hair. These acts restore confidence.
- ☑ Nonverbal communication is often more reliable and believable than verbal communication.

## **Disadvantages:**

Human beings invented language for a reason--if you try the silent day exercise, you will realize both how creative nonverbal communication can be AND how limited it is:

- ✗ Is imprecise
- ✗ Can't explain complex ideas
- ✗ Hard to convey two things at once
- ✗ Can't convey sarcasm (=contradiction between vocal tone and verbal words)
- ✗ Only communicates for limited distances, and only in the present moment
- ✗ Doesn't come across phone lines or in written text
- ✗ Often cannot transmit factual information
- ✗ Is open to multiple interpretations -- easy to misread



## **CONCLUSION**

Regardless of your position in the organization it is important for you to develop some sensitivity to nonverbal messages. Cooperation improves as we recognize and respond appropriately to non-verbal cues. Of course you have been aware of non-verbal communications all of your life, but how much thought have you given them?

According to some experts more than half of information conveyed in a conversation is communicated through nonverbal channels, although it can be subtle enough that we can't consciously tell how we convey or pick up those signals. Awareness of the importance of nonverbal communication goes right back to classical civilisation, whereas its scientific investigation has a relatively short history. According to one research tradition, its particular importance lies in communicating emotion and interpersonal relationships. According to another approach, nonverbal behaviour is so closely synchronised with speech that it should be regarded as part of natural language. From this latter perspective, the study of nonverbal communication should arguably eventually disappear – to be replaced by a message model in which auditory and visual elements of face-to-face communication are treated as an integrated whole.

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