

Communication Skills: Lecture No.6

Module 3

Lecture 2

Nonverbal Communication

In this module, you will learn about

Nonverbal communication

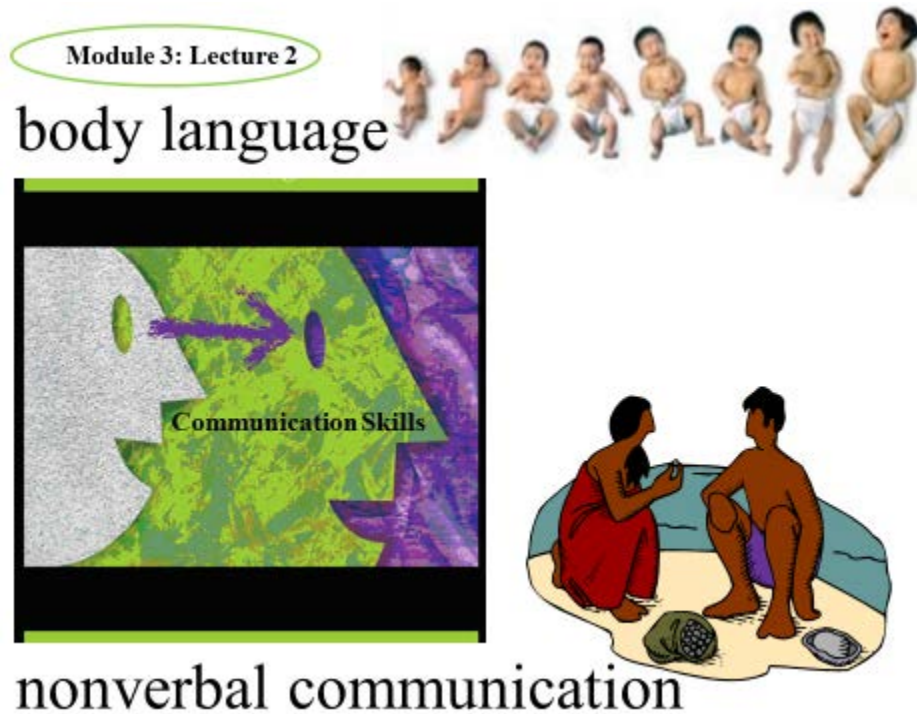
Importance of Body Language

Functions of Nonverbal Communication

Types of Nonverbal Communication

Application of Nonverbal Communication to gain a Professional Image

In the previous module, through quizzes, you checked your fundamental knowledge about *Nonverbal Communication*, especially, your understanding about *body language*. By this time, hopefully you have understood that nonverbal communication is a challenging and the most significant component of communication. I am sure that at the end of this module (which comprises four lectures) you will not only be able to enhance your personal and professional image in terms of Nonverbal Communication but also effectually read body language cues from people and respond to them appropriately.



Take a look at the title slide shown above. Right now you can understand that babies emote so much nonverbally. But you may not be able to gather much about the interaction going on between the man and woman. However, at the end of this module, you will become an informed analyzer of nonverbal communication and you will be able to detect who is nonverbally more inclined in the involved communication transaction. Remember: communication is an interaction between two people and a favorable response is always the desired outcome.

WHAT IS NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION?

Simply speaking, nonverbal communication is all what which is *not* verbal. By verbal, I mean, the form of communication that is manifested in *words* either in the form of *speaking* or *writing*. However, the non-verbal is just not the opposite of verbal. It is applied to so many aspects of life involving communication such as facial expression, gesture, fashion accessories, status symbols like cars, dance, drama, music, mime, traffic signals, territoriality of animals, the protocol of diplomats, parks, maps, flags and so on.



What Is Non-Verbal Communication?

- **A dynamic and continuous communication process where commonly understood codes are used by the senders and the receivers .**



Compared with the verbal, the nonverbal can convey a message more effectively. For instance, you can use a smile or a frown and can communicate and convey message without words.



What Is Non-Verbal Communication?

- **Communication without words.**
- **Communication using images, symbols, signs, gestures, facial expressions, postures, etc.**



e.g., A smile, a frown, can communicate and convey message without words

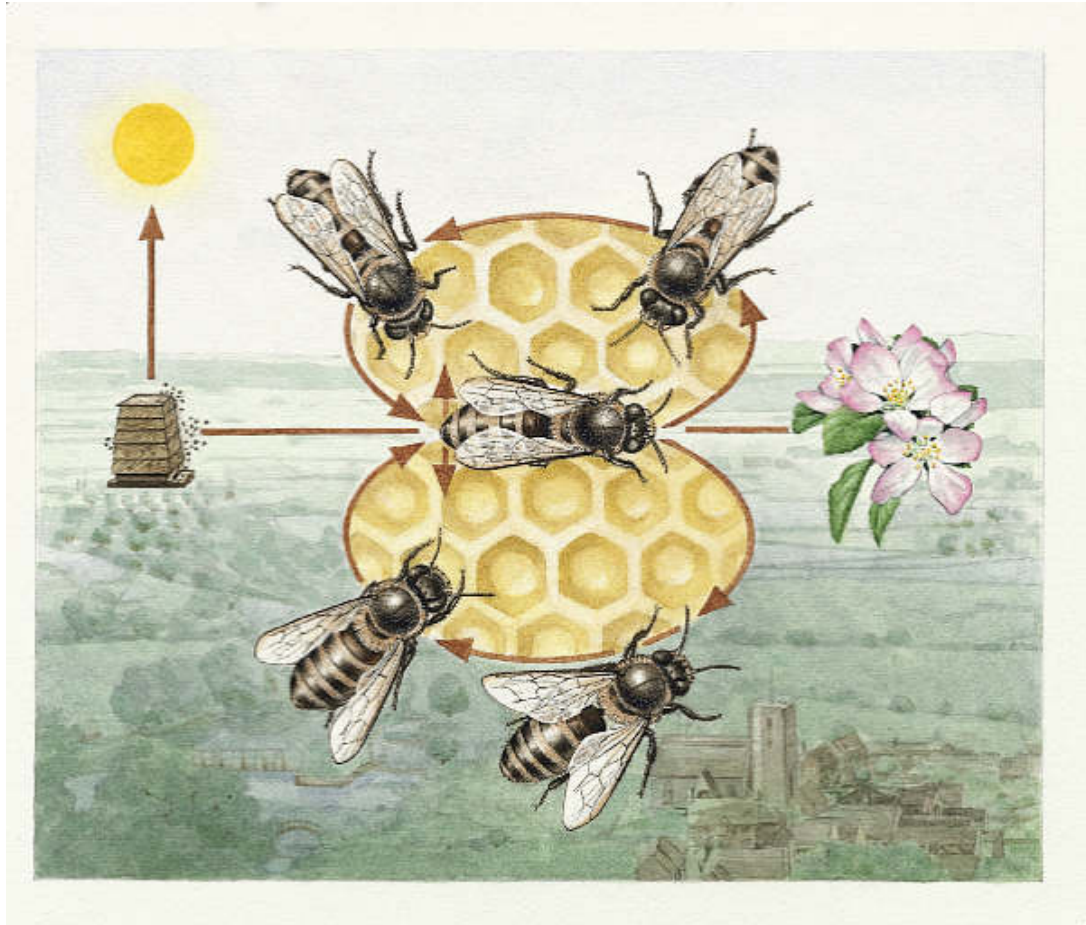
... and convey a message without words

Look at the following situation: a person in Mumbai has invited his friend to meet him at his residence in Andheri. Assuming that the friend is coming to Mumbai for the first time, he has the options of coming by car, bus or train. In case he chooses to come by bus and reaches the bus station, he needs to know beforehand where to get off—whether at Mumbai Central or at Dadar. In case he arrives by the train, he should be knowing which station to get off. Should he get off at Mumbai Central and change to the local train or should he continue to go till the last terminal (CST)? If he is smart enough to get off in Mumbai Central, he should possess the prior knowledge of changing to the western train connection as he has to go to his friend's residence in Andheri.

Again, let us assume that he asked somebody who guided him to board the western train properly. However, having boarded the right train is not sufficient, he should know which platform to get off—the one in the west or the other in the east! He needs to again ask people to help him identify the right platform. In addition, he should be able to inform appropriately the auto rickshaw driver to take him to his friend's apartment. If he lacks the knowledge of the exact location, then even the auto rickshaw driver will not be of much help to find the apartment. Most likely, he will have to roam on the same lane so many times to exactly identify the apartment. Or else, he has to call up his friend and request him to take him safely to the residence.

Contrast the above situation with another fascinating one that involves a non-human being—a honey bee. This bee flew across some mountains, crossed some rivers and then reached a dense forest, where it crossed many trees and found on the top of a huge, tall tree with flowers full of honey. It comes back to its hive, and then, in order to indicate the place where the honey is situated, it just makes a kind of dance by moving in a clock wise and anti-clock wise direction resembling the shape of the number eight.

Looking at this dance, the rest of the bees make a bee line exactly to the spot where honey is located. They cross the same number of rivers, mountains, and trees without ever losing their path or time because through the *nonverbal* dance movement, they learnt the direction.



You may understand now that in the first situation where a human being is looking for an address, it involved *verbal* communication (address written in word form, spoken language used for making enquiries). Whereas, in the second situation where a honey bee conveyed the message to other bees the location of honey, *nonverbal* communication is involved. In the former case, when a man searches for his friend's apartment in a metropolitan city for the first time, ninety per cent chances are there that he is likely to get lost. However, in the latter case, the bees are able to locate the place of honey hundred per cent accurately without any waste of time or energy. Now the question is: Which form of communication do you think is more effective? Which form, in your opinion, is superior?

Obviously, it is very easy to say in this *context* that the nonverbal is more effective than the verbal communication. But it is not proper to conclude that the nonverbal is superior to the verbal part of communication in general. Effective communication is a seamless blend of both the verbal and the nonverbal aspects of communication. In addition, the effectiveness of either verbal or nonverbal aspect of communication depends on *the context* or the situation or *the frame of reference*, and the level of *commonality* between the users. In human communication, appropriate use of channels also play a crucial role in determining effectiveness.

Nonetheless, most of the times, the nonverbal is impactful. It influences the audience by transmitting the message faster than verbal communication.

Look at this e-mail...

Date: Tue, 16 Aug 2005 19:40:22 +0530 (IST)
From: [Dhananjai Chitlangia <dhanchit@iitk.ac.in>](mailto:dhanchit@iitk.ac.in)
To: ["Dr. T. Ravichandran" <trc@iitk.ac.in>](mailto:trc@iitk.ac.in)
Subject: Re: feedback for lecture 3

Today, we saw some barriers to communication which really was an eye-opener to me.

This was actually an e-mail feedback sent by a student of my course on *Communication Skills* at IIT Kanpur. What is more interesting in the mail is that the student was more influenced by the visual images I used in the PowerPoint than perhaps the words I used in the lecture. The words “saw” and “eye-opener” appears to be Freudian slips (words escaping from his subconscious mind) indicating that he enjoyed *watching* my lecture than actually *listening* to it! You *watch* a movie or a show on television but you *listen* to a lecture. Don’t you? So, what he meant was that he was able to get more information through the *visual* message that I generated through the pictures and images in the form of Power Point than through the words I used in my lecture. Thus, the lecture was an eye opener to the student as well as the teacher! Even, I realized that if I have to make the class much more interesting I should use visuals more frequently to correlate

***A Freudian Slip?!**

Date: Tue, 16 Aug 2005 19:40:22 +0530 (IST)
From: Dhananjai Chitlangia <dhanchit@iitk.ac.in>
To: "Dr. T. Ravichandran" <trc@iitk.ac.in>
Subject: Re: feedback for lecture 3

Have You Heard?

Today, we **saw** some barriers to communication which really was an **eye-opener** to me.

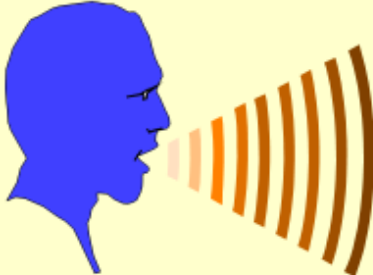


*Something you say by mistake but which is believed to show your true thoughts.

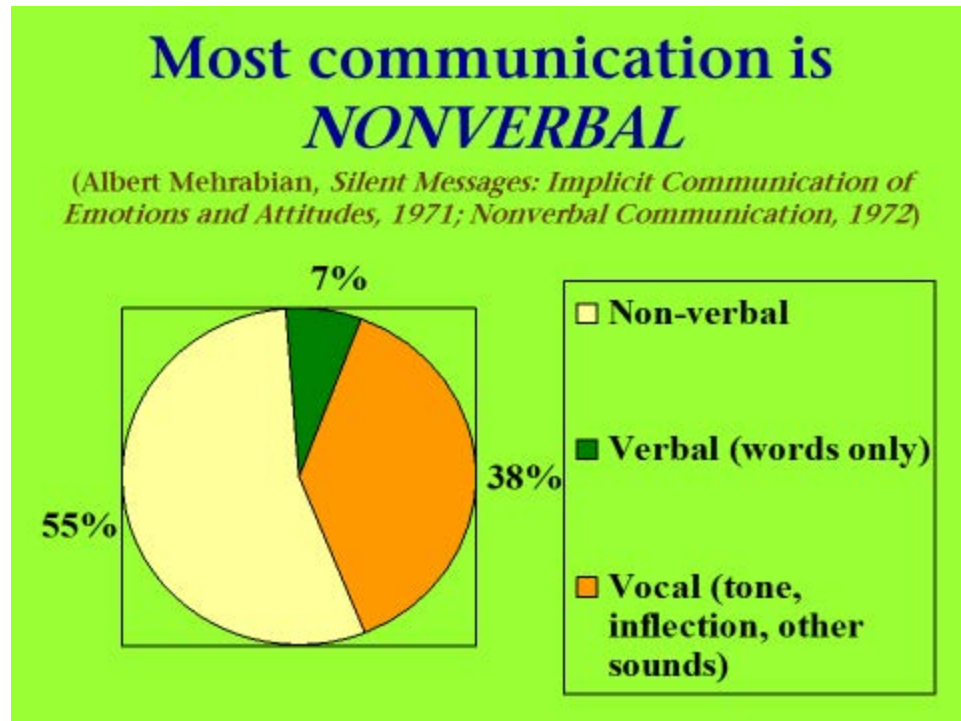
my verbal lessons. In fact, the startling discovery about communication is that ninety three per cent of it is nonverbal (body language) and only seven per cent is verbal!

What Is Communication?

- **93% Body Language**
- **7% Words**



Based on many path-breaking psychological experiments conducted on human communication, Albert Mehrabian asserts that most communication is nonverbal.



For Mehrabian, communication, analyzed functionally, from the perspective of the receiver, is 7% verbal, 38% vocal (paralinguistic), and the majority 55% is non-verbal. That is why, it is important to recognize and learn nonverbal as the chief aspect of communication so that you can use it to integrate, compliment, supplement with the verbal. Hence, you need to know more about the features of nonverbal communication.

Nonverbal communication is a *dynamic* and *continuous* communication *process* where *commonly understood codes* are used by the senders and the receivers. It is dynamic, which means it is active, continuous, and an ongoing uninterrupted process. You can recollect from the preview quiz: “Even if you stop communicating with somebody verbally, you start communicating with that person nonverbally.” When you stop talking to someone, you use frowns, silence, and avoiding eye-contact or staring, etc., to convey your displeasure or anger through nonverbal gestures. That is how you use commonly understood codes which you might have learnt implicitly from your socio-cultural and lingual surrounding. All objects are culturally and are universally encoded with some message. Take for example flowers; if you give a yellow rose to someone, it indicates that you seek friendship. If you give a red rose, it can suggest love. Similarly, lotus is associated with spirituality. A white dove symbolizes peace, and so are white flags. When a red flag is shown before a running train, the engine

driver understands that there is danger ahead and he needs to stop the train. He also waits for the green flag or green signal to be shown just when he wants to start the train from one station and to move on to the other one. Effective communication is possible when the sender and the receiver are able to extract information from these codes and act in an appropriate manner.

WHY SHOULD WE STUDY NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION?

Understanding nonverbal messages or body language helps us to know how human beings communicate their *emotions*. While communicating a message, the verbal component carries the linguistic meaning, but, the nonverbal

Importance of Body Language

*“What you do speaks so loud
that I cannot hear
what you say.”*

- Ralph Waldo Emerson

conveys the real emotions underlain in the meaning. When the verbal comes from the *mind*, the nonverbal reveals what lies hidden deep in the *heart*. So, if we want to know somebody inside out we need to study nonverbal communication. Because nonverbal messages are difficult to hide and one cannot even consciously control them. Hence, they are accurate pointers to the feelings of a person.

Actions Speak Louder than Words?

‘What often happens in any relationship is that language itself becomes a mask and a means of clouding and confusing the relationship. If the spoken language is stripped away and the only communication left is body language, the truth will find some way of poling through. Spoken language itself is a great obscurer’

Body Language, Julius Fast, MJF books, 1970.

According to the above quote from Julius Fast, when you use language (the verbal) to communicate something, it is incorrect to think that you would have communicated the message clearly, and effectively. Especially, in relationship situations, where emotions are involved, language itself becomes a mask, it deceives, and acts as a camouflage. Whereas, it is the nonverbal communication that reveals and makes the message crystal clear. If you look at it this way, you will realize that most of the misunderstandings in human relationships are because of the abuse or misuse of words and understand that spoken language leads to maximum confusions.

FORMS OF NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION

Nonverbal communication is transmitted basically in three forms: *sign language*, *action language*, and *object language*.

Sign language includes all those forms of codification in which words, numbers, and punctuation signs are replaced by gestures. To give a simple example, if I want to say “two” in my class, I can either write it on the blackboard or show two fingers (and fold the rest) to indicate the number. People who have difficulties in speaking and hearing, use sign language successfully for communication.

Action language implies all movements that are not used exclusively as signals. It connotes the gestures and movements we make while we convey something. However, these gestures

and movements do not signify anything on their own when separated from the original message. They are used to correlate thought patterns and express the flow of ideas appropriately.

Object language refers to meanings we attribute to objects around us. It comprises all intentional and non-intentional display of material things such as: Machines, accessories, architectural structure, the human body and clothes. Machines means things like: your car, your computer, your mobile, and all your personal accessories. When you display your possession of I-Phone 6 or Samsung Note 4, you indicate your identity by your choice of a particular brand. You show your affordability to buy expensive goods. You also indicate that you are stylish, sophisticated and have an eye for the latest gadgets.

Similarly, architectural structure conveys a lot about the cultural identity of a country. The Taj Mahal makes people immediately think of India, and associate it with romance and magnificence. Also, the way you decorate the body, the way you use it to perform any activity, and the way you dress it up speak volumes about your personality, character, preferences and prejudices.

Interestingly, the physical objects symbolize professional identity, as for instance, the stethoscope connotes a doctor. They can reveal personal commitments as in the case of engagement or wedding ring. School T-shirt and house T-shirt indicate the local group or community one belongs to. Cars are invariably perceived as status symbols. Like cars, some people use costly and comfortable furniture to display their status and wealth.

Having identified the forms of nonverbal communication, let us now focus on the elements.

Elements of Non-verbal Communication



- Gestures**
- Facial Expression**
- Posture**
- Body Movement**
- Eye Contact**
- Appearance**
- Silence**
- Space**

I will discuss in detail each of these elements in the coming lectures. Let me conclude this lecture with the functions of nonverbal communication. According to Ekman and Friesen, there are five functions as follows:

Nonverbal Communication is strongly related to verbal communication

✚ Functions of Nonverbal Communication
(Ekman & Friesen, 1969)

- Repeat what is said verbally
- Complement or clarify verbal meaning
- Contradict verbal meaning
- Regulate verbal interaction
- Substitute for verbal meaning

REPEAT WHAT IS SAID VERBALLY

You must have observed in Mathematics class where the teacher, while saying zero, rounds her thumb and forefinger to show zero. In this case, nonverbal communication is used to repeat what is said verbally.

COMPLEMENT TO CLARIFY VERBAL MEANING

Here, the nonverbal is *added to* as a *support* to the verbal meaning. For example, the science teacher while talking about the cross-section of heart draws the picture on the board to make the concept clear to his students.

CONTRADICT VERBAL MEANING

A servant who stole a gold ring from his master, for instance, says that he does not know who must have stolen the ring but his lack of eye contact and sweat on the face contradict his statement. In fact, here the nonverbal will reveal the servant as the real culprit.

REGULATE VERBAL INTERACTION

How is it regulated? Look at the following situation. The teacher wants the students to be introduced one by one. She suggests the following: “When I say one, the first fellow from my right side will introduce; when I say two, the next fellow will follow, when I say three the next, and so on.” Then the teacher proceeds to say “one” and points to the particular fellow and the student introduces. She says “two,” “three,” and “four” and after four she does not say anything. Instead, she simply points to the student who is sitting as the fifth, then the sixth and so on. Here, after initiating the interaction verbally, the teacher, uses nonverbal gesture to *regulate* it further.

SUBSTITUTING VERBAL MEANING

The nonverbal can also be effectively used for substituting verbal meaning. When somebody asks you whether you like something, *without* saying “yes” or “no” you can indicate your response by nodding your head suitably. A child indicates its happiness by smile and laughter. In such cases, the nonverbal *substitutes* the verbal meaning. Very often you may use thousand words yet struggle to describe something, which can be fruitfully done by simply substituting them with a picture.

In the next lecture, we will look at the origin of nonverbal communication and its elements in detail.

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