

Communication does not always rely on written or spoken words. Silence often speaks more loudly and clearly than words.

INTRODUCTION TO NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION

The process of communication involves the sending and receiving of messages through words as well as without words, while the outcome of communication (or the 'product') determines the meaning of verbal and non-verbal messages. Clearly, we do not communicate *to* others, but *with* them.¹ Therefore, it is fair to say that communication may be viewed as both a process and a product with the goal of sharing a common idea. It is important to observe at this point that communication is a kind of behaviour, and behaviour communicates. Such behaviour frequently produces results—often, though not always, favourable.²

During verbal communication, we use words to which symbols have been arbitrarily assigned and expect that everyone involved will share the same interpretation of these words. However, communication often gets its breath of life from messages not involving words or speech. In fact, people often seem to have more faith in non-verbal cues than they do in verbal—both spoken and written—messages. For instance, if a person says one thing but transmits a conflicting message non-verbally, listeners will almost invariably tend to believe the non-verbal signal.³ Non-verbal communication refers to the sending and receiving of wordless messages conveyed through such means as gestures, body movements, facial expressions, tones of voice, colours, spaces, and styles of dressing. The look in one's eyes, the wrinkles on one's forehead, the curve of the lips and the movements of the head and hands are reflections of one's mood, thoughts, and feelings.⁴ Even silence may sometimes speak more loudly and clearly than words. On the other hand, using appropriate gestures and facial expressions to reinforce what one wants to communicate adds to its impact. This happens because listeners tend to process non-verbal cues automatically and almost unconsciously.⁵ Clearly, non-verbal communication can aid or affect the efficacy of verbal communication. Non-verbal communication broadly covers the seven components listed here, which we will discuss in detail in this chapter:

1. Body language
2. Kinesic communication
3. Proxemic communication
4. Haptic communication
5. Paralinguistic communication
6. Chromatic communication
7. Chronomatic communication

We communicate almost incessantly with the external world and send out non-verbal messages all the time, knowingly or unknowingly.

Gestures, a natural part of non-verbal communication, are important and need to be understood.

Few would challenge the fact that we communicate almost incessantly with the external world and keep sending out non-verbal messages *all the time*, knowingly or unknowingly. According to an estimate, there are over 700,000 forms of non-verbal communication.⁶ Therefore, it makes sense for us to become more aware not only of *what* we are communicating, but also of *how* we are communicating and, most importantly, of how we *look* while communicating. We must become aware of our gestures and postures, our body movements (kinesic communication), our space language (proxemic communication), our touch behaviour (haptic communication), our voice modulation (paralinguistic communication), our dress sense and selection of colour (chromatic communication), and our time sense (chronomatic communication).

Most of us do not tell each other how we feel about each other (without specific cause); nor do we usually tell a person how our words need to be interpreted. Instead, we often use non-verbal communication to communicate our feelings, intent, and the meanings of our words. In this chapter, we will learn how our non-verbal behaviour can complement the meanings of messages conveyed verbally.

BODY LANGUAGE

Behavioural scientists and communication experts hold the view that the body language we display decides to a large extent the quality of our communication. Therefore, it would be good to become conscious of our own body language as well as that of others. It is important to remember that body language has different meanings in different cultures. How we interpret body language depends on the situation, the culture, the relationship we have with a person, and on the gender of the person we are communicating with. The meanings of most gestures differ from culture to culture.

Body language is a complex mixture of movement, posture, and tone of voice. Developing the skill to understand body language is similar to learning a foreign language as it requires time and effort to achieve mastery. Fig. 4.1 illustrates the three main components of body language.

Your body language is, in fact, an outward reflection of the emotions you feel while communicating with someone. As such, your body language may reinforce your verbal message, but it can also *contradict* and *reveal* your true thoughts when you are not being truthful. This is vital in the workplace. You need to know if a client is really happy with your services or if the client is merely being polite when they say they are happy. You need to know if your manager was satisfied with your project work or if you didn't impress at all.

We use body language all the time. At the same time, it is important to remember that body language has different meanings in different cultures.

Developing the skill to understand body language requires time and effort.

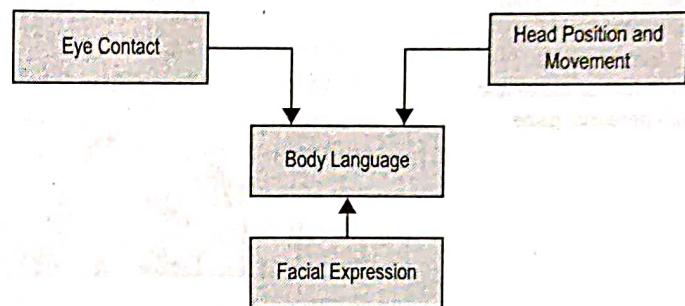


Fig. 4.1 Three Main Components of Body Language

Eye Contact

Eye contact is a direct and powerful tool of communication. The way in which we look at someone often reveals our feelings towards them at the moment. For example, we tend to look at something at length if we like it but will turn our gaze away quickly if it doesn't appeal to us. The act of looking at something is called eye-contact and is directly related to our 'selection' or 'rejection' of that object in our consciousness. Nothing builds trust and rapport with a person as effectively as eye contact. The use of eye contact varies significantly from culture to culture. In some regions, direct eye contact may be considered an honest and confident approach while in other cultures, it may be construed as insulting. For instance, in the USA, direct eye contact is usually considered a sign of trustworthiness. Therefore, regular and attentive eye contact will probably convey your honesty and approachability to an American. However, in India and other Asian countries, a hard, unblinking stare may be interpreted as rude, unyielding, and offending.⁷

Studies say that two people tend to communicate with each other more effectively if their interaction contains an amount of eye contact that they both find appropriate in the given situation. Too much eye contact can be unsettling for most people. Although most rules of eye contact (as is the case with all other forms of body language) are dependent on the context in which they occur. However, some rules are universal. For example, staring is usually considered impolite in most parts of the world. While in Western societies, eye contact with a person is generally expected to be regular but not overly persistent, as constant eye contact is often considered to be an attempt at intimidation.

Too much eye contact or staring is considered impolite in most parts of the world.

Here are some common interpretations of eye contact in a workplace scenario:

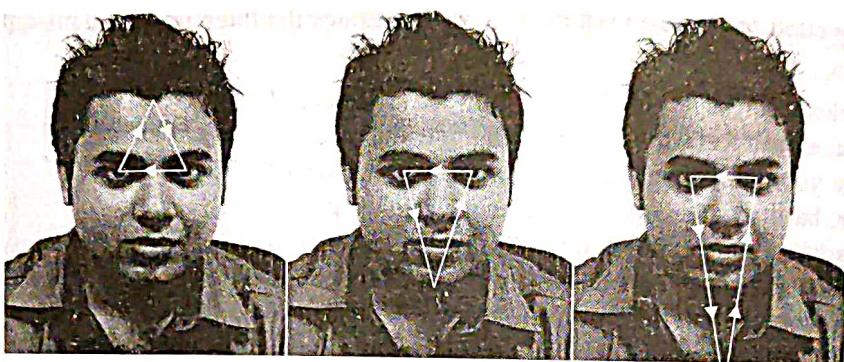
1. Too much eye contact is generally considered as communicating superiority, domination, lack of respect, a threat or a threatening attitude, and a desire to insult.
2. Too little eye contact is interpreted as not paying attention, being impolite, insincere, dishonest, or shy.
3. Withdrawing eye contact by lowering the eyes is usually taken as a sign of submission.

The pupils of your eyes are a component of your gaze behaviour over which you practically have no control. The pupils dilate when we are interested in an object or in the person we're talking to. Try watching the change in the size of a friend's pupils closely as a conversation moves from an interesting topic to a duller topic.⁸

It has also been found that when people are engaged in an interesting conversation, their eyes remain focused on their partner's face for about 80 per cent of the time; however, the focus does not remain exclusively on the eyes. Instead, they focus on the eyes for two to three minutes, and then moved their focus down to the nose or lips, finally moving their focus back up to the eyes. Occasionally, the gaze moves momentarily down towards the table, but always returns to the eyes.⁹ Your gaze behaviour can further be categorized as:

Different types of gaze behaviour (from left to right):

- (i) formal gaze;
- (ii) informal gaze; and
- (iii) personal gaze.



1. **Formal gaze:** This kind of gaze is often used during business-level discussions such as job interviews, client presentations, and board meetings. Here, the speaker gazes at the imaginary triangle formed on the other person's forehead (in an *upward direction* on the area between the two eyes and the forehead). Through this gaze, the speaker can often remain in control of a formal interaction.
2. **Informal gaze:** This kind of gaze is often used during talks in the informal and social ambience of discussions such as departmental meetings, team briefings, appraisals, and exit interviews. Here, the speaker's gaze drops below the other person's eye level and focuses on the imaginary triangle formed on the other person's face (in a *downward direction* on the area between the two eyes and the mouth.).
3. **Personal gaze:** This kind of gaze is used during conversation between people who are very close and informal in their relationship such as between two close friends of the same sex, relatives, married people, or partners. Here, the gaze shifts across the eyes and slides to the lower parts of the person's body, focusing on the imaginary triangle between the eyes and the chest area. Sometimes, a personal gaze may move to the lower abdomen and thigh area.

Facial Expression

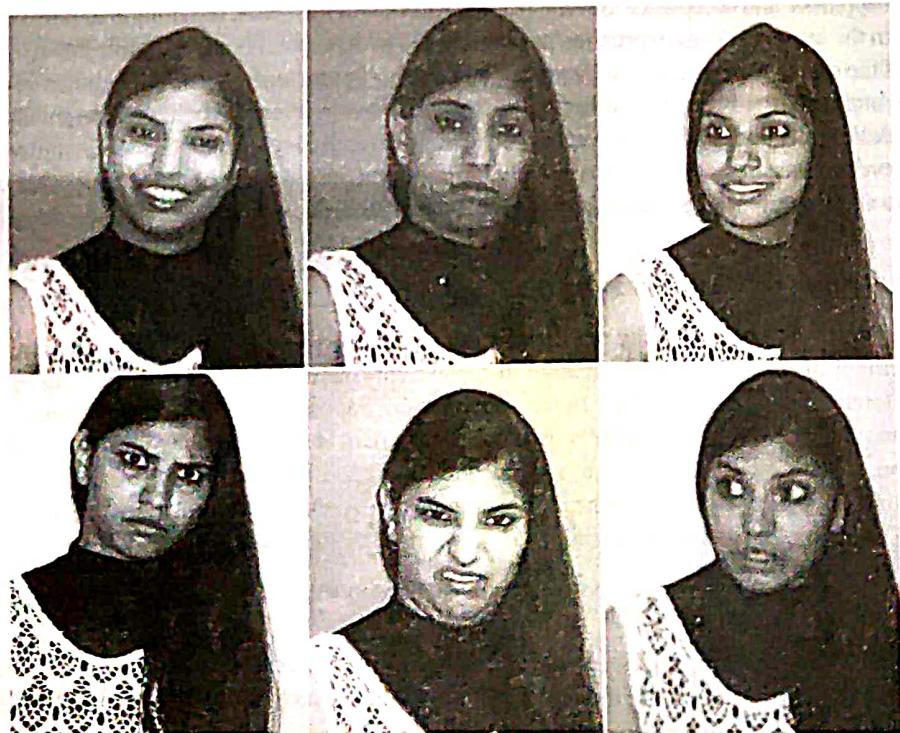
We gain a good deal of information about people's emotional states from the expressions on their faces.

When communicating with others, our faces often reflect the emotions—pleasant or unpleasant—that we feel at that point in time. Facial expression refers to certain movements or contortions of the facial muscles that facilitate the non-verbal communication of emotions. In *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (published in 1872), Charles Darwin writes that the expression of emotions is identical in all primates and must have a biological basis apart from culture and society.¹⁰ However, researchers today believe that non-verbal communication is partly instinctive, partly taught, and partly imitative. While there are some universal facial expressions—such as the smile, frown, and scowl—that are instinctive, there are many more facial expressions that are learned and are unique to specific cultures.

Talking with Your Face

The range of facial expressions is very varied. Broadly speaking, there are six principal facial expressions that indicate whether people are happy, sad, surprised (interested), angry, disgusted or afraid—the six basic human emotions. Let us study these six facial expressions in detail.

- Happiness:** A happy mood is easily expressed through a smile. Smiles are normally used as a gesture of greeting and to indicate varying degrees of pleasure, amusement, and happiness.
- Sadness:** Sadness, disappointment, and depression are usually revealed by a lack of expression and are characterized by a turning down of the corners of the mouth, a downward look, and a general sagging of the features. However, extremes of sadness may be characterized by the appearance of tears, trembling of the lips, and attempts to shield the face from view.
- Surprise (Interest):** Interest is often indicated by what is called a *headcock*—holding the head at an angle to the subject of interest. Interest towards an object, a person or a situation may be expressed by a wider opening of the eyes than usual, a slightly open mouth, and propping up of the chin with the fingers (to show attentive listening or careful observation).
- Anger:** Anger is most commonly expressed by a steady gaze at the source of offence, frowning and scowling, or a clenching of the teeth. However, the expression of anger varies from individual to individual. When angry, one's posture becomes tense as if ready to spring into immediate offensive action.
- Disgust:** Disgust and contempt are shown by a narrowing of the eyes and a grimacing mouth, which becomes more pronounced with increasing intensity of feelings. Here, the nose will also probably be wrinkled and the head turned aside to avoid having to look at the cause of the reaction.
- Fear:** Fear may be expressed by eyes wide open, an open mouth, and a general trembling which affects the face as much as the rest of the body. There may also be signs of perspiration and paleness.



Facial expressions showing six different human emotions (clockwise from top left):
 (i) happiness
 (ii) sadness
 (iii) surprise
 (iv) anger
 (v) disgust and
 (vi) fear

Smile: A Universal Gesture

Some of our non-verbal gestures and actions, such as smiling, are inborn and instinctive. Research has shown that children born deaf and blind smile in exactly the same way as a child who can see and hear. According to Roger G. Axtell, a smile is the 'ultimate gesture' that carries a welcoming feeling like no other single gesture.¹¹ However, Professor Birdwhistell of the University of Pennsylvania contends: 'There are no universal gestures. As far as we know, there is no single facial expression, stance or body position that conveys the same meaning in all societies'.¹² He concedes that all humans smile, but he argued that the meaning and significance of a smile is not the same in all cultures. Even people from the same culture may interpret smile to be either 'fake' or 'genuine' depending on the way it is displayed.

Different types of smile (left to right): (i) fake smile; and (ii) genuine smile.



The smile is the 'ultimate gesture' that carries certain 'welcome' characteristics unlike any other single gesture.

A smile is the most positive and universal facial expression, used all over the world to express pleasure, happiness, and acceptance. Several reasons account for this. First, the smile is interpreted universally in the same way—as expression of pleasure and acceptance. As such, a smile can help you slip out of the prickliest of situations. Secondly, it is rarely, if ever, misunderstood. Leaders of primitive tribes and developed countries alike use this gesture. Finally, scientists believe that smiling releases chemicals called *endorphins* into our system that create a feeling of mild *euphoria* and well being. However, it must be noted that in some situations, a smile can also be used to mask other emotions and to show aggression, sarcasm, and other negative feelings.

A nod is the most obvious and perhaps most frequently used head movement.

Head Position and Movement

If you watch two people in the middle of a conversation, you will notice that, in addition to the movement of their mouths and change in facial expressions as they talk, they hold their heads at different angles or move their heads in what may appear to be quite random ways. The most obvious and perhaps most frequently used head movement is the nod, signifying agreement, affirmation, or approval. It is important to use the right head movements when talking as well as listening to people, as improper head movements can quickly sour a relationship. For example, a nod must not be used when a shake would be more appropriate, and *vice versa*.

Head Positions

There are *three* basic head positions. First, people whose heads remain still and who occasionally nod are said to be taking the 'head up' position and have a positive or neutral attitude to



Different types of head positions (left to right):
(i) head up position; and
(ii) head down position.

what they are saying or hearing. However, someone walking with the head held high and possibly tilted slightly backward is likely to be perceived as haughty or aggressive. Second, someone with a negative or judgmental attitude or someone involved in critical evaluation might have their head down. A lowered head could also indicate humility, submissiveness, or depression. Finally, someone who is alert and deeply interested in what they are saying or hearing will often have their head tilted or in a 'head cock position'. When others are speaking to you, try nodding or tilting the head to make the speaker feel warm towards you! The head can also be tilted to point in someone's direction in situations when finger pointing would be inappropriate or rude. One might also tilt the head to indicate the direction in which they want you to look or move.

Head Movement

The two most widely used head movements are the head nod and the head shake. The head nod is a positive gesture used in most cultures to signify an affirmative or to say 'yes', while the head shake is used to signify a rejection or to say 'no'. Although it is widely believed that the head nod is an instinctive gesture, some in the scientific community claim that a head shake is the first gesture that a human child learns.¹³

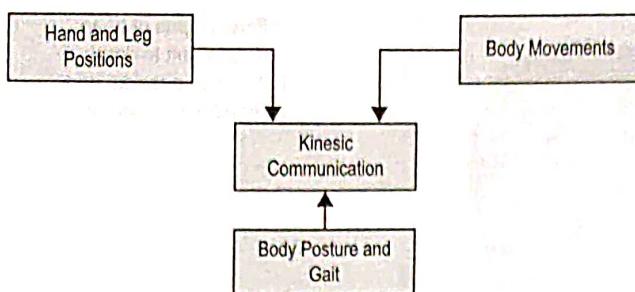
When you listen to others attentively, you tend to unconsciously copy or mirror their head movements. It is almost as if you wish to demonstrate a commonality of interest by a commonality of behaviour. It is also quite common, when listening in a reasonably intimate setting, to bring the head closer to the speaker. Such physical closeness can be used as an indication of intellectual and emotional closeness.

Humans as well as animals tilt their heads to one side when they become alert or find something interesting.

KINESIC COMMUNICATION

Ray L. Birdwhistell, an anthropologist and a pioneer in the field of non-verbal communication, coined the term *kinesics* from the term 'kine' which indicates the smallest observable unit of body movement. Although several anthropologists had put forward the idea in the 1940s that body motions constitute a code that can be cracked and sustained, systematic research into kinesics really began with the publication of the *Introduction to Kinesics* in 1952 where Birdwhistell defined kinesics as 'the study of body-motion as related to the non-verbal aspects of inter-personal communication'. He believed body-motion communication to be a systemic, socially learned, and communicative behaviour.

Human body movements or kinesic communication is coded and patterned differently in various cultures.



Simply put, *kinesics* refers to the interpretation of the movement of the body or its separate parts which may be culture-bound. As many movements are carried out at a subconscious or at least a low-awareness level, kinesic communication carries a significant risk of being misinterpreted in an intercultural interaction. Fig. 4.2 illustrates the three main components of kinesic communication. Let's now discuss the three main components of kinesics.

Fig. 4.2 Three Main Components of Kinesic Communication

Hand and Leg Positions: Gestures Say It All

Gestures refer to the movements of hands, face, or other parts of the body in a way that conveys meaning, either in conjunction with our verbal communication—such as frowning while using harsh words against someone—or in isolation—such as smiling at a stranger to express pleasure at their presence. In almost all cultures, hand gestures are used to illustrate and aid oral communication. According to Desmond Morris, there are two kinds of gestures—hand movements that accompany and emphasize the meanings of spoken words, and symbolic or emblematic gestures that have meanings or provide information.

The importance of gestures lies in the fact that it is a natural part of our verbal and non-verbal communication. Scientific evidence suggests that gesturing while engaged in heavy cognitive activity, such as explaining a financial ratio, literally takes a load off our minds.¹⁴ Let's look at some common workplace gestures seen around the world.

The degree of the listener's boredom is related to the extent to which their arm and hand are supporting their head.

Evaluation, Boredom and Impatience Gestures

When the listener begins to use their hand to support their head, it is a sign that boredom has set in. The degree of the listener's boredom is related to the extent to which the arm and hand are supporting the head. Extreme boredom and lack of interest are shown when the head is fully supported by the hand. Needless to say, ultimate boredom is signalled when the head is on the desk and the person is actually fast asleep! On the other hand, genuine interest is shown when the hand is on the cheek, not used as a head support.

Drumming the fingers on the table or continual tapping of the feet on the floor are signs of impatience. The listener who displays such gestures is in fact telling the speaker that it is time for them to end the speech. It is worth noting that the speed of finger- or foot-tapping is related to the extent of the person's impatience—the faster the tapping, the more impatient the listener has become.

Have you ever come across your boss sitting with fingers closed into a fist and resting on the cheek, index finger pointing upward? If you did, you should know that this is an evalua-

Different types of evaluation, boredom and impatience gestures:
 (i) 'tilted head' position showing genuine interest;
 (ii) finger touching cheek and chin position showing evaluative state of mind; and
 (iii) palm holding face position showing extreme boredom.



tion gesture and your boss may have been trying to estimate the potentiality of a proposal or perhaps the credibility of your report! The moment your boss begins to lose interest in what you are saying, the position will alter to a position in which the heel of the palm supports the head.

Table 4.1 shows some probable interpretations of some of the most commonly used gestures.

Table 4.1 Some Common Gestures and Their Interpretations

Gestures	Interpretations
Brisk, erect walk	Confidence, high status
Standing with hands on waist	Aggression
Sitting with legs crossed, foot kicking slightly	Boredom
Sitting with legs apart	Open, relaxed, unbothered
Arms crossed on chest	Defensiveness, cold attitude
Walking with hands in pockets, shoulders hunched	Dejection
Hand (two or three fingers) on cheek	Evaluating, thinking
Touching or slightly rubbing the nose	Rejection, doubt, lying
Rubbing the eye	Doubt, disbelief
Hands clasped behind back	Authoritativeness
Locked ankles	Apprehension
Head resting in hand, eyes downcast	Boredom, somber mood
Rubbing hands	Anticipation
Open palm	Sincerity, integrity
Tapping or drumming fingers	Impatience
Steepling fingers	Interest, determination
Tilted head	Interest
Stroking chin	Trying to make a decision
Looking down, face turned away	Disbelief, ignoring
Biting nails	Insecurity, anxiety, nervousness

Symbolic Gestures

When gestures are used as symbolic or emblematic movements, the same gesture may often mean different things in different societies leading to bafflement and sometimes embarrassment to people from business entities not belonging to that society. For example, the ‘V’ for ‘victory’ sign made with two figures held upward has a rude meaning for the British and the French if the palm is facing inward.¹⁵

The thumb-up gesture means ‘everything is fine’ in the US and many European countries, but is considered a rude gesture in Australia and West Africa.

Steepling

Like words in a sentence, gestures must be interpreted in the context in which they are observed. *Steepling*, a gesture in which the fingertips of the two palms touch each other to form a steeple-like structure, can be an exception to this rule, as it is often used in isolation of other gestures. In fact, people who are confident or use very few or restricted body gestures often use this gesture, and by doing so, they signal their confidence. The ‘raised steeple’ position is normally adopted by someone offering their opinion or *talking*. On the other hand, the ‘lowered steeple’ position of the hands is normally taken by someone who is *listening*.

A raised steeple is made by someone who is talking while a lowered steeple is taken by the person who is listening.

Although the steeple gesture signals confidence, it can convey both a positive and a negative message. Imagine a situation in which a salesman has observed a potential buyer making

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Different types of steepling gestures:

- (i) raised steeple, normally adopted by someone who is talking; and (ii) lowered steeple, normally taken by someone who is listening.



several positive gestures, such as opening one's palms, leaning forward, and putting one's head up during the demonstration of his product. If the potential buyer steeplest fingers after such a series of positive gestures, just when the salesman presents the solution of the buyer's problem, the salesman has been given a cue to close the sale, ask for the order and expect to get it. On the other hand, if the buyer's steeple gesture follows a series of negative gestures such as arm folding, leg crossing, looking away and numerous hand-to-face gestures, and if the potential buyer steeplest fingers towards the close of the sales presentation, the buyer may be signalling his firm decision not to buy the product. Although the steeple gesture conveys confidence in both these cases, the results of the gesture for the salesman in the two cases are vastly different from each other.

Leg Positions

Leg position can also convey various messages. Uncrossed or open legs may convey an open, relaxed state of mind or a *who-cares-who-is-around* attitude depending on who adopts this gesture and under what circumstances. Someone who has their ankles crossed may be unconvincing or confused. Someone who has their knees crossed may be attempting to lend *firmness* to their otherwise saggy, fatigued body posture in an attempt to display interest, attentiveness, and an energetic state of mind. A crossed thigh position is normally adopted by someone who is extremely relaxed

Different leg positions:

- (i) crossed ankle with closed arms position,
- (ii) open leg and arm position,
- (iii) crossed thigh with open arm position,
- (iv) crossed ankle with open arm position,





Two variations of the crossed knee leg position (left to right):
(i) crossed knees with open arms; and (ii) crossed knees with closed arms.

and unbothered. When this gesture is coupled with both hands held at the back of one's head, it often signals superiority and an *I-am-the-boss* attitude.

Body Movement

Body movement is the voluntary or involuntary movement of parts of the body such as hands, feet, legs, and shoulders, leading to the expression of feelings such as nervousness, excitement, and anxiety. Body movement is a powerful way for humans to communicate nonverbally. It expresses moods and emotions and either affirms or contradicts what is being said.

Some of the most common body movements are as follows:

- Shoulder shrug:** The most common shoulder movement is the *shrug*, which usually conveys the messages 'I don't know', 'I don't care', 'I am doubtful', or 'What can you do?' It consists of an up-and-down movement of both shoulders and may be accompanied by appropriate facial expressions and head movements. A single shoulder being shrugged usually means 'take your hand off my arm (or shoulder)' or 'leave me alone'.
- Palm rub:** By *rubbing palms together* people non-verbally communicate pleasurable anticipation. The speed at which a person rubs his palms together indicates how positive the outcome of a situation will be, and who it will benefit. For example, you want to buy a home and you go to see a real estate agent. After describing the property you are seeking, the agent rubs his palms together quickly and says, 'I've got just the right place for you!' The agent has signalled that he expects *the results to be to your benefit*. However, how would you feel if he rubbed his palms together very slowly as he told you that he had the ideal property? He would then appear to be crafty or devious and would give you the feeling that the expected result would be to *his advantage* rather than *yours*. However, a person who is standing at a bus terminal in freezing conditions and rubs palms together briskly does not necessarily do so in expectation of a bus. It is done because the person's hands are cold!

A shrug conveys the messages 'I don't know', 'I don't care', 'I am doubtful', or 'What can you do?'

3. **Thumb display:** Thumb gestures are secondary gestures, a supportive part of the gesture cluster. Thumb displays are positive signals, often used in the typical pose of the 'cool manager' who uses them in the presence of team members.

Thumbs often *protrude* from people's pockets, sometimes from the back pockets in a secretive manner in order to try and hide the person's dominating attitude. Dominant or aggressive women also use this gesture.

An arm folded with the thumb pointing upwards is another popular thumb gesture position. This gives a double signal:

- (a) A *defensive* or *negative* attitude (folded arms)
- (b) A *superior* attitude (displayed by the thumbs)

4. **The mouth guard:** The *mouth guard* is one of the few adult gestures that is very obvious. The hand covers the mouth and the thumb is pressed against the cheek as the brain subconsciously instructs it to try and suppress the words that are being said. Sometimes this gesture may only comprise putting several fingers over the mouth or even putting a closed fist there, but its meaning remains the same—*lying* or *discomfort with what is being said*.

Many people try to disguise the *mouth guard* gesture by giving a *fake cough*. If the person who is speaking uses this gesture, it indicates that he is telling a lie. If, however, the mouth is covered while you are speaking, it indicates that the person who does this feels that you are lying! One of the most unsettling sights a public speaker can view is the sight of the entire audience using this gesture whilst the speaker is speaking. In a small audience or a one-to-one situation, it is wise to stop the presentation or delivery and ask, 'Would someone care to comment on what I have just said?' This allows the audience's objections to be brought out into the open, giving the speaker the opportunity to qualify his/her statements and to answer their questions.

5. **Nose touch:** The *nose touching* gesture is a sophisticated, disguised version of the mouth guard gesture. It may consist of several light rubs below the nose or it may be one quick (almost imperceptible touch). Like the mouth guard gesture, it can be used both by a speaker to disguise deceit and by a listener who doubts the speaker's words.

6. **Eye rub:** This gesture is your brain's attempt to *block out* the deceit, doubt or lie that it sees or to avoid having to look at the face of the person to whom you are telling a lie. Men usually rub their eyes vigorously and if the lie is a big one they will often look away, usually at the floor. Women use a small, gentle, rubbing motion just below the eye to avoid smudging their eye make-up. They may also choose to avoid a listener's gaze by looking *at the ceiling*.

7. **Ear rub:** This is the sophisticated adult version of the *hands-over-both ear* gesture used by the young child. Other variations of the *ear rub* gesture include *rubbing the back of the ear*, the *finger drill* (where the finger tip is screwed back and forth inside the ear), *pulling at the earlobe* or *bending the entire ear forward* to cover the ear hole. This gesture is a signal that the person has heard enough or may want to speak.

8. **Neck scratch:** In this case, the *index finger of the writing hand scratches below the earlobe*, or may even *scratch the side of the neck*. This gesture is a signal of *doubt* or *uncertainty* and is characteristic of the person who says, 'I'm not sure I agree.' It is very noticeable when the verbal language contradicts it, for example, when the person says something like, 'I can understand how you feel.'

9. **Fingers in the mouth:** Sometimes, when a person is *under pressure* he/she puts his/her fingers in his/her mouth. Whereas most *hand-to-mouth* gestures involve *lying* or *deception*, the *fingers-in-mouth* gesture is an outward manifestation of an inner need for *reassurance*—giving the person guarantee and assurance is appropriate when this gesture is seen.

The mouth guard is a lying gesture. Many people try to disguise the 'mouth guard' gesture by giving a 'fake cough'.



COMMUNICATION SNIPPET

BSNL's Live Tutor

Live Tutor, an initiative of Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) and Smartlinx, is an online tutoring service equipped with audio and video infrastructure to provide video-based learning to students in India. Through *Live Tutor @ School*, a teacher from one location can teach students at a different location using audio-visual and whiteboard tools. This innovative initiative is an attempt to bridge the existing gap between a huge student base and a limited number of teachers and to provide flexibility of scheduling and a customized pace of learning to students, while allowing students to reap the benefits of both the verbal and non-verbal aspects of the tutor's teaching style.

Live Tutor allows an interactive two-way communication using audio and video features. As such, Live Tutor enable students to access the non-verbal aspects of the tutor's delivery style by being able to see online the tutor's movements, gestures, and facial expressions while listening to the verbal delivery of lectures. As much information is communicated non-verbally, this two-way video and audio communication system is expected to enhance the student's learning experience as well as the teacher's understanding of the student's issues. To make use of this service, all a student needs is a headphone for voice transmission, a webcam for video transmission, and a digital pen tablet to write down text formulae, besides, of course, the compulsory Internet connection and personal computer!

Source: <http://bsnl.livetutor.in/Aboutus.aspx>; http://www.siliconindia.com/shownews/Live_Tutor_Educating_with_a_difference-nid-65334-cid-sid-.html, last accessed in December 2010.

10. **Chin stroking:** This gesture is a signal that the listener is *making a decision*. This occurs when you have asked the listeners for a decision and their gestures have changed from evaluation to decision-making, which may be negative or positive. A salesperson would be foolish to interrupt or to speak when a buyer begins the chin stroking gesture after the buyer has been asked for a decision. The best strategy would be a careful observation of the buyer's next gestures, which will indicate the decision reached. If, for example, the chin-stroking gesture is followed by *crossed arms and legs* and the buyer *sits back* in the chair, the sales person has been non-verbally told, '*no*' The seller would be wise to review the main points of the presentation immediately before the buyer verbalizes the negative answer and the sale may be lost forever. If the chin-stroking gesture is followed by the *readiness gesture* the sales person only needs to ask how the buyer would prefer to pay for the product and the buyer will proceed to make the purchase.

11. **Tongue thrust:** From sticking out one's tongue in defiance to doing so for carelessly spoken words that can cause a lifetime's regret, the tongue can be the source of real trouble! Do you remember doctors asking you to stick your tongue out for diagnostic purposes? This is because the texture and colour of your tongue apparently gave a doctor a good indication of your general health condition. The same tongue stuck out without the doctor's suggestion can be construed in many different manners. It is quite common to see in the old movies, how the female actress would poke out her little tongue at the hero in a flirtatious gesture before running away just beyond reach. A nervous flick of the tongue to hastily moisten dry lips can be a very seductive gesture calculated to drive a man wild! Children stick the tongue out as a derisive or challenging gesture, often accompanied by showing the thumb too.

The tongue is also an essential tool in speech for humans, and is responsible for many pleasures. Sweet talk has the power of healing and giving pleasure to people. People who can make their way into hearts or through tough situations are described as being 'silver-tongued'!

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When people are interested in a conversation, they lean forward, while those who are uninterested lean backwards.

A slouching body posture indicates submissiveness or fatigue while an erect one shows dominance or an energetic state of mind.

Proxemics, or the study of spatial relationships, can directly influence the quality and outcome of our inter-personal communication.

Body Posture and Gait

Body posture, or the way people hold themselves while at work, in social gatherings, or in public places, gives us information about their personality and attitude towards life. Body posture can be closed or open. People who are interested in a conversation *lean forward*, while those who are aloof *lean backwards*.

A slouching body posture may indicate submissiveness or fatigue while an erect one shows dominance or an energetic state of mind. Again, while a firm handshake will give the impression of assertiveness or honesty, too firm a handshake can seem arrogant or challenging. Folding arms across your chest or body is protective and will give the impression that you are a closed, guarded, and defensive person. People with arms folded, legs crossed, and bodies turned away signal that they are rejecting messages. People who show open hands, with both feet planted on the ground, indicate that they are *accepting a message*.

Your gait is the manner in which you walk. Whether your gait is fast or slow paced, whether you take brisk or heavy steps in and out of the boss' cabin, whether you make agile rounds in and around the workplace or heavy and slow footsteps to your cubicle, each type of gait conveys something about your state of mind at that point in time.

Your habit of walking with your head up, chin out and one palm gripping the other hand behind the back (as in the case of a policeman patrolling on his beat, or the headmaster of a local school walking through the schoolyard) conveys your comfort, confidence and complete command over a situation. However, when you walk with your head down, chin in, and both arms crossing your chest or both arms tucked inside the pockets of your trousers, the message conveyed may just be the opposite—you are uncomfortable, upset and nervous over your helplessness in the given situation!

PROXEMIC COMMUNICATION

Proxemics is the study of the ways in which individuals use physical space in their interaction to influence the outcome of the communication and the behaviour of others. In simpler terms, proxemics is the study of people's appreciation and use of space and orientation while communicating. The term 'proxemics' was coined in 1963 by Professor Edward T. Hall to refer to the study of how man uses the space that he maintains between himself and his fellows and which he builds around himself in his home and office. To this end,

proxemic research is based on the concept of territoriality, which is a kind of behaviour by which an organism characteristically lays claim to an area and defends it against members of its own and other species. How close you get to others and whether you face *towards* them or *away from* them speak volumes about the kind of relationship—warm or cold, cooperative or competitive, bossy or submissive—you have with them. How we guard our zones and how we aggress to other zones is an integral part of how we relate to other people.

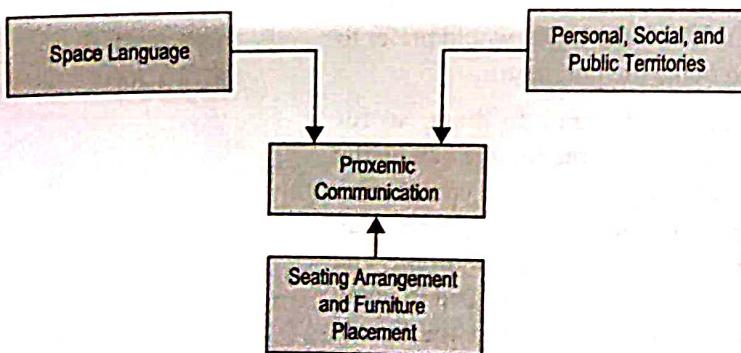


Fig. 4.3 Three Main Components of Proxemic Communication

Space Language

Since proxemics is guided and influenced by cultural transmission, anthropologists like Hall have investigated occupation, cultivation, preservation, and utilization of space by humans from the anthropological as well as the socio-psychological point of view, and linked it to art, literature, architecture, etc.

Hall investigated man's use of personal space in contrast with 'fixed' and 'semi-fixed' feature space. Here, *fixed* feature space was characterized by *unmovable boundaries* (divisions within an office building) while *semi-fixed* feature space was defined by *movable boundaries* caused by furniture, office interiors, etc. Hall held that informal space is characterized by a 'personal zone' or 'bubble' that varies for individuals and circumstances. While the use of each of these spatial relationships can impede or promote the act of communication, the area that humans control and use most often is their informal space. This zone constitutes an area that humans protect from the intrusion of outsiders.¹⁶

Violation of personal space can have serious adverse effects on communication.

E. T. Hall, in a paper published in 1963, made the point that members of different cultures, when interacting with each other, cannot be relied upon to attach the same meaning to the same elements of proxemic behaviour.¹⁷

Personal, Social, and Public Territories

Studies say that the violation of the personal space can have very adverse effects on communication. Thus, if an individual is to be mutually satisfied in a communication encounter, their personal space must be respected.

Sometimes our personal space is deliberately invaded by others for a particular reason. For instance, the severe crowding adopted by the interviewer is similar to tactics often used by police interrogators. People working in security agencies are cleverly trained to sit close to a suspect with no table or desk between them. They gradually move their chair forward during the interrogation so that after a time, one of the suspect's knees is just between the policeman's knees. Such closeness, when uninvited, is almost always perceived as threatening.¹⁸

E. T. Hall defined four zones in the use of space:

1. **Intimate zone:** The radius of 0 to 1.5 feet (0–0.5 m) around us is termed the *intimate zone*, in which people are actually touching or are easily able to touch each other. It is used for embracing, touching, or whispering. Its *close phase* (a distance within which it is possible to hear another person) is less than 6 inches and the *far phase* is between 6 to 18 inches.
2. **Personal zone:** The radius of 1.5 to 4 feet (0.5–1.2 m) around us is the personal zone and here people are able to shake hands or are, at the most, no more than at arms' length from us. It is used for interactions among good friends. Its *close phase* is 1.5 to 2.5 feet and its *far phase* is 2.5 to 4 feet.
3. **Social zone:** The radius of 4 to 10 feet (1.2–3 m) around us is called the social zone. It is most commonly used in everyday encounters of a social or business nature. It is used for interactions among acquaintances. Its *close phase* is 5 to 7 feet and its *far phase* is 7 to 12 feet.
4. **Public Zone:** At a distance of 10 feet (3 m) and beyond, we have the public zone. This zone is used for public speaking. Its *close phase* is 12 and the *far phase* is 25 feet or more.

It is a good idea to work on maintaining a strategic positioning with relation to other people. On the flip side, aspects of other people's attitudes towards you can be revealed in the position they take in relation to you.

Seating Arrangement and Furniture Placement

It is often said that an adequately done office decor (constructed with appropriate interiors) reflects the health of an organization as well as its employees. The ambience, layout, space, lighting and seating arrangement of a workplace speak volumes about its work culture. For instance, in a typical Japanese office, space is shared so that the workers and managers are all within hearing distance of each other. This is common in almost all Asian workplaces, which

In a Japanese office, space is shared in such a way that the workers and managers are all within the hearing distance of each other.

are characterized by an open office space with people at all levels working and talking in close proximity to one another. However, American workplaces are designed so as to provide each person with a private space, which usually gets larger as one moves up in the hierarchy. Space communicates power in both Germany and the USA, as is evidenced by the desire for a corner office or one on the top floor. The importance of French officials, however, is made clear by a position in the middle of subordinates, communicating that they have a central position in an information network, where they can stay informed and control others.¹⁹

Irrespective of the country, location, and culture of your workplace, working in the business world will, more often than not, require you to spend a fair amount of time attending meetings. Regular staff meetings, intra-departmental meetings, inter-departmental meetings, client meetings, sales meetings, planning meetings, project meetings, and budget meetings are some of the kinds of meetings you may have to attend. In each case, one of your most powerful and influential communication tools will be the way you choose to sit and interact with others. It's reasonable, then, to learn about the seating arrangement and ambience in any business environment.

The seating arrangement and ambience are important components of communication in any situation involving meetings.

Research clearly supports the idea that seating arrangement and ambience are important components of communication in any meeting situation. The orientation of speakers and listeners such as face-to-face, side-by-side, or back-to-back, can send powerful non-verbal messages. In a group situation, a leader's act of facing the group and turning towards a speaker conveys particular attention towards the speaker. When communicating, competitors are more likely to sit facing each other while collaborators are more likely to sit side-by-side. If one stands while the other is sitting, the standing person may be sending dominance signals, which can stifle the free exchange of ideas. Regardless of the type of meeting you're in, quality communication is an integral part of your participation. Let's discuss a few things you need to be careful about while in meetings.

Where You Sit

In a meeting, your choice of seat is important both in terms of where you sit at the table and where you sit in relation to other participants. For instance, the person at the head of the table is generally perceived as the leader, so if your team leader usually sits at the head of the table, it's probably not a good idea to take that seat for yourself.

With the leader seated at the head of the table, there is a progression of perceived power that is related to how close each seat is to the leader's seat. The closer you sit to the leader, the more powerful and credible you are perceived to be. However, some leaders make a conscious choice to sit along the side of the table rather than at the head of the table in order to create a more relaxed atmosphere.

Who You Sit or Don't Sit with

Have you ever been in a situation where you find yourself being annoyed by someone's non-stop talking or having frequent and unpleasant disagreements with someone in a meeting? When you find yourself consistently disagreeing with or being annoyed by someone, it helps to take a seat that's not directly across from that person. Sitting directly across a person at a meeting might be construed as confrontational and can send out a very aggressive message. Instead, try sitting diagonally from that person, or even right next to that person. Do this for several meetings and you may start to see some changes in the tone and nature of your interaction with that person.

How You Sit

If you are baffled about how to sit in a meeting, take a look around halfway through your next staff meeting and note the different postures and body positions of others in the meeting. The chances are that you'll be able to 'read' their thoughts, including their level of interest or their

agreement/disagreement with the topic at hand. So what should your body posture be like? In general, your posture should be upright but not stiff in a frozen way. You should not slouch, but neither should you sit at what looks like military attention. Stay relaxed and even lean forward a bit to show your interest in the topic of discussion at hand.

Dress conservatively when going to attend a meeting planned in advance.

What You Wear and What You Do with Your Hands

Make sure that you dress conservatively when going to attend a meeting planned in advance. However, for meetings that are organized at short notice, there isn't much you can do about your clothing. It is fine to keep your arms on the table without leaning on them. It is advisable to keep an open body position—uncrossed arms and legs—and perhaps rest your fingers lightly together or in an upward steepling position. If you have papers or anything else on the table in front of you, avoid playing with them. Finally, if you move your hands a lot while talking, try restricting this by showing an open palm gesture at no higher than your chest level.

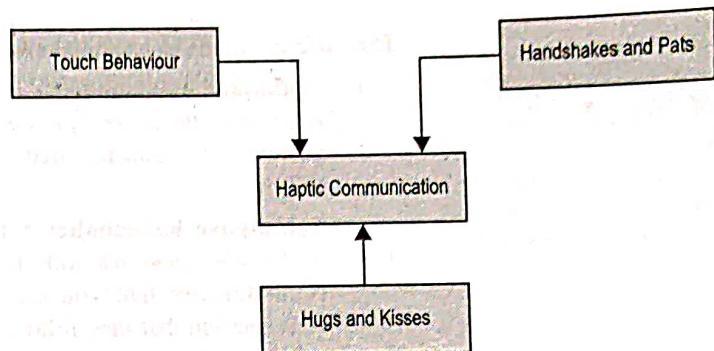


Fig. 4.4 Three Main Components of Haptic Communication

HAPTIC COMMUNICATION

Haptics is a term that is used to describe one's touching behaviour. Haptic communication, or communicating through touch, is a fundamental aspect of inter-personal communication. Whether it is a handshake, an encouraging pat on the back, or a comforting hug, physical contact is the basic means through which people achieve a sense of connection, indicate intention, and express emotion.

Touch Behaviour

It has been proved that touch creates a bonding effect. For instance, Gueguen and Fischer-Lokou, in their experiment in 2003, showed that touching another person during a conversation influenced the other person very strongly. They came up with the finding that 'after touching a stranger when asking directions, turning away and 'dropping' some diskettes, the touched subject would stoop to help pick them up 90 per cent of the time, as opposed to 63 per cent of the time when they were not touched'. Of course, asking them for directions also had an effect, but the increase is significantly more with just a light touch.²⁰ The main components of haptic communication are various kinds of touch behaviour such as handshakes, pats, hugs, and kisses.

Handshakes and Pats

A business meeting usually begins and ends with a handshake. Though it is commonplace across many cultures, the way or style in which the handshake is executed varies from culture to culture. For instance, Americans go for a firm business handshake with three to five pumps, while the French prefer a light and quick handshake. In the present-day workplace, handshakes and pats are the two forms of haptic communication most often used across cultures to encourage, to express tenderness or sympathy, and to show support. Such formal or *business touches* are more likely to occur in some situations than in others. You are more likely to pat or shake hands when:

1. Giving information or advice rather than receiving it
2. Giving an order rather than responding to one

3. Asking a favour rather than granting one
4. Trying to persuade rather than being persuaded
5. At a party rather than at work
6. Expressing excitement rather than listening to someone else's excitement
7. Listening to someone else's worries rather than expressing their own.

Shaking hands has a long history. It is a relic of the caveman era.

The different kinds of handshakes are:

1. **Dominant handshake:** A handshake executed with the *palm facing downward in relation to the other's person's palm* is said to be a *dominant handshake*. This palm gesture communicates that you wish to take control in the conversation that may follow.
2. **Submissive handshake:** A handshake with your *palm facing upward in relation to the other person's palm* is said to be a *submissive handshake*. This palm gesture communicates that you are ready to let the other person assume control in the conversation that may follow.
3. **Equal handshake:** A handshake with the palm facing straight and vertically outward is said to be an equal handshake. This palm gesture communicates that you neither wish to take control nor hand over control in the conversation that may follow. This is one of the best business handshakes, conveying equality in status or, at the very least, mutual respect.
4. **Aggressive handshake:** A handshake with a palm-down thrust is the most aggressive handshake as it gives the receiver little chance of establishing an equal relationship. This handshake is typical of the aggressive, dominant person who always initiates it, and the stiff arm with palm facing directly downwards forces the receiver into the submissive position because they have to respond with their palm facing up.
5. **'Dead fish' handshake:** A handshake when the palm is sweaty, cold and clammy is said to be a 'dead fish' handshake. Few palm gestures are as uninviting and unpopular as the dead fish handshake. Someone with a 'dead fish' handshake is perceived to be weak of character.
6. **Stiff arm handshake:** This kind of handshake is often used by aggressive people to keep you at a distance and out of their intimate zone. It is also used by people brought up in rural areas who have a larger intimate zone (already discussed earlier in this chapter) to protect their personal territory.
7. **Fingertip grab handshake:** The *fingertip grab* is like the stiff-arm thrust that has missed the mark. Here, you mistakenly grab the other person's fingers. Even though the person (you are shaking hands with) may appear to have a keen and enthusiastic attitude towards you, in fact he lacks confidence in himself.
8. **Double-handed handshake:** A handshake using the *palms of both the hands to clasp the other person's palm* is said to be the *double-handed handshake*. The double-handed handshake shows sincerity, trust, or depth of feeling towards the other person. This kind of handshake should be used only between people who experience a close emotional bond at the time of the handshake.²¹

Hugs and Kisses

Friends or close business associates hug each other as a casual greeting gesture in the USA, while in France, it is considered a very intimate gesture.

Haptic communication, like hugging and kissing, is a personal choice and varies from person to person and from culture to culture. Hugging, for instance, is taken to be a closer and more affectionate form of greeting than shaking hands in most cultures and reflects a desire for emotional bonding. Your individual family background, upbringing, and environment play a major role in your acceptance or displeasure of a hug or kiss. People from cultures where

various forms of bodily contact (such as patting, hugging, and kissing) are a normal part of family or social life tend to be more receptive to such touch behaviour than those from cultures where touching is restricted even among family members after attaining a certain age. For example, while it is normal for friends or close business associates to hug each other in the USA, this greeting is considered very intimate by the French; on the other hand, many Americans are uncomfortable with the *double-kiss-on-the-cheeks* greeting used by the French. Gender rules may also apply. For example, hugging in America is far more common among women than among men. Stringent harassment laws and the social code of conduct in some South Asian and Middle Eastern countries also limit touching of the other person in what may be interpreted as an intimate way.

Among the French, kisses on both cheeks are meant for close friends.

PARALINGUISTIC COMMUNICATION

Paralinguistics is the study of the non-verbal elements of communication used to modify the meaning of the verbal message and supplement it with appropriate emotions. Technically, the term 'paralanguage' refers to the conscious or unconscious intonation, accent, pitch, pace, pause, silence, noise, and voluntary or involuntary actions (such as laughter and yawning) in spoken language, how you use them in your speech, whether you look credible while conveying your message, or send out negative cues. Sometimes, the definition of paralanguage is restricted to vocally-produced sounds (see Fig. 4.5).

Paralanguage refers to the intonation, accent, pitch, pace, pause, silence, noise, and voluntary or involuntary actions such as laughter and yawning in one's spoken language.

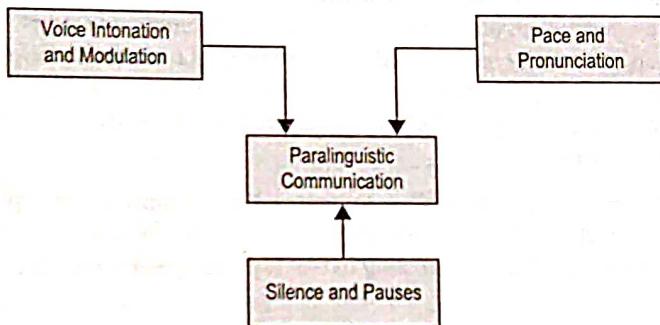


Fig. 4.5 Three Main Components of Paralinguistic Communication

Pace, Pronunciation, Voice Intonation, and Voice Modulation

It is possible to communicate emotions through voice intonation, modulation, and altered pace without using actual words to convey the message. While communicating, emphasis can be laid on important words and phrases by increasing the volume or pace of speech and by placing stress on them. Emphasis can also be achieved by repetition of the vocal characteristics used. Your voice can communicate sadness even without the help of words by adopting a low volume, solemn tone, a deeper than usual voice quality, slow pace, and a relatively uniform stress upon the words. On the other hand, happiness and elation may be expressed by a higher volume, sharper tone, a breathless quality of the voice, a high speed of speaking and a more noticeable stress on key words and phrases.

Vocal characteristics are used in deciding whether one believes or trusts another person, and in helping to make one's mind up about whether one likes someone or not.

Your listeners may infer many things from your pronunciation, pace of speech, voice intonation, and voice modulation. Your voice intonation and modulation as well as the pace at which you speak comprise your vocal characteristics, which may communicate your confidence or discomfort over the verbal message, your nervousness or enthusiasm on the topic being discussed, or your pleasant or unpleasant state of mind at a point of time. People tend to make judgments about age, sex, attractiveness, social class, educational background, and intelligence and decide whether they trust or like a person based on their way of voicing a message. For instance, a whining, complaining, or nagging tone of voice is generally perceived to be annoying.²²

difficulty in communicating their ideas may make it hard for the team to recognize and utilize their expertise. If their teammates become frustrated or impatient with their lack of fluency, inter-personal conflict may arise. As a result, non-native speakers in the team may become less motivated to contribute, or anxious about their performance, evaluations, and future career prospects. The organization as a whole pays a greater price as its investment in a multicultural team fails to pay off. It must be noted that pronunciation is of great but *not* of utmost importance. Sentences should not be slurred; however, enunciating each syllable as though in the middle of a tongue and lip exercise is surely not advisable. Some people who have musical aptitude tend to speak better and acquire local pronunciation more easily than others.

In written forms of communication such as letters (snail mail), e-mail, chatting, and instant messaging, paralinguistic elements can be displayed by emoticons, font and colour choices, capitalization and the use of non-alphabetic or abstract characters. Nonetheless, paralanguage in written communication is limited in comparison with face-to-face conversation, sometimes leading to misunderstandings.

Silences and Pauses

Silence is a powerful communicator. It may be a way of saying 'no', of being offended, or of waiting for more information before making a decision. There is considerable variation in the use of silence in meetings.

The duration of silences can also have communicative value. Short periods of hesitation, if associated with many speed errors, such as speaking very fast or very slow, can indicate that a speaker is nervous or lying. A long pause can be an indication that a speaker has *dried up*. It can also, in conversation, show thoughtfulness and an unwillingness to be rushed for a response. A police official interrogating a crime suspect may interpret silence as an admission of guilt, especially if it persists. In other contexts, it may be interpreted as shyness, a willful refusal to speak or ignorance.

In public speaking, pauses can be used to effect create, to control laughter and applause from an audience. In some ways, the effective public speaker uses the same kind of timing techniques as the successful comedian, waiting for applause or laughter to almost *die down* before continuing. Speakers at conferences will often indicate that they expect applause by pausing. It is significant, however, that it is often only people like party spokespersons and seasoned media persons who can make this technique work almost unfailingly.

People who have musical aptitude tend to speak better and acquire local pronunciation more easily, whereas others may find it difficult.

The duration of silences has communicative value.

Silence may be a way of saying 'no', of being offended, or of waiting for more information before making a decision.

An effective public speaker uses the same kind of timing techniques as the successful comedian, waiting for applause or laughter to almost die down before continuing.

CHROMATICS

Chromatics is the study of colour. It not only impacts the mood of an individual but also reflects upon the work culture of an organization and its corporate identity. Aesthetically pleasing use of colour contributes to the happiness and stimulation of the workforce as it interjects variety, creates energy, provides focus or defines social interaction. It may even have specific physical or psychological effects. At the same time, choosing inadequate colours may impact an employee's physical health by causing eyestrain, headache and fatigue. A research conducted by colour psychologist Dr David Lewis found that 80 per cent employees believe the colour of their surroundings has a significant impact on their emotions and performance, and can lead to better creativity and innovation.²⁴ Have you ever wondered why performers feel more relaxed in green rooms? Why weightlifters do their best in blue gyms? This is because colours have communicative value. In fact, our selection of colours speaks something of our personality, our attitude, and our mindset. According to a recent report by colour psychologist Andrea Mountford, wearing the right colours at work is extremely important. Colour can not only make a positive impact on colleagues and bosses around you, but it can also enhance your career. However, according to Mountford, it's not just about

Black is the colour of authority and power. It is popular in fashion because it makes people appear thinner.

White symbolizes innocence and purity.

wearing what are commonly perceived to be positive colours, it is all about the personality that is wearing the clothes.²⁵ Let us look at the communicative aspects of some colours:

1. **Black:** Black is the colour of *authority* and *power*. There is a common tendency to wear black in the workplace. It is popular in fashion because it makes people appear *thinner*. It is also perceived as *stylish* and *timeless*. For instance, Italian designer, Giorgio Armani is rarely seen wearing any other colour than midnight blue and black, which, he believes, make him more noticeable. In fact, Armani has turned this colour into a positive image, whereby he has taken black and turned it into his trademark style, which makes him a recognizable figure across the globe.
2. **White:** White symbolizes *innocence* and *purity*. It reflects light and is considered a summer colour. It is also popular in decorations and in fashion because it is *light*, *neutral*, and goes with everything.
3. **Red:** Red is the most emotionally intense colour; it stimulates a faster heartbeat and breathing. It is also the colour of *love* and *energy*. Red clothing gets noticed and makes the wearer appear *heavier*. Since it is an extreme colour, red clothing might *not* help people in negotiations or confrontations. This colour is definitely not for your interviews, boardrooms, or business meetings.
4. **Pink:** Pink is the most romantic colour. It has a *tranquilizing* effect. It may be a good choice for informal meetings and parties.
5. **Blue:** Blue is the colour of the sky and the ocean and is one of the most popular colours for formal, corporate scenarios. Peaceful, tranquil blue causes the body to produce calming chemicals, so it is often used in corporate boardrooms. Fashion consultants recommend wearing blue to job interviews because it symbolizes *loyalty* and *sincerity*.
6. **Green:** Green symbolizes nature. It is the easiest and most soothing colour on the eye and can improve vision. It is a calming and refreshing colour. People waiting to appear on TV sit in 'green rooms' to relax. Hospitals often use green curtains because it relaxes patients.
7. **Yellow:** Cheerful sunny yellow is a great attention getter. It is the most difficult colour for the eye to take in, so it can be overpowering if overused. However, you can go for lighter shades of yellow for your office wear or for any meeting in a formal setup.
8. **Purple:** The colour of royalty, purple connotes luxury, wealth, and sophistication. It is also feminine and romantic.
9. **Brown:** Solid, reliable brown is the colour of earth and is abundant in nature. Light brown implies *gemininess*. Brown can also convey a sad and wistful mood.²⁶

Just as individuals can use colour for success, organizations too can use colour intelligently to set themselves apart in an increasingly competitive environment. Thinking about colour at a workplace should extend farther than the company's logo. Whether they are the hue painted on the walls or the shades of the carpets, furniture or work stations, have profound effect on the moods and attitude of the people who work there. Use of colour in the office can make the working environment more inspiring and uplifting for employees. In fact, according to Dr David Lewis, a colourful working environment can enhance problem-solving skills by 10 per cent. Not only that, but sunshine yellow raises energy and productivity levels, whilst blue encourages thought and creativity.²⁷ Studies also say that visual elements, including colours, can have an influence on employee behaviour and even their productivity level. For instance, yellow is Logica India's brand colour and it is used to visually connect with the workspace. It is a happy, cheerful colour with positive associations of hope, wisdom and the life-giving sun.²⁸

Pink has a tranquilizing effect, so it is a good choice for informal meetings and fun parties.

Peaceful, tranquil blue causes the body to produce calming chemicals, so it is often used in boardrooms of corporate houses.

CHRONOMATIC COMMUNICATION

Chronomics is the study of the use of time. Conducting business entails schedules, deadlines, and appointments, but these matters are regarded differently from culture to culture. For instance, in Brazil, relative punctuality communicates the level of importance of those involved, whereas in the Middle East countries, time is something controlled by the will of God. Another case in hand is that of executives in Germany and the USA, who see time as a way to plan the business day effectively, focussing on only one task during each scheduled period and viewing time as limited. However, executives from Latin America and Asia see time as more flexible. Meeting a deadline is less important than building a relationship. So, a workday isn't expected to follow a rigid, preset schedule.²⁹

Americans often find it difficult to do business with people from other parts of the world because of differences in the perception of time. To an American, time is a valuable and limited resource which is to be used sparingly. During an intercultural interaction, Americans may feel insulted when others are not in time for a meeting. Additionally, when meetings digress from their original purpose, they tend to become impatient.³⁰

In Brazil, punctuality communicates the level of importance of those involved.

DRESS SENSE

Your personality is a dynamic and organized set of personal characteristics that uniquely influences your cognition, motivation, and behaviour in various situations. Appearance and dressing may reflect personality traits such as approachability, friendliness, and attractiveness. By manipulating our appearance and dressing, we can decide which personality traits we want to show to the world.

In the Middle East, time is something believed to be controlled by the will of God.

Appearance would seem, at first sight, to be an area over which we can exert little control. However, this is not true. The way we dress exerts a considerable influence over how others perceive us. For example, if you look sloppy during a job interview, your prospective employer might think, 'If this person is incapable of caring for himself, how can he possibly take care of the business and give me the service I need?' On the other hand, wearing your best business attire to a job interview would communicate to your prospective employer that you are serious about the job opening that the company has to offer.

There is no doubt that most of us take pains to make ourselves presentable to the world. Indeed, very few of us simply climb out of bed to confront whatever the day has to offer without putting some thought into our attire. Most of us realize that the way we look makes a difference to the way others will react and respond to us.

In the Middle East, time is something believed to be controlled by the will of God.

Kinds of Outfits

Clothes may be categorized as formal or informal. No matter what an individual's physical features are, formal dresses provide a major boost to one's personality. People dressed in formal clothes are usually considered decent and sober.

Clothes can be categorized as formal or informal.

In general, formal clothes include uniforms and even the business executive's suit. For men, formal dresses mainly comprise formal trousers, formal (plain or striped) shirt, a tie, a suspender, formal black or brown shoes and an overcoat. Women certainly have more choices when it comes to formal dressing. In South Asian countries, for women working in the corporate world, formal dresses may comprise business suits, formal tops and skirts, and even unrevealing Punjabi suits for women working in a corporate scenario. In India, *saree* comprises formal attire for women at the workplace and can make any woman look elegant, regardless of her physical appearance. Similarly, in Dubai or any other Middle Eastern country, working women wearing the *hijaab* would be the norm.

Irrespective of what an individual's physical features are, formal dresses give a major elevation to one's personality.

While dressing for business meetings or any typical working day at office, women may keep the following points in mind:

At the workplace, an individual's dress sense communicates his or her personality, passion, and professionalism.

1. Wear clothes that fit you well and are neither too tight nor too loose. Try deciding upon an outfit on the basis of what works for you and how you will look rather than on what is the latest fad.
2. Identify a few colours that go well with your age, complexion, built, and profession. Find good fabrics and make sure that they do not make noise when you move.
3. Avoid wearing very bright red, pink, or orange in a business meeting. These colours tend to draw unwanted attention.
4. Avoid jewellery that sparkles, dangles, or makes noise. Your big earrings, brooches, and bracelets may distract others from the key area of your communication.
5. Put on simple make up to compliment your attire. Overdone make up becomes the focus of negative and unwanted attention.
6. Hair, like other aspects of your appearance, should add to the positive overall impression of your appearance. While styles are highly individual, they should not be the dominant feature of your face.

While dressing for a day at the office, men are advised to keep the following points in mind:

1. Wear well-tailored suits. Generally, dark blue, gray, or black suits in single- or double-breasted classic styles are the safest.
2. In formal meetings, depending on the level of formality, you may wish to button, unbutton, or take off your jacket altogether.
3. Ties can be used to compliment the colour of your dress.
4. Shoes should be appropriate, comfortable, and well polished. Make sure that your socks match your trousers and that they do not leave any part of your legs exposed when you sit down.
5. Make sure that your hair is well groomed, regardless of the style. Beards should be well groomed and moustaches trimmed above the lip line.

While dressing, it is useful for individuals to remember that they represent the organization they work for and the way they dress reflects the character and personality of their workplace. This is the reason that many companies across the world have formal dress codes—reflecting discipline and professionalism—for their employees. In order to create the best first impression, it is essential to avoid overdressing. Additionally, one should not neglect the body shape. For instance, fashion experts suggest that overweight people wear vertical stripes as well as darker colours on the lower part of the body and lighter colours on the upper body.

Formal dress code is applicable mostly to people engaged in typical nine-to-five white-collar jobs. However, companies like Google would like to have its own way. The Russian-born Brin and Larry Page, the co-founders of Google, describe the dress code of the company to be ‘dishevelled students’.³¹

Much has been discussed about this aspect (dress sense) of your non-verbal communication in Chapter 13, ‘Business Etiquette and Professionalism’.