SESSION 4

NON VERBAL COMMUNICATIONS
&
EFFECTIVE SELF PRESENTATION

UNIT 1   NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION

Unit Structure

1.0   OVERVIEW

In this Unit, we define nonverbal communication, discuss different types of nonverbal codes and identify their role in communication. We also discuss some of the pitfalls of nonverbal communication.

1.1   LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this Unit, you should be able to do the following:-

1. Define non-verbal communication;
2. Describe different nonverbal codes (or different categories of nonverbal communication);
3. Discuss the functions and importance of different nonverbal codes in communication;
4. Identify pitfalls and barriers in nonverbal communication;
5. Assess your own use of nonverbal cues;
6. Prepare and rehearse your oral presentations (individual and group) by making use of appropriate and effective nonverbal cues.

1.2   NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION: IMPORTANCE AND FUNCTIONS

When we communicate orally with one another - whether we are conscious of it or not - we use both verbal communication (words) and nonverbal communication (e.g. facial expressions and gestures).

Nonverbal communication usually refers to human communication that is not written or spoken, or rather, forms or means of communication other than words. Nonverbal communication includes a variety of cues or signs: a smile, a nod, a wave of the hand, a bow, slouching on a chair, touching someone on the shoulder, being on time for an appointment, the jewellery worn.

We acquire nonverbal language since we are born and this process is an on-going one. The nonverbal language of an individual is the result of a number of factors such as one's family environment, social and cultural context, education, exposure to media, as well as the immediate context of communication and the audience/other persons involved in the communication situation.

Nonverbal communication (nonverbal behaviour, nonverbal cues or signs) plays an important role in communication among human beings.

- We convey meaning to others, intentionally or not, consciously or unconsciously, through our nonverbal behaviour;
- We interpret meaning from the nonverbal cues conveyed by the 'sender' or perceived by us as 'receivers'.

Verbal and Nonverbal communication usually work together to convey messages and meanings. Observe the persons around you, observe yourself; they (or you) do not speak only with words, but with different parts of the body [Note: The term 'body language" is often used as a synonym for nonverbal language or communication].

In face to face communication, communicators can observe each other, and they sometimes gather more meaning from the nonverbal behaviour than from the verbal messages. Even when communicators are not in each other's presence (for example a telephone conversation), nonverbal communication can play a role. For instance, the tone of one's voice or, rate at which one speaks, contributes to the meaning conveyed by the verbal messages.

Verbal communication primarily (but not exclusively) conveys content information:
e.g. "Meet me at the bus station at 10 a.m. tomorrow morning".

Nonverbal communication generally conveys information about the relationship between/among the communicators, or the context in which the communication takes place.

For instance, we do not use the same tone, facial expressions and gestures when saying: "Meet me at the bus station at 10 a.m. tomorrow morning" in the different situations below:

(1) giving an order

(2) making a polite request

(3) urging a friend to be present at that place and time

Activity 1

Say the sentence above in the different situations (1) to (3), using a realistic tone (and making use of variations in tonal accent if necessary).

Nonverbal communication can:

- add to, reinforce or emphasise verbal messages. Consider the message "You will place the chest here;" the tone of voice when saying "here" or the use of one's hands and body to indicate the exact location in the room, adds emphasis to the verbal message, and helps to better capture the attention of the one being addressed

- replace verbal messages. For example, in a meeting, the chairperson raises his or her hand to signify "wait" to a person who is trying to speak before the chairperson has finished speaking.

- contradict the verbal message. For instance, the frown on your best friend's face is clear to you that (s)he is annoyed even though (s)he denies it verbally. (Research tends to show that nonverbal cues are more credible or more readily believed than verbal ones.)

Activity 2

List five examples of non-verbal communication which you often use or see around you.

We shall now discuss three nonverbal codes: Kinesics, Proxemics, Paralinguistics, in some detail, and then provide a brief overview of three other non-verbal codes: Clothing and Artefacts, Haptics, Chronemics.

1.3   NONVERBAL CODES

1.3.1   Kinesics

The term 'Kinesics' comes from the same family of words as 'Kinetic' (cf Kinetic energy in Physics) which refers to the idea of movement. Thus, Kinesics deals with movements of parts or the whole of the human body in communication.

The term 'Kinesics' refers to nonverbal behaviour involving the body, facial expressions, eye contact, gestures, posture, body movement.

Facial Expressions
"Facial Expressions" include movements or expressions of any part of the face such as the eyes, eyelids, eyebrows, nose, mouth and cheek. Examples of facial expressions are: smiling, frowning, raising an eyebrow, pursing of the lips.

In certain cultures, the face is the most expressive part of the body. It communicates the emotional state of a person, his/her reactions to the other's communication/messages. (For some people, their face acts as a barometer to their feelings!)

Eye Contact
Eye contact refers to sustained and meaningful contact with the eyes, with the person or persons you are addressing. Eye contact is a less universal convention than other expressions of the face. In traditional African or Asian Cultures, dropping your eyes in conversation with an elder or a superior is regarded as a sign of respect. In Western cultures, little or no eye contact is regarded as unusual or inadequate behaviour, and can be interpreted as a lack of interest or attention.

In the specific setting of public-speaking, eye contact is said to reveal a speaker's honesty and sincerity towards the audience, as well as his/her self-assurance. It helps to improve the speaker's credibility. It is advised to establish eye contact right from the beginning of a speech. Eye contact

serves as a visual bonding between a speaker and the audience. The public speaker who rarely or never looks at the audience may appear disinterested in the audience; the speaker who looks over the heads of audience members, or scans members so quickly that eye contact is not established, may appear to be intimidated by the audience. Some authors also argue that too much eye contact can be "too much of a good thing". We must remember that the way the speaker interacts with, the audience may determine how the audience reacts to the speech.

(Note: The term 'Oculesics' refers to the use of the eye in communication. It constitutes a nonverbal code in itself, and is studied as such in certain books and courses).

Gestures

The term "gesture" generally refers to movements of the hands, arms, shoulders, head, feet of the communicator/sender of messages. The use and amount of gesture are usually determined by the personality of the speaker, the subject-matter, the situation, context, culture and the audience/receiver.

Gestures convey ideas, feelings and emotions. However, overuse of gesture can distract the attention of the audience.

Posture

Posture refers to the way we hold our body, the way we sit, stand, slump, or slouch. Posture can give information about the person involved in communication: the status, the self-image, the attitude, the emotional state, gender (there can be a lot of differentiation in gender behaviour and posture in certain societies), social roles, the communicator's perceived relationship with the others.

Examples of posture are:
- sitting with your head in your hands (this may indicate a low emotional state)
- sitting with one's feet on the desk (this may indicate familiarity, a feeling of superiority…)

A speaker's posture, like his/her facial expressions and gestures, should fit the context and the occasion.

Body Movements

Other movements of the body that do not appear under the above categories can be classified as body movements. For instance, the way a person walks can be an indicator of how the person is feeling or the way a person walks beside another one can be an indicator of the relationship or closeness between the two.

It seems that our ability to interpret a speaker's meaning is increased when we combine the interpretation of both facial expressions and body movements.

1.3.2   Proxemics

Proxemics comes from the same family of words as approximate, proximity, etc. Proxemics can be described as the use we make of space in communication (in personal, social and formal situations). Examples of movements in space are walking a few steps to and fro, moving closer to or further from the audience.

Researchers (like Hall) have shown that the way human beings arrange and make use of space reveals information about themselves, their personality, their relationships and their culture.

However, just as for kinesics, we should not stick to fixed interpretations that can lead to stereotyping. For instance, if it is true that some serious students tend to choose a seat near the front of the class or near the teacher, this is not true of all serious students who may prefer to sit further from the front or the teacher.

In the public-speaking context, movement in space can help maintain the attention of the audience, especially in long speeches. A short speech without movement tends to be less difficult for both the speaker and the audience than a very long speech without movement.

A speaker may use space to stress an idea, to indicate a change in topic or mark a transition. Sometimes, the use of movements is limited by the physical setting: e.g. the use of a fixed microphone on a lectern or desk, the use of an overhead projector, or a computer for a PowerPoint presentation, the smallness of a room, the seating arrangement.

Inappropriate and purposeless movements are to be avoided. For instance, if the speaker moves like a caged lion, pacing back and forth or sideways, this can give the impression that the speaker is nervous.

Activity 3

<u>**Read through the whole exercise before attempting.**</u>

Observe two or three persons interacting in any informal situation for a few minutes. You must be close enough to observe their facial expressions, and hear the verbal exchange. You must not participate or obstruct in the interaction. Observe **discreetly**.

(1)   Note the nonverbal aspects listed below
(2)   Compare the verbal and nonverbal signs and messages. Does the nonverbal aspect reinforce, replace or contradict the verbal message(s)?

Person n0 1	**Person n0 2**	**Person n0 3**
- eye contact (very little – average – a lot)		
- facial expressions (describe)		

- gestures (describe)		
- use of space (describe)		
- Functions of nonverbal signs or behaviour		

1.3.3 Paralinguistics or Paralinguistic Features (other terms used are "paralanguage", or "vocal aspects of speech delivery", or "nonverbal oral cues".)

The prefix "para" means alongside or parallel to. Paralinguistic features are sounds and their variations that are made by the vocal chords, but which are not words. They exist alongside words or verbal language.

Some paralinguistic features are:

♦ **Volume**

♦ **Pitch**

♦ **Rate**

♦ **Pauses**

♦ **Pronunciation and Articulation**

Volume

The volume of the voice has to do with its relative loudness.

To be effective in our communication, we must speak in order to be heard by the persons we are addressing. Although this may sound elementary, many speakers (in a class, in a meeting,….) forget or neglect to speak loudly enough for all participants in the communication situation to hear.

Usually, variations in volume help to lay stress on ideas and points, and can convey additional meaning such as emotion, or level or degree of importance.

Voice Pitch

Voice pitch is defined as the highness or lowness of the voice. An example might help to understand what is meant by pitch: Compare the "ah!" you utter in reaction to sudden pain with the "ah!" uttered when you see someone very attractive going by!

Generally, in the first case, the pitch is high, and in the second case, it is a low one.

As a speaker, you should avoid either the same pitch all along which can result in a monotonous delivery, or too many changes in pitch that can result in a singsong delivery or a delivery that can sound artificial.

Some uses or effects of voice pitch are:

- The pitch of the voice can make a speaker sound lively, or, on the contrary, listless and monotonous
- Changes in pitch can be used to lay stress on words and ideas, and consequently help an audience remember information
- Changes in pitch can indicate meaning: they can, for instance, indicate whether the words are a statement, a question or an exclamation, or whether the speaker is expressing doubt, disgust, anger, surprise or determination

Pitch control is important in communication because sometimes we sound angry when we do not intend to; or we may sound opposed to an idea when, in fact, we are only expressing surprise.

Rate (or pace) of speech

Rate refers to how fast or how slowly someone speaks. Just as for pitch and volume, variations in the speech rate can help to stress an idea, or to maintain the interest of the audience.

The rate of delivery depends on such factors as:

- The individual speaker (how fast the person normally speaks)
- The situation
- The audience (for instance, reading a story to a small child generally requires a slow rate or pace)
- The topic or subject treated especially in relation to the audience (for instance, whether the audience is familiar or not with the topic).

Usually, the bigger the audience in a face to face situation, the more complex and serious the content of the topic, the slower the rate of speech.

Pauses (or sounds and silence)

Pauses break words and sentences into meaningful units. Pauses can be used to emphasise ideas, to mark transitions, to ask rhetorical questions, to maintain attention or to create suspense.

As we pause and search for the next words of our delivery, we often use vocalised pauses i.e., sound like "uh", "um", "you know", "well", "right". Unfilled pauses are silent pauses that often last hardly a few seconds and which interrupt the flow of speech in a natural manner.

Overuse of filled or vocalised pauses can cause interference in communication and can distract listeners. Overuse of vocalised pauses also seems to affect negatively an audience's perception of the speaker's competence and dynamism.

Pronunciation and Articulation

Pronunciation refers to the way we utter words especially with reference to a standard that is generally accepted or understood. For example, the 'g' in "gemini" is pronounced like the soft 'j' in "junk", but we must produce a more harsh and guttural sound when we are pronouncing the 'g' in "ground". People who are learning English as a second language sometimes have tremendous difficulty with the pronunciation of words. Also, some words are pronounced differently according to the English used (e.g. British vs.
American).

Sometimes a difference in pronunciation conveys difference in meanings and may even lead to misunderstanding.

Note: If you are not sure about how to pronounce a word, you may look it up in the dictionary. The phonetic transcription (sound form) is often inserted between brackets. A phonetic alphabet is also available at the beginning of the dictionary as a guide for pronunciation.]

Articulation refers to whether the speaker/sender clearly separates the parts / syllables of the word or verbal message being uttered (e.g. de-part-ment). In informal spoken English, we tend

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not to articulate correctly. For example, we sometimes merge syllables in oral expressions such as "I wanna go home" (instead of "I want to go home").

Activity 4

With the help of your tutor, say the following sentence for each of the different circumstances listed underneath:

- "Ladies and gentlemen, I would like to thank you for being with us today"

(1) The opening at a circus
(2) At a funeral service
(3) A social function such as a wedding party

What lessons do you learn?

1.3.4   Clothing and Artefacts (Personal Appearance)

This category includes the general appearance of the communicator: clothing, hairstyle, make- up, perfume, use of jewellery, shoes and other objects like a handbag, a watch, glasses.

Although we know the saying "Clothes do not make the man" (a French equivalent: "l'habit ne fait pas le moine"), our perception of a person is often influenced by the clothing and other artefacts worn, carried by or accompanying that person. Likewise, our general appearance conveys meanings to others.

What is appropriate for the occasion will depend on different factors such as the context - cultural and social - the other person(s)' views and values. We need to be aware of what is considered fit for different situations or contexts. For example, if you are going for a job interview, you will necessary dress up like you would be expected to do if you were already on the job, and not, as you would do for example to attend a wedding.

1.3.5 Haptics (Use of Touch)

Haptics, or tactile communication, refers to the use of touch in communication. It varies from one culture to another, and also depends on one's status, role(s), profession, gender.`

Referring to Western cultures (though this is true in other cultures as well), Pearson and Nelson (1994, p. 124) note that: "The president might pat you on the back for a job well done, but, in our society, you don't pat back."

We know that the same applies for our society, for instance, if your boss or superior pats you on the back, you don't pat back!

1.3.6   Chronemics (Use of Time)

Chronemics is concerned with the use of time in encounters and relationships. Time can influence the way we interpret messages and behaviour. For example, you are late each time you have a meeting with your colleagues. You may have genuine reasons to justify your lateness but your systematic lateness may be interpreted as a lack of interest or lack of co-operation.

We know also that different cultures and societies have different attitudes to time: some are very rigid (9 a.m. means 9 a.m.!), while others are more flexible with time. Misunderstandings can occur between partners of different cultures/countries who have different conceptions of time.

Activity 5

Explain how you personally convey and interpret meaning using
   i.   touch
   ii.   time
   iii.   clothing and artefact.

Can you think of instances where your notion of these nonverbal codes was not shared by another person, and led to misunderstanding or conflict?

1.4 DIFFICULTIES IN INTERPRETING NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION

Nonverbal communication provides the basis for much of the misunderstanding that occurs in communication.

[Pearson & Nelson, 1994, p. 116]

Nonverbal messages are more ambiguous than verbal messages. Nonverbal messages can indeed be confusing, tricky, and can lead to misunderstandings or conflicts.

Difficulties in interpreting nonverbal communication or messages are due to different factors. Some of the factors are:

Contradiction
Confusion (or multiplicity of meaning)
Multiplicity of cues and expectations
Cultural Difference

1.4.1 Contradiction

When we communicate, our nonverbal signs or messages generally confirm or add to our verbal messages. Sometimes, however, the nonverbal messages seem to contradict the verbal messages they accompany. Someone tells you: "Don't hesitate to ask if you need anything", but the tone or facial expression do not seem to be saying the same thing. The non-verbal message seems to contradict the 'help offered' in/by the verbal message. You are left to wonder: is the person offering help merely to be polite? Yet, the verbal message may be genuine, but the person, preoccupied with some other thought, does not express or show the enthusiasm (s)he would have shown in normal circumstances.

1.4.2   Confusion or Multiplicity of Meaning

Even within the same culture, the same nonverbal cues may have different meanings, and the difficulty in deciding which meaning is conveyed can create confusion. For example, when waving the hand from a distance, the meaning intended may be, for instance:

Calling someone

Or, saying goodbye

Or, showing something.

The following situation has probably happened to all of us at one time or another: we part with someone, and as we move away in the car or bus which is driving off, the person gestures with the hand, and we are left wondering whether it was to say goodbye, to point at something, to call us back to say something important.

Another tricky situation can happen to drivers at a busy crossroads where a traffic /police officer, who uses only nonverbal code, is directing the traffic flow. Sometimes the gesture or hand sign is not clear and a driver finds himself or herself in a difficult situation: did the officer signal me "go" or "wait", or even did the officer signal me, or the car beside me?

1.4.3   Multiplicity of Cues and Expectations

An example of a variety of nonverbal cues communicating the same meaning would be the many nonverbal ways adults have to express love or affection.

[Pearson & Nelson, 1994, p. 116]

Because of a person's expectations, (s)he may be tempted to doubt another person's affection because for instance, "that person takes no special care in dressing when we go out together!" Although the other person is always very considerate, speaks softly, is on time for a date (all of which are normally considered to be indicators of affection), the first one tends to doubt the affection of the other, instead of considering the other cues or signs of affection.

1.4.4 Cultural Difference

From one culture to another, the same nonverbal cues may mean different things, just as the same meaning may be conveyed by different nonverbal cues. It is therefore essential to understand not only the verbal code, but also the nonverbal one, when communicating with someone from a different culture, or co-culture (different groups living in the same country). Misinterpretation of nonverbal communication across cultures, especially when combined with stereotyping and other prejudices, can have serious consequences.

Activity 6

Describe situations in which you were involved, or which you witnessed, and that illustrate the difficulties in interpretation, identified in Section 4.4 of Unit Four.

1.5   A FEW POINTS TO REMEMBER

- Communication is concerned not only with verbal messages but with nonverbal ones as well; most often, verbal and nonverbal messages operate simultaneously.
- We need to be aware of how nonverbal communication functions, the different types of nonverbal codes and their characteristics.
- Communication is not just about sending, but also about receiving messages; hence, improving our nonverbal skills involves conveying **and** interpreting nonverbal signs or cues, more effectively.
- We must pay sufficient attention to our nonverbal language, and be open to feedback from others. For example, if people frequently misunderstand our messages or meanings, it may be because of our nonverbal behaviour.

- We must be receptive to other people's nonverbal cues: remember that nonverbal cues and meanings can vary from one person to another, from one context or situation to another. "Interpreting the meaning of nonverbal communication is partly a matter of assessing the other person's unique behaviour and considering the context. You don't just "read" another person's body language; instead, you observe, analyse, and interpret before you decide the probable meaning." [Pearson and Nelson, p. 118]

- "Wrong" interpretation of nonverbal language or meaning can cause misunderstanding or conflict.

- Nonverbal language, even more than verbal language, is not universal.

UNIT 2   EFFECTIVE SELF PRESENTATION

Unit Structure

2.0   OVERVIEW

This Unit focuses on one of the key skill areas in managerial communications that can make an immense difference in your work and career as a manager. You will have the opportunity to learn about your own self being a communication resource, and develop a working knowledge of body language, gestures, dress and appearance, and how to arrange space for achieving specific communication objectives.

2.1   LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this Unit, you should be able to:

1   Know about, and be skilled in, making good first impressions.

2   To identify the functions of non-verbal communication.

3   Know about, and be skilled in the effective use of body language.

4   Analyse the effect of personal space, interpersonal distance, and office designs

5   Dress and groom yourself for maximum effectiveness in personal communication as a
        manager.

6   Identify and develop good impression management, non-verbal communication, and
        space arrangements

2.2   MAKING CONTACT – THE BASICS

As is often said, first impressions last, and so making a good start to an interpersonal communication – face-to-face, telephone, or written – is not only essential but well within our reach (even if a satisfactory *end* to an encounter cannot be guaranteed…).

The words we use to **greet** people will be dictated by the relationship we have with them. Here are some rules of good contact": check if you pass or fail in each of these roles.

Role	Pass/Fail
➤ In a friendly or equal relationship, we almost always use first names and informal salutations such as "Hello, how are you?" or "Good Morning".	
➤ With strangers, the greeting also acts as an introduction, so by announcing our name ("Maria Sharpov") and follow up with an expression of polite pleasure ("Pleased to meet you"), it implies a friendly and courteous intention on our part. If we are introduced to a stranger by someone, we can say "How do you do?"(without expecting a literal answer!) or, again, "Pleased to meet you".	
➤ Even if the relationship is potentially hostile, education and professionalism is suggested by such a civil verbal start.	
➤ If you are seated, always stand up to greet and to say goodbye.	
➤ As you stand up, extend your hand and offer a firm handshake.	
➤ Always face the person you are addressing and make eye contact.	

At the end of an encounter or meeting, especially when an agreement has been reached or the meeting has been particularly productive, make it a point to emphasising this success. If you are the host of the encounter or the chairperson of the meeting, remember to thank your guest(s) for their presence and/contribution and show them out (of the elevator, or to the exit of the building, or to their car). If the meeting has not been successful or easy, you must remain courteous and civil, but don't dwell on what went wrong.

Activity 1

Conduct a micro experiment with a friend on campus. Take him or her around and introduce him or her to a few individuals only known to you. Report on the exchanges of greetings and goodbyes. What insights do your findings provide?

2.3   USING BODY LANGUAGE (NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION)

Abercrombie (1968) stated that *'we speak with our organs, but we converse with our whole body'*, and this reminds us of our frequent neglect of non-verbal ways of communicating, such as through glances, facial expressions, posture, tone of voice and dress, often referred to as *body language*. What is especially interesting with body language is that it proves decisive in communicating information and forming ideas and judgements, the significance of which is tremendous in workplace situations. It was Fletcher (2000) who said that *'... actions speak louder than words'*, and that:

> *"...nowhere is this more true than in management, where we are often uncertain about whether we have understood each other fully – and need every clue we can get to help us ensure we are sending and receiving messages accurately".*

So, our nonverbal communications, including all such things as listed in **6.3** above, can be a very important part of business success. In surveys, nonverbal communications are always rated highly as important or very important in managing teams and meetings, and in one-to-one interactions, even higher. It would seem that when managers try to disguise or mask their true

opinions and feelings, this results in their sending conflicting signals which may readily be decoded by employees as duplicity, subterfuge or having a 'hidden agenda', and lead to the erosion of trust.

➢ Effective management requires a high degree of awareness of one's own body language as well as sensitivity to that of others.

2.3.1 The Functions of Nonverbal Communication

- Replacing verbal communication.
- Complementing the written word.
- Contradicting the written word.
- Expressing emotions.
- Expressing interpersonal attitudes.
- Conveying personal, social and cultural identity.
- Negotiating relationships.
- Regulating conversations.
- Contextualising interactions.

### 2.3.2 Personal Space and Interpersonal Distance

The main functions of nonverbal communication are achieved through certain *forms of communication*. Territory and personal space are spaces to which we claim special rights of access and ownership, and in which we move about in as if it were 'ours'. This is our 'space bubble' which we do not want violated by anyone. Indeed, failing to recognise the negative effects of intruding into personal space can lead to attributions of arrogance or crudeness and impact severely on working relationships. As for interpersonal distance, it refers to the distance that people tend to maintain while interacting with others. Consider the following case:

Case study: the Anglo-Arab 'dance'

The story is told of a group British businessmen who formed a trade delegation to an Arab country at a time when wealth was pouring into that part of the world. A banquet was held in their honour, at which Arab and British had an opportunity to meet and make contacts. However, something strange seemed to be taking place. It appeared that those who were present were circling the hall, mostly in pairs, with the British businessmen in retreat, hotly pursued by their Arab hosts. What on earth could account for this rather bizarre 'dance'? Interpersonal distance was at play: an Arab would approach a member of the delegation to introduce himself, moving right up close to his guest. Somewhat taken aback, his guest would take a few steps backward (in keeping with his culturally determined interpersonal distance). The Arab gentleman would once more close the distance, and so it continued. The incident had rather unfortunate consequences in terms of each group's perception of the other: while the British were considered aloof and unfriendly, the Arabs were seen as pushy and domineering, all in all seriously jeopardising that particular trade delegation.

The ways in which work space is arranged and utilised can send strong signals about:

- status and authority
- tasks and activities
- desirability and appropriateness of focused communication

Sociofugal ───────────────────────────► Sociopetal
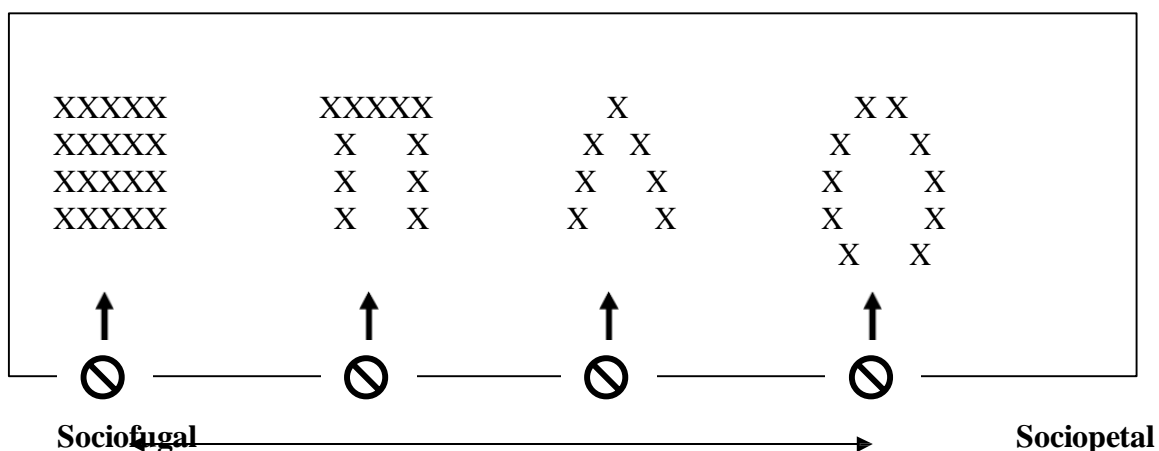
A layout that *encourages interaction*, promotes the sharing of ideas and friendly exchange, is called *sociopetal*.

Activity 2

How would you qualify the following task and seating arrangements?

(a)

....

(b)

....

(c)

....

The environment in which we work has features which explain much about our personal and social opinions and feelings, and as such, the communicative significance of office size, design, type of décor and furnishings, should not be overlooked. In addition, we can also read much into the organisation's culture, structure and image by observing such environmental cues as: presence of organisation chart, name plates on doors, placement of offices, titles, and parking areas. **Office design** and size also convey message about position, power and personality. It is believed that the arrangement and use of space is more impactful on a manager's power than the actual size of the office or how it is furnished. Other factors such as facing the door as you sit at your desk, filtering visitors through a gate-keeper, are all ways of exercising control for more power and status. **Office 'props'** are also believed to influence initial impressions of a manager, and more broadly of the organisation. Examples of props are: level of technology, type of furniture, and artwork. Certain props also influence impressions formed of the organisation

(Giacaolone and Rosenfeld, 1989), even though the industry or type of product or service is expected to be reflected differentially in the props. Generally, props are of the following types:

➢ Authority symbols, such as flags, logos, company colours, pictures of organisational founders or leaders, lead to impressions of tight structure and control;

➢ Empathic symbols, such as green plants, glossy magazines, create images of autonomy, friendliness and comfort;

➢ Reward symbols, such as trophies, medals and prizes, are thought to reflect an organisation trying to express and encourage excellence and achievement in its workforce.

2.3.3 Gestures and Posture

The extent to which movements of the hands, arms and hands are used varies significantly from culture to culture and from situation to situation. It is generally believed that speakers divide the communication task into words and gestures so as to achieve their economy of expression or a particular effect on the receiver. There are five main types of gestures:

1. *Emblems* are used just like words and have direct verbal translations. Emblems are signs and signals used by: undersea divers, policemen, stockbrokers, deaf people, and others.

2. *Illustrators* accompany, enhance and facilitate speech. Examples are when gestures are used to illustrate an abstract idea, some happening, place or thing, or to point to an object or place while referring to it. They are also often used to add emphasis and create impact during, say, a managerial presentation.

3. *Regulators* orchestrate conversation and are often used to bring a speech to an end.

4. *Affect displays* such as hand movements, convey emotional states such as embarrassment, anger, impatience, shame, nervousness. Because of their spontaneous and often unconscious nature, managers are well advised to pay attention to affect displays of employees.

5. ***Adapters*** include such gestures as nose-rubbing, head-scratching, ear-tweaking, pencil-biting, hair preening or nail-biting. Whether we believe these to be signs of anxiety or unease or something else, it is nevertheless important to be sensitive to them as parts of a message to be decoded.

As for posture, there is a broad understanding that we can use it to get to the real opinions and emotions of others. Posture is all-important in creating a good impression and in working up the organisational ladder. If you watch how people sit in chairs at meetings, it is not difficult to see who is enthusiastic, who is relaxed, who is disconnected, and so on. Experts in Neurolinguistic Programming (NLP) talk much about how people match or mirror the postures of others, by way of establishing rapport, but also in identifying with a clique or coalition.

2.3.4   Dress and Appearance

Physically attractive people are seen as more personable, popular, persuasive, interesting, outgoing and .. successful. Even those who are not naturally gifted can, and must, compensate in how they dress, groom themselves, and pay attention to details in their appearance. Dress and appearance are clearly very strong forms of non-verbal communication and this is even truer for managers who have to exert authority and influence others. Some companies have a strict dress code, but where this does not exist explicitly, it is well-known that it is always best to dress "up" rather than "down" and wear the "power suit" rather than the latest fashion. Looking at individuals in positions just one up to your own is a good guide to how to dress, since your aim should be to dress for the job you want to be in! For men as for women, dark suits project an impression of competence, rationality and credibility.

Activity 3

Use a reporter's notebook and observe a few male and female managers at work (but do so discreetly! You may also be able to observe these in a movie/news broadcast or other TV Programmes). Note down their title (status) and the following:-

- dress style and colour,
- hair style,
- type and state of shoes, and
- makeup (for women)

You may think in terms of: formality/informality, status, classic/modern/fashionable, simple/fussy, neutral, co-ordinated, expensive/cheap, etc.

Examine carefully what impression each left on you. What useful learning have you gained?

Activity 4

You have a job interview with a rising star in the advertising business in Mauritius. You have seen their work and believe they represent trendy youth. To fit in with your assumption at what will be the climate at the interview, you dress 'down' in an informal, trendy, youthful fashion outfit. Upon being shown into the interview room, however, you are dismayed to discover that your assumption was wrong: the entire interview panel is in formal, dark suit and the room décor is formal and rather forbidding. You feel you are caught in an innocent mistake, and that you now have to rely on non-verbal techniques to counteract your error and convey a message more in line with your prospective employers. What do you do?