

Verbal and Non Verbal Communication

Chapter Outline

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7.1 Verbal Communication

All forms of communication can be categorized as either verbal or nonverbal. Much of the communication that takes place between people is verbal; that is, it is **based on language**.

In turn, both verbal and nonverbal communication can be subdivided into either vocal or non-vocal. Verbal communication of the vocal category includes **spoken language (oral communication)**. Non-vocal verbal communication involves **written communication** as well as communication that is transmitted through sign language, finger spelling, Braille, or other similar alternatives.

- (a) **Oral Communication:** Human beings first learn to speak and then write. Oral communication means communication through spoken words. In organizations maximum communication is through oral medium.

Tools of Oral Communication are: Telephone, face to face, loudspeakers, etc.

Advantages of Oral Communication:

1. Immediate Feedback
2. Time Saving
3. Economical
4. Personal Touch
5. Flexibility
6. Secrecy

Limitations of Oral Communication

1. Poor Retention
2. No record
3. Time Consuming
4. Misunderstanding
5. Lengthy Messages
6. Imprecise

How to make Oral Communication Effective?

1. Clarity
2. Brevity
3. Precision
4. Right Words

5. Avoidance of Clichés
6. Understanding the Listener
7. Natural Voice
8. Logical Sequence
9. Conviction

(b) Written Communication

Characteristics of Written Communication:

- (i) Requires lot of imagination and effort. It is a creative activity.
- (ii) Takes more time than oral communication.
- (iii) Fewer cycles of communication.
- (iv) Required for smooth functioning.
- (v) Suitable in most situations as oral communication is not possible always.

Advantages of Written Communication:

1. Wide Access
2. Accuracy
3. Repetition is avoided
4. Record for future reference
5. Legal document
6. Fixed responsibility
7. Appropriate for Lengthy messages
8. Convenient

Disadvantages of Written Communication

1. Time Consuming
2. Expensive
3. Lack of Secrecy
4. Rigidity
5. Impersonal
6. Delayed feedback

Difference between Oral Communication and Written Communication

Basis	Oral Communication	Written Communication
1. Nature	Informal with personal touch	Formal without personal touch
2. Speed	Fast	Slow
3. Flexibility	High	Low
4. Record	No Record	Permanent Record
5. Cost	Economically	Costly
6. Use of Gestures	May/ May not be used	Cannot be used
7. Feedback	Immediate	Delayed
8. Suitability	For short and simple messages	For Lengthy messages

7.2 NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION

While verbal communication is much studied and is the focus of much applied attention in areas ranging from journalism to governance to entertainment, the fact is that human beings communicate more through nonverbal means. Some estimates are that so-called body language accounts for 65, 70, even 90 percent of human communication. Using the 70-percent figure for body language, the voice accounts for another 20 percent or so, and specific words only about 10 percent. The Mehrabian Communication Model suggests that words constitute 7% of the entire communication whereas 38% is accounted by the paralinguistic features (the way the words are said) and 55% of the communication is through gestures. Research conclusions may vary a bit, but the consensus is clear: **Nonverbal communication is hugely important in human interaction.**

Note the implications of the proverb: “Actions speak louder than words.” In essence, this highlights the importance of non-verbal communication.

► *Uses of Nonverbal Communication*

Nonverbal communication provides individuals and groups with many options for presenting their messages. Here are some of the uses of nonverbal communication.

To create impressions beyond the verbal element of communication

To repeat and reinforce what is said verbally (e.g. point in a direction while stating directions.)

Often complement the verbal message but also may contradict. E.g.: a nod reinforces a positive message (among Americans); a “wink” may contradict a stated positive message.

To manage and regulate the interaction among participants in the communication exchange (non-verbal cues convey when the other person should speak or not speak).

May substitute for the verbal message (especially if it is blocked by noise, interruption, etc) — i.e. gestures (finger to lips to indicate need for quiet), facial expressions (i.e. a nod instead of a yes).

To express emotion beyond the verbal element

To convey relational messages of affection, power, dominance, respect, and so on

To promote honest communication by detecting deception or conveying suspicion

To provide group or social leadership by sending messages of power and persuasion

Non-verbal communication is especially significant in intercultural situations. Nonverbal communication also is bound to culture. In particular, there are differences among cultures and nationalities about the relative value of speech versus silence, the relative value of talk versus action, the social role of small talk or gossip, and the role of animation, rhyme and exaggeration in speech. Because of these differences, the study of verbal and nonverbal communication always must be done within a social or cultural context. As noted above, nonverbal communication may be vocal (focusing on vocal characteristics such as pitch, rate, and so on) or nonvocal (focusing on body language, environment, attire and the like). Commonly, the study of nonverbal communication is divided into several specific categories.

1. **Kinesics** (simplistically called body language) deals with physical movement, sometimes called affective displays. This study applies traditional linguistic principles to the body as a whole or to specific parts, particularly the face, hands and arms. It also deals with posture in standing and sitting, as well as with eye and facial expressions, such as the arching of eyebrows or rolling of the eyes. Kinesics vary culturally.

Gesture: For example, a person of Mediterranean culture may use extensive hand movements and body gestures as an expression of anger, whereas a Japanese person may be apparently less excited, but perhaps no less angry. Kinesics also includes the use of smiling, frowning, giggling and so on, which also differs by culture. While universally,

smiling reveals happiness, in some cultures it also is used to mask sadness or to hide embarrassment.

Kinesics generally refers not to sign language that relies on gestures and expressions in a

grammatical context as an alternative to spoken language. But it is associated with the use of emblems, physical gestures that support or reinforce what is said verbally. Some emblems seem to be universal, while others are cultural, with different interpretations in various cultures, or perhaps with different uses by men and women. An example of a universal emblem is the uplifted shoulders and upturned hands that indicate “I don’t know” virtually everywhere in the world. An example of a culture-bound emblem is the encircled thumb and forefinger. That gesture can be interpreted as worthless in France, money in Japan, OK in the United States, a curse in Arab cultures, and an obscenity in Germany, Brazil and Australia.

Even simple things like using hands to point and count differ.

Pointing : US with index finger; Germany with little finger; Japanese with entire hand (in fact most Asians consider pointing with index finger to be rude)

Counting: Thumb = 1 in Germany, 5 in Japan, middle finger for 1 in Indonesia.

Appearance deals with the communication role played by a person’s look or physical appearance. It deals with physical aspects of body shape, hair color and skin tone, as well as grooming, dress (both clothing and jewelry) and use of appearance enhancements such as body piercings, brandings and tattoos. All cultures are concerned for how they look and make judgments based on looks and dress. Americans, for instance, appear almost obsessed with dress and personal attractiveness.

Body Movement

We send information on attitude toward person (facing or leaning towards another), emotional state (tapping fingers, jiggling coins), and desire to control the environment (moving towards or away from a person).

Posture

Consider the following actions and note cultural differences:

- o Bowing (not done, criticized, or affected in US; shows rank in Japan)
- o Slouching (rude in most Northern European areas)
- o Hands in pocket (disrespectful in Turkey)
- o Sitting with legs crossed (offensive in Ghana, Turkey)
- o Showing soles of feet. (Offensive in Thailand, Saudi Arabia)

Occulesics is closely related to kinesics. Occulesics deals with eye behavior as an element of communication. Some aspects of occulesics deal with a static or fixed gaze versus dynamic eye movement. This so-called eye contact is the subject of much interpretation by the observer, making it difficult to predict its exact communication impact. In the West, direct eye contact (looking into the eyes of the other person) is common about 40 percent of the time while talking and 70 percent while listening. In Japan, it is more common to look at the throat of the other person. In China and Indonesia, the practice is to lower the eyes because direct eye contact is considered bad manners, and in Hispanic culture direct eye contact is a form of challenge and disrespect. In Arab culture, it is common for both speakers and listeners to look directly into each others' eyes for long periods of time, indicating keen interest in the conversation. In Mediterranean society, men often look at women for long periods of time that may be interpreted as staring by women from other cultures. Even the same kinesic gesture can be interpreted differently. For example, the facial gesture of downcast eyes during conversation can suggest social deference, evasion, insincerity or boredom.

2. **Proxemics** involves the social use of space in a communication situation. One aspect of this is the closeness between and among people when they speak, and the significant role that culture plays in this. Distance is generally described on a continuum from **intimate space (0-18 inches)** to **personal space or informal distance (18 inches to 4 feet)** to **social space or formal distance (4-12 feet)**, and **public space or distance (beyond 12 feet)**. Edward T. Hall classifies these spaces in terms of zones – Intimate Zone, Personal

Zone, Social Zone and Public Zone. Proxemics also deals with the effective use of space in social settings, such as businesses and homes, ranging and the arrangement of space to encourage or inhibit communication.

3. **Paralanguage** deals with vocal cues, more accurately referred to as the nonphonemic qualities of language. These include accent, loudness, tempo, pitch, cadence, rate of speech, nasality and tone, insofar as these convey meaning. Vocal qualifiers such as volume, pitch, rhythm and tempo also are associated with cultural distinctions. In Arab culture, for example, speaking loudly connotes sincerity, whereas in North America it often is interpreted as aggressive. Vocal segregates (sounds such as mmmm, uh-huh, oooo) likewise also differ among various cultures. Vocal rate deals with the speed at which people talk, another factor that offers various interpretations. This suggests that “how” of an utterance is more important than just “what” of an utterance that makes the communication complete. In written communication too, the tone of the communication reflects the attitude of the sender (positive, negative, helpful, rude etc.).

4. **Chronemics** deals with the use of time as an element of communication. Formal time is measured in minutes, hours, days, and so on. Informal time is measured relative to seasons, social customs, lunar cycles, etc. Chronemics involves specifics such as punctuality (which can be monochronic or M-time and polychronic or P-time) along with patterns of dominance or deference within a communication situations. For example, studies show that men are more likely than women to dominate a conversation and interrupt another speaker. Chronemics also deals with time from the standpoint of social settings, such as the likelihood among Americans of arriving early for business meetings but being “fashionably late” for social activities, while in Latin American and Arab culture, business people often arrive at a time Westerns would consider “late,” taking business meetings as occasions for hospitality and socializing. Meanwhile, the Sioux language doesn’t even have a word for “late,” reflecting a very relaxed attitude toward time. Chronemics also considers the use of monochronemics (doing one thing at a time,

emphasis on schedules and promptness, getting to the point quickly) versus polychronemics (doing several things at a time, emphasis on people and the whole of a relationship). Studies show that the monochronemic conversation (talking about one thing at a time) is common in Northern Europe and North America. Meanwhile, Latin American, Asian, Middle Eastern and Mediterranean cultures are more likely to use polychronemic conversation (multiple conversations at the same time, and frequent interruption by other speaker-listeners).

5. **Chromatics** or the use of colour to communicate is not new. In fact, since time immemorial colour has been used symbolically in different cultures. For example, the colour purple has often been associated with royalty in various cultures. Similarly, white is associated with chastity or peace. In organizations today colour is increasingly used to express organizational culture. BPO's/MNC's now use bright and colourful walls and upholstery to indicate that it is a 'happy', 'cheerful' and 'fun' place to work in.
6. **Haptics** focuses on touching as an element of communication, indicating both the type of touch as well as its frequency and intensity. Like many other elements of nonverbal communication, haptics is very much a function of culture. It has been noted, for example, that Mediterranean, Middle Eastern and Latin American cultures employ much social touching in conversation, including embraces and hand-holding; these are called high-contact (or high-touch) cultures. In moderate-touch cultures such as North America and Northern Europe, touching is used only occasionally, such as in handshakes and sporadic shoulder touching or back slapping. In low-contact cultures such as in Northern Asian cultures, meanwhile, social touching is rarely used at all. But the geography is by no means that simple. People in the Asian nation of the Philippines, for example, use a large amount of social touching in conversation and personal interaction. Even within a culture, haptics vary. For example, handshakes vary in length and strength of grip depending on the actual (or hoped for) degree of intimacy between the two people shaking hands.

Question: Why do we touch, where do we touch, and what meanings do we assign when someone else touches us?

Illustration: An African-American male goes into a convenience store recently taken over by new Korean immigrants. He gives a \$20 bill for his purchase to Mrs Cho who is the cashier and waits for his change. He is upset when his change is put down on the counter in front of him.

What is the problem? Traditional Korean (and many other Asian countries) don't touch strangers, especially between members of the opposite sex. But the African-American sees this as another example of discrimination (not touching him because he is black).

- o Islamic and Hindu: typically don't touch with the left hand. To do so is a social insult.
- o Islamic cultures generally don't approve of any touching between genders (even hand shakes). But consider such touching (including hand holding, hugs) between same-sex to be appropriate.

Basic patterns: Cultures (English , German, Scandinavian, Chinese, Japanese) with high emotional restraint concepts have little public touch; those which encourage emotion (Latino, Middle-East, Jewish) accept frequent touches.