

# NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION-AN ESSENCE OF INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIP AT WORKPLACE

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## ABSTRACT

*No one in this world can survive in isolation. Communication is the only tool to bridge to gap between individuals. When individuals speak, they normally do not confine themselves to the mere emission of words. A great deal of meaning is conveyed by non-verbal means which always accompany oral disclosure-intended or not. It can also be said that, a spoken message is always sent in two parallel levels, the first one is verbal and second one is non-verbal. Facial expressions and body language are the most common way of non-verbal communication. Nonverbal communication is the process of communication through sending and receiving wordless (mostly visual) cues between people. Today when we interact with others (interpersonal communication) we continuously give and receive wordless signals. In the present study an attempt has been made to explore the significance role of non-verbal communication in maintaining the longevity and effectiveness of interpersonal relationship. The present paper deals with what is non-verbal communication, its various forms and types, how to interpret them, and also some tips of how to enhance these non-verbal communication. An attempt has also been made in this paper on how to improve the interpersonal relationship with the help of effective non-verbal communication.*

**Key Words :** Non-verbal communication, Interpersonal relationship, Body language, Facial expression

## INTRODUCTION

We use 'communication' usually to mean speaking or writing or sending a message to another person. "Communication is transfer of information from one person to another, whether or not it elicits confidence. But the information transferred must be understandable to the receiver" (G.G. Brown). Communication is giving, receiving or exchanging ideas, information, signals or messages through appropriate media, enabling individuals or groups to persuade, to seek information, to give information or to express emotions. This broad definition includes body-language, skills of speaking and writing. It outlines the objectives of communication. Apart from the major classification pertaining to forms and dimensions, non-verbal communication is the

most important part of communication to be studied.

### Non-Verbal communication

The motion picture 'The Artist' received the Oscar for Best Picture in 2012. This mostly silent black-and-white movie won the hearts of audiences and enthralled the critics, all with hardly any dialogue. Most of the communication which occurred in the movie was nonverbal. The actors moved, by paying attention to their facial expressions, by looking at how they sat and adjusted their heads, we understood them-the actors' messages came alive. Relying on such nonverbal cues, we connected with the characters emotionally. We normally do this in our daily lives as well.

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Our actions are means of communication, subject to interpretation by others. Even the failure to act is a way of communicating. Today, many researchers are concerned with the information sent through communication that is independent of and different from verbal information; namely, the non-verbal communication. While verbal communication is organized by language; non-verbal communication is not. In interpersonal communication (mostly in business), understanding the message of team members as well as those of any one else with whom you are communicating often involves more than merely listening to the spoken words. On-verbal cues, in fact speak louder than words. Your personal appearance, facial expression, body language, posters, gestures, proximity-all of these non-verbal signals influence the way your message is interpreted or deciphered by your partners in a communication process. These silent messages communicate your feelings during any form of interpersonal communication that you have with your seniors, subordinates or colleagues. Non-verbal communication includes all unwritten and unspoken messages, both intentional and unintentional. Though they have a profound impact on our receivers, it is difficult to interpret them accurately. Nevertheless, they are not to be ignored, but to be recognized and understood as correctly as possible. After all, we can change the meaning of our words with the wink of an eye, a certain facial expression, voice tone, bodily movement, use of space, or touch. As our ability to

use and interpret nonverbal behavior and contextual cues improves, so will our understanding of interpersonal relationships. Some Essentials of non-verbal communication are as below:-

1. Non-verbal communication is less structured than verbal communication
2. Non-verbal communication is unplanned.
3. Non-verbal communication is intent and spontaneous.
4. Non-verbal communication blends with speech.

#### **UNDERSTANDING THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF NON-VERBAL MESSAGES**

In interpersonal communication our messages are sent on two levels simultaneously. If the non-verbal cues and the spoken messages are incongruous, the flow and comprehension of communication is hindered. Right or wrong, the receiver of the communication tends to base the intentions of the sender on the non-verbal cues he/she receives.

Imagine a situation when you are comfortable seated in a movie hall and waiting for the movie to begin. The hall is noisy with people talking to each other, chatting over cellular phones, enjoying the music being played, etc. All of a sudden the hall becomes dark and the music stops. Now you sense a totally different mood in the auditorium. You and the others become silent, as you know that the movie is about to start in a few seconds. The darkness and the silence in the hall communicated something to you. The following table depicts the various types of non-verbal cues:-

<b>Kinesics</b>	<b>Facial expressions, gestures, and postures</b>
Paralinguistics/Vocalics	Variations in the voice, pitch, speed, volume and pause that conveys meaning.
Proxemics	The communication of space and distance
Haptics	The communication of touch
Appearance	The physical characteristics, style, appearance.
Chronemics	The effect of time in communication
Oculesics	Eye contact

*Source: Raman and Singh, 2007*

### **Kinesics**

Kinesics is articulation of the body, or movement resulting from the muscular and skeletal shift. This include all actions, physical or physiological, automatic reflexes, postures, facial expressions, gestures, and other body movements. Body language, body idiom, gestures language, organ language, and kinesic acts are just some terms used to depict kinesics.

*Body posture*:-The way that the body is held can communicate many different messages. An open body that takes up a lot of space can indicate comfort and domination, whilst a closed-in body that makes itself small can signal inferiority. Copying of the other person's body shows agreement, trust and liking.

### **Paralinguistics/Vocalics**

The messages being conveyed with voice are known as Paralinguistics.Relying on vocal cues helps in determining the real meaning of spoken words. The voice is an extraordinary human instrument. People from different walks of life recognize that the human voice communicate something beyond language. These effects are referred to by many impressionistic descriptions such as tone of voice, voice quality, manner of speaking etc. There are modifying feature that can occur independently, such as crying, laughing, groaning and whining.

### **Proxemics**

Major aspect of proxemics has to do with how close we stand to others. The distance may vary based on cultural norms and the type of relationship existing between the parties. It is the language of space and distance. The close one stands, the greater the chances of strong bonding.

Edward T Hall (1966) specified four distance zones:-

1. Intimate Zone. (0 to 18 Feet)-This zone extends from actual touching to eighteen inches. It is normally reserved for those with whom one is intimate.
2. Personal Zone. (18 inches to 4 feet)-This zone extends from 18 inches to 4 feet. This is the zone for close friends, the contents of

conversation are generally about private affairs, and the speaker talks softly .Of course, if people are in outdoors, the volume will behigher.

3. Social Distance. (4 feet to 12 feet)- This zone exists from four to twelve feet.It seems to be an appropriate distance for casual friends and acquaintances to interact.
4. Public Zone. (over 12 feet)- Extending outward from twelve feet a speaker becomes formal. In this zone, the speaker's volume is quite high, commonly it happens in the situation of lecture or play act.

### **Haptics**

Haptics or tactile communication or touch is an important form of communication in maintaining the interpersonal relationship. Touch help groups forms bonds and stays peaceful. Many factors such as intentions, feelings-both positive and negative can be conveyed with the help of Haptics. Touch can signify consolation, congratulations, warmth and emotion in interpersonal communication. The type of touch you need, tolerate, receive and initiate depends up on the extent and the kind of touch on receives in his family.

### **Appearance**

Until unless you don't speak your personality speak. Personal appearance is a sort of communication which gives the first impression. People can change their appearance by changing their clothing, styles, hairstyles, and other accessories or artifacts.Appearance - artifacts can be one of the most powerful types of nonverbal communication. It is important to wear clothing appropriate to the occasion. Appearance also includes- Body Cleanliness, Clean Nails, Shiny Shoes, Being appropriately dressed.

### **Chronemics**

Chronemics is the study of how time is used in communication. Time can be used as a communication tool in many ways, from punctuality, to expectations around waiting and response time, to general principles around time

management. Chronemics has become an area of study primarily for maintaining better interpersonal relationship, and the way cultures can vary and converge around different norms. More recently, chronemics appears to be branching out into other disciplines, such as the more business oriented study of interpersonal relationship and organizational behavior.

### Oculesics

Oculesics refers to the study of eye contact and pupil dilation in terms of non-verbal communication. It may include eye contact or avoidance of eye contact. Eye contact indicated interest, openness, through aggressive eye contact or staring can be interpreted as assign of hostility. In addition to this lack of eye contact also transmits a message, oftentimes that the listener is bored and/or is not paying attention. Oculesic movements are also frequently associated with kinesics movement.

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In his book, *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals*, Charles Darwin (1872) looked at how our emotions express our feelings and thoughts. The brain, being stimulated by the increased flow of blood, reacts on the mental powers; lively ideas pass still more rapidly through the mind, and the affections are warmed (Darwin, 1872, p. 696-697). Non-verbal communication is very important in maintaining the interpersonal relationship as the signals of warmth, emotions and feelings are mostly conveyed through non-verbal communication. Our emotions, mind, and body work as one to send signals to other people. Nonverbal communication relates to the unspoken word and a means to send messages that are "not sanctioned for verbal delivery by our culture" (Wiemann, 1975). Andersen (2004) concluded people trust body language over the spoken word. People trust body languages because it is spontaneous, multi-channeled, and possesses redundant qualities that make it very hard to completely fake. Edward T Hall (1966) has specified 4 zones of proxemics (non-verbal

communication) i.e.-Intimate Zone, Personal Zone, Social Zone and Public Zone which plays a vital role in comprehending and maintaining the interpersonal relationship. According to Professor Albert Mehrabian's communications model (1990):-

- 7% of message pertaining to feelings and attitudes is in the words that are spoken.
- 38% of message pertaining to feelings and attitudes is paralinguistic (the way that the words are said).
- 55% of message pertaining to feelings and attitudes is in facial expression.

Culture also plays an important role in understanding of non-verbal communication specially Oculesics (eye contact). For the necessity of eye contact and the civility it provides in American Culture differs greatly from an Asian culture, for example where your eye contact is often considered rude (DeFleur, 2005)

### NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION AND INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIP

Success of interpersonal relationship totally depends on the communication, and non-verbal communication being the instinctive part play a vital role in maintaining the same. It is important to understand the several attributes of non-verbal communication to expound how it affects and maintain the longevity of interpersonal relationship. In interpersonal communication verbal exchange accounts for only a fraction of the message people send and receive. Reseraches has shown that between 70 to 90% of the entire communication spectrum is non verbal. In interpersonal communication the words generally convey the objective information where as non-verbal messages reveal our emotions and attitudes which is the essence of the interpersonal relationship. When we do use words to talk about our emotions, we often talk about what we think we ought to feel, not what we really feel.

### DISCUSSION

One can play fast and get loose with the words, but it's much more difficult to loose with gestures. As discussed, non-verbal cues

constitutes a major part of the whole communication process, it become necessary to comprehend these cues minutely in order to have a better understanding of the message. Since these are subtle signals which can either contradict, reinforce or regulate the whole message, hence must be observed closely to understand the essence of the message. Good eye contact should be maintained in order to increase the overall effectiveness in interpersonal communication. During the communication process, sender and the receiver both communicate simultaneously. While sender communicates with words and non-verbal cues, receiver emits non-verbal signals. These signals must be closely observed by the sender in order to enhance the effectiveness of the communication, e.g. while nodding and smiling reflects better understanding, frowning and rubbing eyes may reflect disinterest and disbelief respectively.

Appropriate postures should be adopted as according to the situation, e.g. responsive posture must be adopted during interpersonal communication as it reflects interest in communication with open body, arms and hands. Responsive and reflective postures come under the open body language while combative and fugitive postures reflect closed body language. During interpersonal and workplace communication responsive and reflective postures must be adopted to increase the efficiency and warmth.

### **Non-verbal communication at Workplace**

Non-verbal communication is one of the most important aspects of the workplace. Whether communicating internally or with a client, it's vital to understand that there is more to communicating than what comes out of mouth. In fact, the most powerful form of communication doesn't include words at all.

Nonverbal communication includes all the unspoken messages sent to people on a daily basis, whether it's telling someone about yourself by how you wear your hair or clothing or sharing your feelings through the rolling of eyes or the

nodding of the head. We are constantly communicating without ever saying a word. Oftentimes, and what is most frightening, that in many cases individuals are not aware of it. Nonverbal communication comprises of your overall body language, including your appearance and posture as a form of communication with others. Rather than using words, people can communicate using nonverbal gestures, facial expressions and eye contact. Also, an individual's voice tone may communicate nonverbal messages to others. In the workplace, people interact with each other throughout the workday using verbal and nonverbal communication. In essence, the way individuals deliver nonverbal messages can be just as important as verbal dialogue.

### **Enhancing Communication at workplace**

Depending on occupation, individuals are required to communicate messages to others on a regular basis; certain occupations -- such as teachers, salespeople, journalists, doctors, lawyers and corporate executives -- spend a great deal of their workday communicating with others. Using nonverbal cues can enhance how people receive your communication. Nonverbal communication indicates how a person is feeling in relation to what they are saying, and it also reflects how people react to the message. Communication of an important message to colleagues with excitement and enthusiasm may have a greater impact on receiver in regards to the importance of the message versus delivering the message with a monotonous tone and facial expression. When confronting someone who you are in close relationship with, reach out to take his/her hands in both of yours. These subtle non-verbal signals have a great impact on the workplace communication. Conscious awareness of your nonverbal communication when you are also communicating verbal messages allows others to receive the message the way you intended to deliver your message. Positive nonverbal communication helps colleagues in the workplace build positive business relationships, whereas negative nonverbal communication can cause conflicts and other

negative disturbances in the workplace. Many people build positive business relationships by consistently delivering positive nonverbal communication to others.

### CONCLUSION

Non-verbal communication is not a mystical or magical thing. It is a natural even rational process by which people convey information by means other than words. While linguistic channels of communication can shut off by refusing to speak or write, it is impossible to avoid behaving non-verbally as our body keeps sending signals consciously or subconsciously. The field of non-verbal communication has grown rapidly over the last few decades and it has its application in business, media, international relations, education and indeed any field which significantly involves interpersonal relationship and group dynamics. When communicating it is not only important to pay close attention to what somebody is saying, but also to observe what someone's body "is saying". That means to pay attention to the gestures and to the facial expression someone is using. To be able to interpret non-verbal communication correctly one needs experience. Nonverbal communication is just as important, giving cues to supervisors, coworkers and clients

about ones understanding and attitude. Understanding the importance of nonverbal communication will make individuals more aware of what someone says -- without opening mouth. Effective and better use of non-verbal communication can the increase and enhance the interpersonal relation at the workplace. This relationship development process often occurs through subtle and unconscious cues and can have profound consequences for the superior-subordinate relationship and client outcomes.

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