



## NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION AND ITS IMPORTANCE AT WORKPLACE

**Shobha D'mello, Rajendra Mahajan, Dr.Balaji Shinde**, Assistant Professor, Atharva College of Engineering Malad, Mumbai

**Abstract:** *Throughout the day we spend time with our colleagues at the workplace. We used to communicate with each other and transfer our thoughts, feelings, emotions and experiences. After analyzing the schedule of the whole day it has been observed that we use language to communicate but most of the time without spoken words we convey messages effectively just with the help of some cues, expressions and symbols. It proves that humans can communicate with language or without language. When we communicate with language it is called verbal communication and when we communicate with any other medium other than language that appeals to our senses and information is transferred between two individuals we can call it nonverbal communication. People give importance to verbal communication at the workplace but most of the time they neglect the importance of nonverbal communication. Nonverbal communication is an important aspect of the 21st century as it lays emphasis on behavior of an individual at his place of work. Interpreting and analyzing information are keys in understanding messages but most of the time interpreting nonverbal cues is a big challenge. This paper will focus on various aspects of nonverbal communication which are playing a vital role at the workplace.*

**Keywords-**Nonverbal communication, body language,cues, behavior

“The global village is shaping its own language. The global market, the corporate world, science and technology are all using this handy lingua-franca, which is not the language of Shakespeare or Churchill, nor that of R. K. Narayan ...” ( Arun Sadhu, The Times of India, January 17, 2007)

### **Introduction-**

Effective communication empowers individuals to convey their messages and emotions constructively that leads to bolster relationships between co-workers. Most of the people just focus on the verbal aspect of communication to achieve effectiveness and relinquish nonverbal aspects. In fact nonverbal communication plays a vital role in the engagement of stakeholders in an organization. It is an inseparable part of day to day communication in a business scenario. The 21st century brings technological advancement but the human factor is still needed to complete the task. While working together proper understanding and consideration is required which is lacking at many places due to wrong interpretation of verbal and non-verbal behavior. The scope of nonverbal communication is very vast as it includes many factors which deal with a living human being. Each Individual in a corporate world comes across with different people who have their own perception, thoughts, beliefs and ideologies. Proper understanding of non verbal aspects of communication like body language, gestures, postures, eye contact and vocalics creates a positive and healthy atmosphere at the workplace.

### **Importance of nonverbal communication-**

In a corporate environment verbal communication is always accompanied by nonverbal cues. Non verbal aspects play an important role when one talks with colleagues, boss, or any stakeholder. They are salient features of communication which affect communication process in formal situations like presentations, meetings, group discussions and even in social settings like official get togethers, parties,



lunches or dinners. It has been observed that the success of most of the organizations depends on the ability of people to decode and understand non verbal aspects of communication. Lack of proper understanding of nonverbal cues creates communication gaps between stakeholders. Not only leaders but all the people who are involved in different activities should go through the training of non verbal communication to reduce these gaps. If these gaps are not eliminated they become hindrance in the smooth process of communication. Different communication situations require different understandings as employees interact with each other face to face, through telephonic conversation, through emails and mobile chats. In each situation employees need to decode and understand different cues for better communication. The proper understanding of nonverbal cues is essential which can be learned over a period of time.

Every corporate organization has some set of values and culture. The accuracy of analyzing and interpreting nonverbal cues enables us to understand information, message, attitude, emotions, and feelings of a person in a better way. The better understanding enhances good bonding, healthy work environment, team spirit, high morale and effective engagements at the workplace. In the business world 'how you say' is more crucial than 'what you say'. While interpreting the message one should not only consider the words but also body language, expressions, eye contact and tone of a person. Various methods of nonverbal communication come into play in the workplace at different situations like project presentations, interviews, meetings, group discussions and activities within and outside campus.

### **Forms of Non-Verbal Communication:**

Non-verbal communication refers to all perceptions and interpretations made by our senses. Nonverbal communication can often be divided into two categories: The difference between conscious and subconscious nonverbal communication

#### **1. Conscious non-verbal communication:**

The sender transmits a message with a specific intention, and the receivers are aware of the sender's intended meaning. As an illustration, when welcoming a guest, Indians fold their hands and interlock the palms of both hands. It represents a gracious greeting for the visitor. It is a form of conscious nonverbal communication in which the broad intent of the act is understood by both the sender and the recipient. Graphics, photos, maps, diagrams, and other visual aids can be efficiently used to convey conscious nonverbal information.

**2. Subconscious Non-Verbal Communication:** Subconscious non-verbal communication involves sending unconscious messages to the recipient. Even though the recipients of such communications are not consciously aware of it, they still have impressions after viewing or hearing anything. An ambulance siren, for instance, can signal a casualty or a medical emergency. Unknowingly, people are given information about power and status after seeing a police officer's outfit or a doctor's apron. In summary, unconscious non-verbal communication involves the unconscious or unconscious delivery of messages.

### **Methods of nonverbal communication**

Communication is the most simple yet complex process, because the way a person uses nonverbal cues plays a pivotal role in having meaning to the message to be conveyed, if there is some kind of misinterpretation it may lead to a miscommunication. When a message is communicated it takes two persons to comprehend the message. Sometimes communication is a futile attempt. Verbal communication is impossible when a reply is meant only for the receiver and not the general audience; it helps to give a desired feedback without disturbing the whole group of the audience. Communication is



possible without using words, communicating without the use of words is known as nonverbal communication. Nonverbal communication acts as a bridge between the sender, the receiver and the environment.

The following are some of the main contributing variables of nonverbal communication at workplace:-

### **Kinesics:**

Kinesics, or more technically non-verbal demeanor connected to motion, of any portion of the body or whole, is the interpretation of body languages such as facial countenances and gesticulations.

The transmission and interpretation of sentiments, attitudes, and moods through both unconscious and conscious body language occurs by:

- 1) bodily position, movement, physical state, relationship to other people, things, and environment,
- 2) face quirks and eye-movement
- 3) The spoken words can be entirely different from this transmission and interpretation.

Every physiological gesture has a certain significance. For illustration, a wry smirk expresses scepticism, a rubbing of the nose denotes perplexity, and shrugging shoulders denotes disappointment.

When someone is eager to hear something, they sit with their feet under the chair, their feet pressed to the ground, and lean forward on the desk. Someone who is focused maintains eye contact and nods frequently. When a message is conveyed orally and nonverbally through body language, it has greater meaning.

### **Proxemics:**

The scientific word for the part of body language that refers to personal space is proxemics. The study of measurable distance between people during interaction is known as proxemics.

Unintentional responses to sensory fluctuations or shifts, such as minute variations in voice pitch and sound, result in body separation and posture. According to the following delineations, social distance as well as intimate and personal distance between individuals are consistently connected with physical distance.

In both personal and professional life, space is crucial. Space is a symbol of power, especially in formal contexts. Officers in higher positions frequently receive superiorly furnished quarters in comparison to their inferiors. Authorities are given a distinct seat during meetings, whereas subordinates are given a seat that is relatively smaller. In order to establish connection with the audience, space is used as a technique. Effective presenters make excellent use of their available space to deliver messages. Conversely, a person may be threatened in a private setting, as is the case in a testing environment. Space separation conveys intimacy in addition to power or status.

1. Intimate Space: As the name implies, intimate space is very close to one's body. Intimate space is defined as the range 0-18". In that area, the majority of our bodily parts move. Only close friends, family, or chosen persons are allowed in there because it is so near to the speaker's body. Others are not allowed in that area. However, they may be permitted in specific situations, such as to congratulate,



comfort, or express sympathy. Speakers utilize low tones or whispers since they are so close together. It is frequently used to talk about extremely confidential issues.

2. Personal Space: The range of personal space is 18" to 4'. It extends outside the close-knit group. Only friends and coworkers are permitted entry. Typically, regular speech volume is employed. However, a small group of people could also use this area to address some crucial problems.

3. Social Space: The distance between the speaker and the social space is between 4 and 12 feet. It is appropriate for formal or official communication. In this area, business meetings are held the majority of the time. The speaker utilizes a formal tone with a loud or standard speech volume in this area because it is typically utilized for interacting with clients or visitors. Personal issues, emotions, and feelings can be discussed in the first two areas, but in the social space, primarily formal or official issues are discussed.

4. Public Space: The speaker's distance from the public is greater than 12 feet. In formal settings, communication in this area is typically one-way. The speaker must adopt an objective stance while speaking loudly and in a formal tone. To communicate clearly in this area, a public address system is always an excellent idea. It is frequently employed while speaking to enormous crowds of people.

**Oculusics (Eye contact):** It examines how eye contact affects nonverbal communication. We communicate a lot of nonverbal cues to other people through our eyes. The exchange of meaning between communicators without the use of words is known as nonverbal communication, and oculusics is one type of it. It can consist of the surrounding environment, the communicators' physical features or traits, and their actions.

Making eye contact is crucial for fully comprehending the message. It aids the speaker in successfully connecting with the listeners. It conveys the speaker's and receiver's sincere interest, curiosity, involvement, and sentiments. If they keep eye contact, both the speaker and the listener feel important and valued. Eye contact improves communication when giving speeches, attending meetings, interviews, and conversations with superiors and coworkers.

**Chronemics :** We frequently state that time is a valuable resource or that time is money. In both personal and professional life, it signifies the worth and significance of time. Time management is regarded to be one of the most important factors in a successful business because it can have either positive or bad effects. A prompt response conveys interest, readiness, and excitement, while a delayed response conveys lack of interest or care. All communications must be completed on time or else their significance is lost. The amount of time spent with the person also demonstrates his value and priority. The value of time differs amongst cultures. Chronemics (Time) refers to a person's situational awareness of their actions at work. The employee has a duty to be present at the appropriate location and time because everything is noted by the appropriate authorities. For instance, if a meeting is set for 10:00 am, the employees must arrive early; this demonstrates their commitment to the firm.

**Haptics :**Haptics refers to the study of touch. Superiors need to understand the importance of using touch while communicating with subordinates as well as must be alert and know how touch can be misleading. When we work with others when we use touch to communicate, it should be minimized as much as possible as tolerance of each subordinate differs from person to person. Haptic or tactile communication is the term used to describe communication that takes place through touch. The most effective non-verbal communication method is touch. Your aim, attitude, feelings, status, perception, need, etc. can all be expressed through touch. In casual settings, holding hands or giving someone a



loving hug is a simple way to express your love and care. On the other hand, in a professional setting, a forceful handshake can convey your attention or opinions. A shaky handshake exudes insecurity and diminishes credibility. Even a simple "well done" from the manager to an employee can convey their appreciation.

Although touching is typically done voluntarily, it can also happen accidentally or unintentionally. Touch, on the other hand, can be used to comfort, guide, and communicate sympathy.

**Vocalics/Paralinguists** :It means a person's way of presenting themselves plays a vital role in the communication process. It doesn't matter if communication is verbal or nonverbal it matters, that the nonverbal behavior of an individual in a given circumstance such as proper use of volume, pitch, speed, and pauses to convey the message in a meaningful way.

It is one of the branches of the study of variations in volume, pitch, speed, and pauses to convey the meaning of the terms used in communication. Interestingly, when the speaker is making a presentation and is looking for a response, he will pause. However, when no response is desired, he will talk faster with minimal pause.

The non-verbal components of communication that are utilized to change meaning and express emotion are referred to as chronetic. Pitch, volume, and, in rare cases, duration are all examples of paralinguistics that can be used deliberately or unconsciously. The definition may occasionally be limited to vocally produced sounds. The field of research is called paralinguistics. The term "paralanguage" describes the type of speech used to communicate a message, including volume, pitch, pace, and non-fluencies like "ah," "um," or "uh." It facilitates communication of the speaker's attitude. There may occasionally be a discrepancy between what a person says and what his actions suggest. In such circumstances, the person's actions can be seen as a more accurate representation of his sentiments and beliefs.

**Physical Appearance:** A person's appearance always affects how others see them. Words will never have the same impact as well coiffed hair, ironed clothes, and a cheerful smile. It is widely held that a person's physical characteristics indicate the level of success they will have throughout their lives.

A person's appearance reflects the reputation of the company. A person is required to maintain a decent wearing style and a well-groomed appearance while dealing with stakeholders directly. It means that the hair can be neatly styled and clipped, the clothes can be dated but yet attractive, and appropriate shoes can be worn to complete the look. Being well-groomed makes a person a valuable asset to the company. As was previously mentioned, a single person serves as a miniature representation of the business as a whole.

### **Olfactics:**

Who has a pleasant scent? How appealing do you seem to others? Numerous industries that produce items like scented candles, aromatherapy oils, mouthwashes and deodorants, household disinfectants, and perfumes and colognes have grown out of the desire to use and appeal to the sense of smell over the years.





The memory of both pleasant and unpleasant experiences is evoked by smell. For instance, when horrible things happen, our sense of smell becomes more acute, as if going onto high alert to warn us of impending danger. Of course, pleasant smells like those from freshly made cookies or blooming flowers are also associated with happy recollections.

### **Color:**

The colors we wear and the colors we surround ourselves with have an impact on our physical and mental well-being. For instance, studies show that prolonged exposure to pure red excites the neurological system and increases blood pressure, heart rate, and breathing rate. Dark blue, on the other hand, has a relaxing impact and causes blood pressure, respiration, and heart rate to decrease when the individual is equally exposed to it. Color may either make us move more rapidly or more slowly, help us relax or make us irritated. People who frequently wear red are more animated, outgoing, and impatient than those who don't.

### **Silence**

Communicating through silence, we can communicate through silence. Writers loudly pay brilliant tributes to the importance of silence. The best example is Thomas Carlyle's "speech is great, but silence is greater" or the old saying "speech is silver, but silence is gold" ie. silence speaks louder than words". Silence can express agreement, disagreement, indifference, appreciation, or withdrawal...

### **Examples of communication through silence**

Examples of communication through silence are as follows:

- Silence can be a very effective form of communication in many situations.
- If the employer asks for a salary increase and the boss is silent, this means that the increase has been refused.
- If a boss asks a certain employee "were you out yesterday" and the employee remains silent, it means that he answered yes.
- If your friend is angry with you, he may be silent, and a worried or sad person may not want to say anything. His behavior and facial expression are enough to convey his thoughts and feelings.

It is not necessarily required to speak to one another. Silence can be used to convey a message. It's because our silence can likewise have many connotations depending on the circumstance. Silence can communicate our conformity, oddity, disinterest, respect, disdain, and other things. It can be used to ignore someone or cut off contact with them. On the other side, a speaker can draw the audience's attention with a little pause before speaking. Silence during the presentation can indicate that the audience is in agreement to move forward, while silence after asking a closed question (seeking agreement or disagreement) can also imply disapproval.

**Visual and Auditory Signs and Signals:** The word 'Sign' is derived from the Latin word 'signum' which means a mark. Signs and signals are both symbols with a specific meaning. Signals are dynamic and contain a component of change or movement, while signs are fixed and static symbols.

Visual and aural modes can also be used for nonverbal communication. Visual and auditory refer to things that can be seen and heard, respectively. Visual communication uses images like graphs, maps, charts, signs, and symbols. On the other hand, aural communication utilizes bells, tunes, whistles, and sounds.



### **Gender and Nonverbal Communication**

We pick up the appropriate use of nonverbal cues from others in the same way that we acquire language from them. Since men and women prefer different nonverbal interaction styles that frequently reflect different gendered patterns, it is likely that our nonverbal interaction style influences how we identify as a particular gender. According to researcher Judith Hall, "man" and "female" are roles, each with a certain set of expected behaviors.

Men and women frequently utilize nonverbal communication in ways that mirror societal norms as a result. Men, for instance, are expected to display assertive behaviors that show their dominance and authority, whilst women are expected to behave more receptively and reactively. Therefore, it should not come as a surprise that men speak more and interrupt women more often than vice versa.

### **Conclusion**

Understanding how non-verbal cues are used to convey messages is crucial in the workplace. You run the risk of missing a crucial message if you simply pay attention to linguistic clues that are being used to communicate. It is important to keep in mind that while our words provide clear meaning, our nonverbal cues reveal our emotions and attitudes. We communicate our actual emotions through nonverbal cues. Acquiring the ability to decipher non-verbal cues enables you to understand the precise message being expressed by the other person. Controlling your body motions might also assist you in avoiding sending unintended messages. More weight is given to how the message is conveyed than what is actually spoken. Positive first impressions are made when you greet your team with a smile on your face.

A terrible impression could be made, though, if you welcome your team members in a commanding manner or make fun of someone in public. Non-verbal cues are a very important and effective form of communication, but they are so frequently neglected. In order to successfully communicate ideas in a meaningful and successful way, all professionals should understand how to use nonverbal cues appropriately. Knowing the appropriate usage and use of technology is crucial for every manager or team leader.

Nonverbal cues include the behaviors or characteristics of human beings, as well as the utilization of things, sounds, moments in time, and places that inspire others to find meaning. Nonverbal communication also serves metacommunicative purposes since it enhances the character and meaning of verbal messages. Nonverbal cues can supplement, contradict, accentuate, control, or completely replace verbal cues. They are therefore a crucial component of the whole communication package. Additionally, nonverbal behavior has communicative value, is ambiguous, mostly relational in character, and offers indicators of dishonesty.

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