

Lecture : **11**

Topic : **NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION**

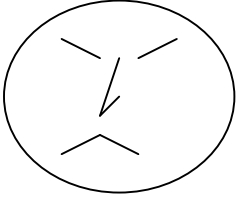
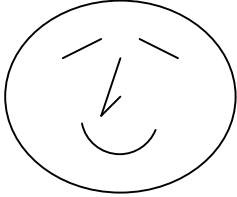
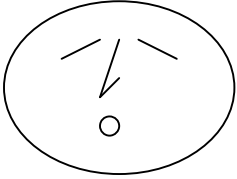
Non-verbal communications form a very large part of the communication process. Communication is more than just what we say. It is also how we say it, what we do not say, how approach the communication, and so on. It is a vitally important part of the communication process, as it can either reinforce the message we are conveying through our mouths or it can convey a totally different message, and so totally undermine our communication effort. The impact of non-verbal communication on our total communication experience was summed up by Clappitt (1991), who pointed out that 'communication' involves the coordination of meaning'.

In other words, the meaning we convey through non-verbal means must tie up with the meaning associated with our verbal means. If the two do not tie up, then the recipient of our communication will be confused at the very least, and may well totally disregard what we are attempting to communicate. It may also have a knock-on effect on our future communications with that person in that they may approach our later message with an attitude of suspicion, which then interferes with the successful implementation of the actions we seek through making the communication. Non-verbal communication is often called metacommunications, or 'in addition to communications' because it is in addition to the verbal forms of communication.

The various forms of non-verbal communication are many. Some of these have been covered already, but it is worth revisiting these where they occur. The main forms of non-verbal communication of which we need to be aware are as follows:

5.1 Use of the face

Our facial expressions carry a lot of information about some the hidden meanings behind our verbal messages, or indeed about our lack of verbal message. We can convey a wealth of information without even having to utter a word, merely through our faces. For example, note the examples below and consider the message that the expressions are attempting to convey:

	<p>Most common responses to this face include Anger, pain, frustration and similar emotions.</p>
	<p>Most common responses to this face include Happiness, pleasure, contentment, and similar Emotions.</p>
	<p>Most common responses to this face include Surprise, amazement and similar emotions.</p>

As well as the expression contains within our faces, an important use of our faces in communication is the use of eye contact. Maintaining eye contact with the people with whom we are communicating is an important part in establishing credibility and sincerity. Many people say that the eye are the ‘window to the soul’, and that it is possible to discern someone’s intention through their eyes. whether this is true or not, failing to establish eye contact is often the fault of those who do not believe in what they are saying, or who know that what they are saying is a lie. As such, for effective face to face contact, eye contact is vital.

5.2 Use of the body.

As well as the face, the body also provide a rich source of information in the communication process.

(& often subconscious, e.g. often when on the telephone I wave my arms about & gesticulate, even though the other person cannot see me).

Posture, alongside facial expression, provides a strong visual cue for the listener as to whether there is any hidden message being communicated behind the words being spoken, as well as being an important part of assisting people to effectively vocalise. Slouching is often regarded as bring a sign of informality, which is appropriate in some circumstances and not others. During job interviews, for example, this would be inappropriate, and indicates a lack of commitment or serious intent. At home, conversing with the family, excessive in posture would be equally inappropriate,

Having mentioned eye contact previously as an indicator of sincerity, an additional factor in this is whether the communicators face each other or not. Not facing the person with whom we are talking indicates that we are not providing the message they are giving as being of sufficient import to warrant full attention. This is an important element in active listening. By facing in an alternative direction, we are indicating that other things are more important than the message being transmitted to us. It also is an indicator of distractions in the environment, which forms part of the noise which detracts from the communication process. As such, whether or not the communicating parties are facing each other provides a useful cue as to the relevance and importance of the communication to the parties.

The proximity of the communicating parties to each other also provides a useful indicator for the communication. Most people require a certain amount of ‘space’ around themselves (often called personal space). The lesser the space between the communicating parties, the more intimate the communication, and the more comfortable with each other the parties are. As such, you find that lovers are often seen in closer proximity to each other (often involving bodily contact) than with total strangers.

3.1 Consideration for effective verbal communication

In ensuring the effectiveness of verbal communication, a number of factors need to be considered ensuring that distortion and noise in the communication process are minimised. This is the responsibility of both the sender and the receiver of the communication, although following Aristotle’s view of the communication process, the sender needs to pay particular attention to these factors.

CLARITY – In other words, is the communication distinct and easily perceived. This is particularly related to the reduction of noise in the communication environment.

ACCURACY – Do we precisely encode the message being transmitted into appropriate symbols for the audience? This is appropriate in the context of reducing distortion in the communication process. Is the message unambiguous, and understood by both parties, is the terminology used appropriate for the audience, and so on. Even within supposedly the same language there can be differences depending on the region from which the parties come. As an example, consider the differences between UK English and American English. There is a poster in the arrival hall of London Heathrow airport that provides some ‘translations’ between these two forms of English. A Londoner would say ‘tube’. When an American would say ‘subway’. A Londoner would say ‘subway’ when the American would say ‘tunnel’. This can also lead to some embarrassing differences in words.

EMPATHY – In communicating a message to another person, in identifying with the audience, and so in easing the acceptance and understanding of the message, the sender needs to be able to understand the position and processes within the receiver of the

message. Does the sender appreciate the differences in perception and understanding of the recipient?

SINCERITY – If you do not sound as if you believe in the subject, then the audience will be unlikely to. If you are convinced about the validity of what you are saying, then your audience will usually give you a fair hearing. A good example of this is credence many people give to the storylines in television soap opera's. these stories are often presented with sincerity, and as a result, even though they are fiction, many people give them a credibility that perhaps they do not necessarily deserve.

RELAXATION – This is important for the sender of the communication, in that a relaxed speaker is often more coherent and clearer than a stressed speaker.

EYE CONTACT – This is important in establishing credibility to a verbal communication. In essence, eye contact increases the sincerity and credibility of the message being sent. If the sender is not prepared to establish eye contact with the recipient, he or she is conveying the image or impression that the words being spoken are less believable, because the lack of eye contact implies an unwillingness to be challenged and a lack of confidence in the message being spoken.

APPEARANCE – Does your appearance cause defensiveness on the part of listeners. Are you dressed appropriately for the audience's expectations? Too formal and you create barriers, too informal and you risk the audience not taking you seriously enough.

POSTURE – As with eye contact, posture forms an important part of body language in communication. One can often make assumptions about the message being spoken by the posture being assumed by the sender.

TONE – (inflection, or movement of your voice through the scales) These last two can be illustrated through a famous saying of Queen Victoria's. when she was told that she was to be Queen, she said "I will be good: Some have maintained that she really said "I will be? Good."

PITCH – This refers to the 'highness' or 'lowness' of the tone of the voice. The pitch and tone of the voice need varying during the course of the conversation for a number of reasons. Most importantly, it allows the speaker to highlight and emphasise various points in the message. It also creates variation in the speech. If the entire conversation is in a monotone or at a single pitch, the attention of the receiver is likely to wander, and as such, the receiver may well miss an important point being made, or may not give the message the appropriate credibility. In addition, the receiver may well treat each issue mentioned with equal weight, whereas the sender may well mean for different parts of the message to be treated with varying degrees of importance.

VOLUME – If any of you have read the 'Mr. Men ' series of Children's books you will know that there is a character called Mr. Noisy, who shouts every time he talk to people. In the end, the people in his village get so fed up with this that they decide to pretend they

cannot hear him. As such he shouts louder and louder, and the villagers seem to be able to hear him less and less. Eventually he gets the message and start speaking at a volume that they are comfortable with, and Mr. Noisy is reintegrated into village life. This illustrates a serious point about volume in speech. Too quiet, and the people you are speaking to will give up trying to hear, and so not take any notice of what is being said too loud, and the listeners will stop listening as they try to stop the volume irritating them. You will often see people cringe with a very loud noise. The same principle applies in speech.

You will notice that if you shout at people, they visible cringe. This is in part a defensive reaction to a perceived threat, and reflects itself in the communication in that people will see the shouted message as being a threat and so not treat it with the openness that they would otherwise give it at a more tolerable volume. This is not to say that shouting or a high volume is out of place in communication. Indeed, it may serve a very specific purpose in the communication. Notice any great orator at work, and you will see that their use of volume varies throughout the speech. Quieter to attract attention, and to get people concentrating on what is being said (although not for too long, associated non-verbal means of emphasis), although again not too loud as it then de-emphasises what is being said.

DICTION – Specifically, this refer to articulation (how you pronounce consonants) & enunciation (how you pronounce vowels). The classic example of this is Eliza Doolittle, the flower seller in Pygmalion, to whom Henry Higgins taught diction utilising the phrase “ The rain in Spain falls mainly on the plain” as it contains number of elements of articulation and enunciation which can be manipulated to produce different sounds, and when he displayed her in public she was assumed to be of noble breeding purely on the basic of the way in which she spoke.

ACCENT – This plays an important part in ensuring the clarity of the message. If speaking to someone from a different part of the country, the different accent (diction) can create barriers to the communication process in two main ways. Firstly, it may be difficult for the sender and the recipient to understand each other, and additionally, it may be difficult for the receiver may have certain perceptions and stereotypes attached to certain accents that create distortion in the communication environment by generating prejudice. As such, people with one accent may be treated more seriously than people with a different accent, even though they could be saying the same thing, purely on the basis of each other's perception of what the accent is conveying about the speaker.

SPEED – Speed within speech also affects the comprehension, clarity, understanding and ability to correctly act upon the information being conveyed in the message. For example, a common error of new lecturers is higher education is that the talk too quickly for their students to understand fully take in the information being conveyed in the lecture. Here, it is important for the speaker understand the reason for the talk. If it is important that the listener comprehends what is being said in its entirety and is expected to take notes, then the conversation would have to be at a slower pace than if it was merely a social conversation, where it is less important to recall every detail. In addition, too much speed can cause problems for the speaker by ‘tripping over’ the words being spoken.

One of the reasons for this is that we think faster than we speak. This is one of the cause of the speech defect of ‘cluttering’, where the speaker is unable to speak the words intended correctly because he or she is trying to get too many words out at the same time. In addition, many speakers attempt to speak quickly when they have something unpleasant to say, or if they feel that the message will not be well received. This often create even more problems, or may ask the speaker to repeat the message, which creates more embarrassment for the speaker than would have been the case if the message had been spoken clearly in the first place.

PAUSING AND BREATHING – In singing lessons, people are taught how to breathe effectively to ensure that the sounds generated are flowing, properly spaced, and has consistent pitch and volume. A complaint made some years ago about newscasters on the television was that they got their breathing wrong, and as such found that the volume, speed, and pitch of the sentences was different at the end than at the beginning, although it was not, meant to be. In addition, breathing creates a natural pause in the speech, which can totally alter the meaning of a sentence if applied incorrectly. For example, ‘all the people in London who are clever like eating chocolate’. This can either mean all the people in London are clever, and like chocolate or it can mean that all of the people in London like eating chocolate. There is a world of difference between saying all of the people in London are clever, and that some people in London are clever. This can lead to incorrect information being communicated if incorrect breathing is used. In addition, incorrect breathing can cause speech to become hurried, as the speaker attempts to get the entire sentence out before he or she runs out of breath. This can seriously hinder the ability to communicate, as high speed is difficult to understand and the speaker may leave out parts of words in the attempt to get them all out in time before running out of breath. This then reduces still further the ability to effectively communicate through speech.

ALERTNESS – For the speaker to have maximum impact on the audience, and to ensure that the speaker is able to concentrate on the various elements of the conversation and presentation, it is important for the speaker to be fully alert. This also enable the speaker to pick up the feedback from the recipient with greater ease, particularly the non-verbal communication .As such, the speaker is able to adapt the verbal communication as he or she is speaking. Despite all the preparation a speaker might make for a conversation, there a likely to be the need for some ‘fine-tuning to the message and presentation during the course of the delivery of the message, and an alert speaker will be able to implement these small changes more effectively and faster than if he or she was not alert.

PLEASANTNESS – A pleasant speaker is better received than an unpleasant speaker. The message is more likely to be listened to, be more likely to be acted upon, and the recipient is more likely to wish to deal with the speaker again than with an unpleasant speaker. In addition, unpleasant speaker can hinder the receiver from seeking feedback, and as a result, the message may not be appropriately acted upon as the speaker had intended. Indeed, the pleasant speaker is also likely to be in a position to obtain a deeper and more open response from the recipient of the message. This is a methods often used by chat-show hosts in

Interviewing guests, where by being pleasant, they encourage the guest to open up more, and as such they often obtain more information from the guest than if they adopted a more confrontational approach. A common mistake for people at this juncture is to confuse the difference between aggressiveness and assertiveness. Aggressiveness is about being confrontational, whereas assertiveness is about being confident in their approach to the communication, but is not aggressive unless the situation specifically calls for aggressiveness.

DISTINCTNESS – The sender needs to ensure that the message being transmitted is clearly perceptible and understandable, in order to enable the recipient to more closely follow what is being said. This relates to both the vocalising of the communication and to the terminology used.

EXPRESSIVENESS – The more expressive, varied illustrative and reinforced a message is, the more likely it is for the recipient to pay attention and retain interest in what is being said. Where this happens, the sender of the message is more likely to obtain a favourable response from the recipient, or at least to be given a better hearing by the recipient.