

## **SIGNIFICANCE OF LEARNING NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION**

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### **Abstract**

In this paper, an attempt has been made to analyze the importance of learning non-verbal communication for the students. Wordless communication depends upon decoding the sign language in the desired manner. Verbal communication becomes dull if the speaker has a listless face and awkward body language which makes the conversation boring and bizarre. Sometimes speakers' lackadaisical face creates confusion in judging his/her mood. This problem has been identified in the classroom among the students when they are unable to give the suitable or desired expressions. To perform this research, data have been collected from 100 students by using questionnaire method about the importance of learning non-verbal communication for them. It incorporates kinesics, proxemics, paralanguage, haptics, and chronemics. It is suggested that these cues should be used with great care in conversation. As improper use of sign language may spoil the originality and essence of the message and will create a barrier in getting a positive feedback from the receiver. The study revealed that students were unaware about the proper use of non-verbal cues, as a result, they were unable to present themselves properly during their academic presentation and job interview. Thus the findings reveal the importance of non-verbal communication and stressed upon the inclusion of its study as a requirement of present scenario.

**Keywords:** Non-Verbal Communication (NVC), kinesics, Proxemics, Paralanguage.

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Teaching is the most challenging job to perform in the classroom. A teacher has the biggest responsibility of teaching the importance of verbal as well as non-verbal communication and its usage. It is often taught to the students in the class that good communication is a key to success, but they rarely get to know the importance of wordless communication, which is equally important to learn. Communication is a way of sharing and exchanging ideas, knowledge, and thoughts from one person to another. But it may look unattractive without using facial expressions, gestures, hand and body movements which make conversation more interesting. These cues replace the words and interpret the human behavior and certain emotions through expressions. Most of the students are unaware with the fact that improper use of non-verbal communication may create a bad impression or may turn down their selection if these cues are not used carefully. Non-verbal communication includes the use of visual cues such as body language (kinesics), distance (proxemics) and physical environments/appearance, of voice (paralanguage) and of touch (haptics). It can also include chronemics (the use of time) and oculosics (eye contact and the actions of looking while talking and listening, frequency of glances, patterns of fixation, pupil dilation, and blink rate (<https://en.wikipedia.org>)).

## 2. MEANING OF NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION:

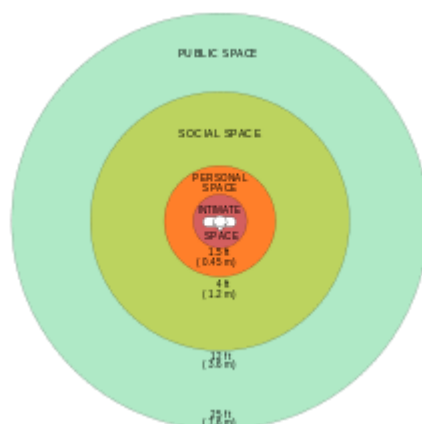
**Knapp & Hall (1992)** defined nonverbal communication as appearance, proxemics, body motion (gesture, posture, touching, facial expressions, eye behavior), and paralanguage. It includes signs and symbols that enable people to communicate with each other without using words. It depends on an individual that how he encodes and decodes the message. An individual encodes the message by using sign language, displaying emotions through various expressions, gestures, using symbols and posture. All such communication can be interpreted by decoding the sign language used by the sender. For example, affection and love can be expressed by smile and touch.

## 3. TYPES OF NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION

In this paper following types of non-verbal communication have been discussed and taken into account to perform the study:

**3.1 Kinesics:** Kinesics is the study of body movement. It also can be defined as communicating through various movements of body parts. Ray Birdwhistell, an anthropologist who wished to study how people communicate through posture, gesture, stance, and movement. (**Birdwhistell, 1952**). His ideas over several decades were synthesized and resulted in the book *Kinesics and Context*. (**Birdwhistell, 1970**). (Interest in kinesics specifically and nonverbal behavior generally was popularized in the late 1960s and early 1970s by such popular mass market (nonacademic) publications as *How to Read a Person Like a Book* (**Nierenberg et. al. 1971**). Part of Birdwhistell's work involved filming people in social situations and analyzing them to show elements of communication that were not clearly seen otherwise. One of his most important projects was *The Natural History of an Interview*, a long-term interdisciplinary collaboration including Gregory Bateson, Frieda Fromm-Reichmann, Norman A. McQuown, Henry W. Brosin and others (<https://en.wikipedia.org>). Drawing heavily on, Birdwhistell argued that all movements of the body have meaning and that nonverbal behavior has a grammar that can be analyzed in similar terms to spoken language. Thus, a "kineme" is "similar to a phoneme because it consists of a group of movements which are not identical, but which may be used interchangeably without affecting social meaning."

**3.2 Proxemics:** The term Proxemics refers to the study of space we use in communication. Edward T. Hall the cultural anthropologist described human relationship in terms of four kinds of distances (<https://en.wikipedia.org>). Following diagram showing distance in radius and meter depending upon the intimacy between the people:



- Intimate Zone is a space which we reserve for ourselves. In this space, an individual doesn't allow everyone to intrude. Allowing anybody in personal space depends on an individual's will.
- Personal Zone: here we allow close friends and family members.
- Social Zone is for familiar people or those who are acquainted.
- Public Zone one maintains and use for public speaking. The proximity varies with culture. The rate of acceptability may vary from Asian to Western countries.

## 3.3 Haptics:

Haptics is a study of communication through touch. Haptic communication includes handshake, high five,

kiss, holding hand etc. These gestures may vary culture to culture. Studies have shown that touch communicates distinct emotions such as anger, fear, happiness, sympathy, love and gratitude (Hertenstein et.al. 2006).

### 3.4. Paralanguage and Chronemics:

Paralanguage is a systematic study of expressing emotions with the help of different aspects of voice. It includes rate of speech, Pause, volume, pitch, intonation etc. Chronemics refers to the accurate timing and pause in communication.

**4. Research Question:** This study has taken following questions to collect data to analyze:

- What problems students do face in the classroom if they never have studied about non-verbal communication?
- What problems students do face during campus selection if they don't pay heed to the importance of non-verbal communication when teacher was teaching in the classroom?

### 5. Methodology:

To perform this study quantitative method has been adopted to collect the data from 100 students pursuing engineering programme. They were divided into two groups of 50. Group A contains newly admitted students and group B has senior students who after spending the time period of 6 semesters in the institute have started taking part in campus placement. A set of close-ended questions had been distributed to the respondents. The collected data is presented in the form of table:

**Table 1. Group A (50 Respondents)**

| S. No | Problematic Gestures | Yes | No | Percentage |
|-------|----------------------|-----|----|------------|
| 1.    | Kinesics             | 37  | 13 | 74%        |
| 2.    | Paralanguage         | 43  | 07 | 86%        |
| 3.    | Proxemics            | 41  | 09 | 82%        |
| 4.    | Haptics              | 30  | 20 | 60%        |

This table indicates that newly admitted students found it problematic to understand the non-verbal gestures. But the most challenging is paralanguage where 86% students have failed to understand the communication due to either language barrier or articulation, intonation, and rate of speech.

**Table 2. Group B (50 Respondents)**

| S. No | Problematic Gestures | Yes | No | Percentage |
|-------|----------------------|-----|----|------------|
| 1.    | Kinesics             | 16  | 34 | 32%        |
| 2.    | Paralanguage         | 22  | 28 | 44%        |
| 3.    | Proxemics            | 10  | 40 | 20%        |
| 4.    | Haptics              | 05  | 45 | 10%        |

**Table 2** indicates that the senior students have not faced severe problem in decoding and encoding these cues like the junior students. Very few have problems in encoding the kinesics may be because they have performance phobia or they have etiquette problem. Paralanguage is difficult for them also which is indicating that this barrier can easily hamper their growth.

## **6. Discussion:**

Non-verbal cues are important to learn, it was admitted by the students who faced problem due to the absence of its knowledge. The collected data in Table A and Table B clearly indicate the problem. Table A indicates that the problem is more severe. 74% students have admitted that they have problem in understanding kinesics the facial expressions, eye contact, various emotions like joy, sorrow, irritation. They failed to decode the message and also failed to use the proper gesture when such cues should have been used. Secondly, they have problem in understanding the lecture because of the pitch, rhythm, intonation, rate of speech and verbal ability of the speaker. It doesn't mean that the sender is always a good speaker, he may have a weird accent or regional tone which can create difficulty in comprehending the message. As the problem discussed with them separately after seeing their poor grades it was shocking to know that some of the students have medium problem (medium of instruction). When they switched the medium from regional or mother tongue to English they are unable to comprehend the subject content. Therefore the percentage of the students who faced problem in paralanguage is too high i.e., 86%. In the matter of proximity, they have admitted (82%) that they have no idea about the distance to be maintained with their seniors or higher authority and teachers. They do not know that how much distance should be maintained in each relationship. Sometimes they face awkward situation due to the poor understanding about the term proximity. The lowest percentage (60%) is of Haptics and mostly uses it properly. It has come through the culture they grew in; they have not learned this from any other source.

Table B indicating the data of the senior students who already were aware of non-verbal cues. Now the respondents percentage shown in the table who feel difficulty in understanding the NVC are those who either have not taken the communication classes seriously during their semester when this subject was being offered or those who gave less importance to the subject like communication study and behavioral science. Such students felt that they have difficulty in presenting themselves properly during recruitment and selection process. As one student told that during GD he avoided maintaining his hand movements and eye contact with others as a result, he was not selected for the final round as his posture was so unwelcoming and he could not maintain the proximity with his fellow group member. Overall analysis of Table B indicates that there were few students who need to learn or improve their behaviour as per the situation. But above all paralanguage is most challenging cue for the students where they could not understand the questions due to the accent of HR person or could not maintain the required rate of speech while speaking. It has come up as a biggest barrier and 44% senior students admitted their failure owing to paralanguage.

## **7. CONCLUSION**

On the basis of the findings of the study it was concluded that apt or inapt use of non-verbal cues can please, displease anybody so easily. Therefore, it is teachers' responsibility to teach the students about NVC and students also need to be responsible while studying interpersonal communication. "A good teacher is a good listener, not only to words being spoken, but also to silent messages that signal agreement/disagreement, attention, inattention, interest/boredom, and the desire of the student to be heard" (Miller, 2005b). A majority respondents realized that facial expressions are able to convey love as well as hatred so they need to be careful in displaying the emotions with gestures. They found that proper use of kinesics can be helpful at various platforms. It is helpful during presentation and GD. The study can be concluded with the fact that majority of respondents found the study topic very helpful in improving their overall personality to succeed in their personal and professional life. It helped them in showing the damage caused by taking this aspect of communication lightly.

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[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nonverbal\\_communication](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nonverbal_communication)

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kinesics>

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Proxemics>