NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION

"What you say without saying a word"

B. Com 3rd Semester
VAC: Business Etiquette and Soft Skills



Dr. Raktima Hujuri
HoD & Assistant Professor,
Department of English
West Guwahati Commerce College

Learning Objectives

By the end of this presentation, students should be able to:

Understand

Define non-verbal communication and explain its role in everyday and professional life.

Identify

Recognise common forms such as facial expressions, gestures, posture, eye contact and voice cues.

Apply

Use appropriate non-verbal behaviour in interviews, meetings, presentations and customer interactions.

What Is Non-Verbal Communication?

Non-verbal communication is the process of conveying meaning without relying mainly on spoken or written words.

Words	Non-verbal cue	Possible message
“I’m listening.”	Facing the speaker, nodding and maintaining comfortable eye contact.	Attention, interest and respect—depending on the context.

Verbal vs Non-Verbal Communication

Verbal Communication

- Uses words
- Spoken or written
- “I am interested.”
- “I am confident.”
- “I am listening.”

Non-Verbal Communication

- Uses body/behaviour
- Mostly visual/behavioural
- Leaning forward, eye contact
- Upright posture
- Nodding and attentive expression

Why Does It Matter?

First impressions

Appearance, greeting and posture influence how we are perceived.

Trust and credibility

Consistent words and body language can make a message seem more sincere.

Relationships

Attentive expressions and respectful distance support rapport.

Professional success

Interviews, teamwork, leadership and customer service rely on non-verbal skills.

Major Types of Non-Verbal Communication

Kinesics

Body movement, gestures, posture and facial expressions

Oculesics

Eye behaviour and eye contact

Proxemics

Use of personal space and physical distance

Haptics

Communication through touch, such as a handshake

Paralanguage

Tone, pitch, pace, volume and pauses

Chronemics

Use of time, punctuality and response time

Appearance & artefacts

Dress, grooming and objects that shape impressions

Silence

Pauses or absence of speech, interpreted in context

Body Language: Face, Gestures and Posture

Facial expressions

A smile may signal warmth; a frown may signal concern. Read the whole situation, not one expression.

Gestures

Use natural, purposeful hand movements. Avoid distracting or aggressive gestures.

Posture

An upright but relaxed posture can convey readiness. Turning away or slouching may be read as disengagement.

Eye Contact, Space and Touch

Eye contact

Use natural, intermittent eye contact to show attention. Avoid staring. Expectations differ across individuals and cultures.

Personal space

Respect physical distance. Adjust to the setting, relationship, accessibility needs and the other person's comfort.

Touch and greetings

A handshake may be appropriate in some settings, but never assume everyone is comfortable with touch. Offer alternatives.

Paralanguage: The Voice Beyond Words

The same sentence can convey different meanings depending on the voice.

Tone

Warm and respectful can sound welcoming; a sarcastic or sharp tone can create tension.

Pace and pauses

A steady pace helps understanding. Pauses give listeners time to process key points.

Volume and pitch

Speak clearly and audibly without shouting. Vary emphasis naturally to hold attention.

Appearance, Time and Silence

Appearance

Clean, suitable and context-appropriate dress and grooming can communicate care and professionalism. Expensive clothing is not required.

Time

Punctuality, preparation, and timely responses often signal reliability and respect for others' time.

Silence

Silence may show reflection, disagreement, respect or discomfort. Check meaning rather than making assumptions.

Non-Verbal Communication at Work

Job interview

Sit attentively, greet respectfully, listen without interrupting and use a calm voice.

Meeting

Face the speaker, avoid checking your phone and signal turns without dominating.

Presentation

Look around the room, use purposeful gestures and keep a clear speaking pace.

Customer service

Use an attentive expression, open posture and a patient tone—even under pressure.

Culture, Context and Individual Differences

A cue does not have a universal meaning.

- Eye contact, gestures, silence and personal space can vary across cultures and situations.
- Disability, neurodiversity, anxiety, language differences and personal preference can affect non-verbal behaviour.
- Do not infer honesty, confidence or respect from one cue alone.
- Look for patterns, consider context and ask a polite clarifying question when needed.

Common Mistakes and How to Improve

Common mistakes

- Looking at a phone while someone speaks
- Interrupting or turning away
- Overusing gestures or speaking too loudly
- Standing too close or assuming touch is welcome
- Treating one cue as proof of someone's feelings

Ways to improve

- Practise active listening
- Keep posture relaxed and attentive
- Match voice volume to the setting
- Observe feedback and adjust respectfully
- Ask for feedback; practise interviews and presentations

Classroom Activity: Read the Situation

What message might the behaviour send? What else would you need to know?

Scenario A

A student looks down while listening to a teacher.

Scenario B

A candidate gives short answers while sitting very still in an interview.

Scenario C

A team member checks their phone during a meeting.

Scenario D

A customer speaks calmly but uses a tense facial expression.

Quick Recap

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. Non-verbal communication includes body movement, eye behaviour, space, touch, voice, appearance, time and silence.
2. It can reinforce, replace or contradict spoken words.
3. In professional settings, attentive listening, respectful boundaries and suitable vocal delivery matter.
4. Interpret cues in context; avoid stereotypes and check assumptions.
5. These skills improve with awareness, practice and feedback.

Thank you • Questions?

Suggested References and Further Reading

- Guffey, M. E., & Loewy, D. (2021). Essentials of business communication (11th ed.). Cengage.
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- Matsumoto, D., Frank, M. G., & Hwang, H. C. (Eds.). (2013). Nonverbal communication: Science and applications. SAGE Publications.