**Lecture 8.**

**NON-VERBAL LANGUAGE IN INTERCULTURAL BUSINESS COMMUNICATION**

**The aim:** to viewcharacteristics of non-verbal communication; to make a connection between verbal and non-verbal communication; to understand the functions of non-verbal communication.

**Plan**

1. Characteristics of non-verbal communication.

2.The connection between verbal and non-verbal communication.

3. Understanding the functions of non-verbal communication.

**Keywords:** verbal and non-verbal communication, paralanguage, functions of nonverbal communication, non-verbal behavior, 3Vs, identity.

1. **Characteristics of non-verbal communication.**

“If language is the key to the core of a culture, nonverbal communication is indeed the heart of each culture. Nonverbal communication is omnipresent throughout a culture – it is everywhere” (S.Ting-Toomey). We need to begin our study of *nonverbal communication* by defining this term. At first this might seem like a simple task. If *non* means “not” and *verbal* means “words,” then *nonverbal communication* appears to mean “communication without words.” This is a good starting point after we distinguish between vocal communication (by mouth) and verbal communication (with words). After this distinction is made, it becomes clear that some nonverbal messages are vocal, and some are not. Likewise, although many verbal messages are vocal, some aren’t. Keeping this fact in mind, we arrive at a working definition of **nonverbal communication:** “oral and nonoral messages expressed by other than linguistic means”.

**Types of communication**

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| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Vocal communication** | **Nonvocal communication** |
| **Verbal Communication** | Spoken words | Written words |
| **Nonverbal Communication** | Tone of voice, sighs, screams, vocal qualities,  (loudness, pitch, and so on). | Gestures, movement, appearance, facial expression, and so on. |

It’s virtually impossible to not communicate nonverbally. Suppose you were instructed to avoid communicating any messages at all. What would you do? Close your eyes? Withdraw into a ball? Leave the room? Of course, we don’t always intend to send nonverbal messages. Unintentional nonverbal behaviors differ from intentional ones. For example, we often stammer, blush, frown, and sweat without meaning to do so. Some theorists argue that unintentional behavior may provide information, but it shouldn’t count as communication. Others draw the boundaries of nonverbal communication more broadly, suggesting that even unconscious and unintentional behavior conveys messages and thus is worth studying as communication. We take the broad view here because, whether or not our nonverbal behavior is intentional, others recognize it and take it into account when responding to us.

According to Ray Birdwhistell, more than 65 per cent of a conversation is communicated through nonverbal cues. Professor of Psychology Albert Mehrabian’s research provided the basis for the widely quoted **over-simplified statistics** dealing with effectiveness of spoken communication. In 1970s A. Mehrabian developed a model, in which he demonstrated that only 7% of what we communicate consists of the literal content of the message. The use of our voice, such as tone, intonation and volume, take up 38% and as much as 55% of communication consists of body language. This 7 – 38 – 55 is still much used today. In his studies, Mehrabian came to two conclusions. Firstly, that there are basically three elements in any face-to-face communication: **words**, **tone of voice** and **facial expression**. Secondly, the non-verbal elements are particularly important for communicating feelings and attitude, especially when they are incongruent: if words disagree with the tone of voice and facial expression, people tend to believe the tonality and facial expression. According to A. Mehrabian, these three elements account differently for our liking for the person who puts forward a message concerning their feelings: Total Liking = 7% Verbal Liking + 38% Vocal Liking + 55% Facial Liking. They are often abbreviated as the “**3 Vs**” for **Verbal**, **Vocal** &**Visual**. For effective and meaningful communication, these three parts of the message need to support each other – they have to be “congruent”. In case of any “incongruence”, the receiver of the message might be irritated by two messages coming from two different channels, giving cues in two different directions. R. Porter and L. Samovar point out that nonverbal communication is culturally based; thus, a particular gesture or action symbolizes only the meaning a particular culture has attached to it. Members of a culture recognize those realities that have a meaning or importance for them and interpret nonverbal experiences through their own personal frame of reference. Failure to

recognize observable nonverbal signs and symbols or interpret them correctly can lead to a breakdown in communication (Samovar, Porter). In order to enter into a new culture and communicate accurately, we need to identify the rules, be aware of the underlying cultural values and understand the connection between the functions and interpretations of nonverbal behavior (Ting-Toomey).

The values, norms and beliefs of a group are reflected in their patterns of verbal and nonverbal behavior. Nonverbal behavior often carries a heavy affective load, but the meaning of an emotional gesture varies from one culture to another. E.g., Japanese smile when they are angry, feel sad, or fail, while Americans smile to signal joy, happiness and contentment.

**2.The connection between verbal and nonverbal communication.** In the USA there is a saying “*Actions speak louder than words*”. The term nonverbal communication, or what Hall (1959) calls “the silent language” refers to all types of nonverbal interaction including **paralanguage** – the use of the body language – the use of the voice to make sounds that are not words. This includes features such as pitch, stress, volume, and rate of delivery. Paralanguage even takes into consideration the contextual elements found in human interaction (Damen). These elements include body movement, the use of time and space, and whatever other nonlinguistic elements help to get message across. These behaviours are learned and vary cross-culturally. Paralinguistic cues are also used to manage conversation. These cues include silence, pauses, the backchannel behavior such as “uh huh” and “yeah”, spoken by the listeners to indicate that they are paying attention to what is being said. But there are many subtleties in the use of these cues. For example, a drop in pitch “Excuse me” in English can indicate anger, frustration, anxiety, or

impatience, whereas speaking the same words with a drawn out or slight rising tone shows friendliness or a relaxed attitude.

**3. Understanding the functions of nonverbal communication.** Nonverbal communication does not occur in a vacuum. It does not exist independently of

meaning. When we use a smile, a shrug or a “hmmm?” response, we do so in order to convey meaning and emotions and often to achieve a particular purpose. For instance, if a teacher would like to get her students involved in a classroom activity she/he would add a smile of encouragement as she gives her verbal instructions. Her/his goal is to signal students that she/he is encouraging them to take risks and not be overly concerned about the failure. Such a signal can help to achieve more positive results in terms of student involvement rather than giving an instruction to the students without any smile. However, cross-culturally a teacher’s smile can

present a problem, e.g., in Japan a smile can signal anger, sadness or failure.

Nonverbal communication can vary **not only in use** but also **in function**.

DeCapua and Wintergerst (2004), Ekman and Friesen (1969), Patterson (1990) identify the most important functions of nonverbal behaviour:

- expression of emotions,

- reinforcement of verbal messages,

- substitution for verbal communication,

- contradiction of verbal messages,

- management of communicative situations,

- conveyance of messages in ritualized forms.

Stella Ting-Toomey (1999) identifies five functions of nonverbal communication:

- **The 1st function of nonverbal communication is to reflect our identity**. StellaTing-Toomey likens nonverbal cues to “name badges” that we use to alert others about our group memberships. Unspoken signals such as our choice of clothes or jewelry, our **vocalic –** voice qualifiers such as accent, pitch, volume, articulation, resolution and tempo – and our vocalizations – sounds and noise such as laughing and crying, moaning and groaning, yawning, and hesitation or silence – send the world a message about who we are. The person receiving these messages forms attitudes and impressions based on them.

- **The 2nd function of nonverbal communication is the expression of emotions and attitudes.** Emotions and attitudes can be communicated to the listener through **kinesics**, which are facial expressions and gestures, and vocalics, or voice qualifiers. These cues and their meanings vary from culture to culture. The messages sent and received depend on what cues the speaker and listener have been exposed to and how their culture has conditioned facial expressions that indicate the emotions of anger, distrust, fear, happiness, sadness and surprise. In Japan speakers are less likely to express emotions through facial expressions. It is

easy to see how miscommunication can happen if speakers are not familiar with the way that facial expressions are interpreted in another culture**.**

- **The 3rd function of nonverbal communication is conversation management.**

A study of conversational management during business negotiations revealed that Brazilians tend to interrupt twice as much as Americans or Japanese. The French also interrupt, but only when the conversation has reached a certain level of informality. In Asia it is a signal of respect to avoid sustained direct eye contact with the elderly or with any high-status individual. The opposite, however, is true in the US where failure to make eye contact when speaking to another person is considered impolite.

- **The 4th and the 5th functions of nonverbal behavior are forming impressions and creating interpersonal attraction, otherwise known as trying to make a good impression.** We are culturally conditioned to examine the posture and facial expressions of others to learn more about them. Many people form the first impressions when meeting individuals before anyone has even had a chance to say anything. Facial expressions and posture are frequently cited in books about international communication as areas requiring special attention when communicating to those from other cultures. We also “read” the nonverbal communications of others to decide whether we like them and would like to spend more time with them. Due to the fact that so much of our interaction is nonverbal and this symbol system includes many kinds of communication, Julia T. Wood distinguishes ten forms of nonverbal behavior that help us create and interpret the shared meanings:

- Kinesics (face and body motion);

- Haptics (touch);

- Physical appearance;

- Olfactics (smell);

- Artifacts (personal objects);

- Proxemics (personal space);

- Environmental factors;

- Chronemics (perception and use of time);

- Paralanguage (vocal qualities);

- Silence.

**Kinesics** refers to body position and body motions including those of the face. **Our bodies communicate a great deal about what we see ourselves**. A speaker who **stands** erect and appears confident announces self-assurance, whereas someone who slouches and shuffles seems to be not very confident of himself/herself. Our **moods** are communicated with our body posture and motion. For example, someone who walks quickly with a resolute facial expression appears more determined than someone who saunters along with an unfocused gaze. We **sit** rigidly when we are nervous and adopt a relaxed posture when we feel at ease. Audiences show interest by alert body posture. **Body postures** and gestures may signal whether we are open to interaction. To signal that we would like to interact, we look at others and sometimes smile. We use **our gestures** to express how we feel about others and situations. Our **faces** are intricate messengers. Our **eyes** can shoot daggers of anger, issue challenges, express skepticism, or radiate love. Houman A. Sadri and Madelyn Flammia point out eye contact as a separate form of communication and call it **Oculesics**. According to them, “eye contact is a significant component of communication and may reveal a great deal of information to a mindful communicator”. A. Sadri and M. Flammia distinguish various functions of gazing: regulatory, monitoring, cognitive and expressive. The **regulatory function** is when eye contact is used to initiate communication, to signal turntaking in conversations, and to end a communication encounter. The **monitoring function** of eye contact has to do with attentiveness and interest during a communication encounter. When engaged in a conversation, individuals may look at each other as a signal of attention and to monitor their partner’s response to what they are saying. They also use their gaze as a way to encourage the speaker to continue, the nonverbal equivalent to saying, “That’s interesting. Tell me more”.

The **cognitive function** is the relationship of eye movement to the processing of information. During conversations, individuals may avert their eyes when processing complex information or when reflecting upon what has been said.

The **expressive function** is the relationship of the eyes and eye movement to the expression of emotions. Generally, the role of eye movements in expressing emotions is examined as part of the facial expression. Poets call the eyes the “windows to the soul”, as they communicate complex messages about how we feel and how we look at others: if we judge their emotions, judge what they say or consider them to be confident. Universally, a direct eye contact is not regarded as positive. For example, among traditional Hasidic Jews, boys are taught not to look into women’s eyes.

**Haptics** is the term for nonverbal communication involving physical touch. Many communication scholars believe that touching and being touched are essential to healthy life (Ackerman; Whitman). In disturbed families, parents sometimes push children away and handle them harshly, nonverbally signaling rejection. Conversely, researchers have learned that babies who are massaged thrive more than babies who are touched less (Mwakalye & De Angelis). R. Lekavičienė points out that the interpretation of the meaning touching is directly associated with the parts of the body that are being touched. Research suggests that the concept of touching depends upon culture and sex. It is proved that French people have a habit of touching each other approximately 110 times per hour (Lekavičienė) while Lithuanians try to avoid touching each other. Compared to

men, women are more likely to engage in touch to show liking and intimacy (Andersen) whereas men are more likely than women to use touch to assert power and control (Jhally and Katz).

**Physical Appearance.** Western culture places an extremely high value on physical appearance and on specific aspects of appearance. J. T. Wood emphasizes our first notice of obvious physical qualities such as sex, skin colour and size. According to the scientist, based on physical qualities, we may draw conclusions about others’ personalities. Although these associations may have no factual basis, they can affect personal and social relationships as well as decisions about hiring, placement, and promotion. Cultures prescribe ideals for physical form, and these vary across cultures. Western cultural ideals today emphasize thinness in women and muscularity and height in men (Davison and Birch; Lamb and Brown; Levin and Kilbourne). The cultural ideal of slimness in women leads many women to become preoccupied with dieting and other means or weight control. The general cultural standard for attractiveness is modified by ethnicity and socioeconomic class. For example, traditional African societies perceive full-figured bodies as symbols of health, prosperity and wealth, and all of which are desirable (Bocella). Physical appearance includes physiological characteristics, such as eye colour and height, as well as ways in which people manage, or even alter, their physical appearance.

**Clothing and Physical Adornments.** The old saying “You can’t judge a book by its cover” has been around for a very long time, and yet, we do just that all the time, both within our own culture and across cultures, we tend to react to others, at least initially, based on their physical appearance. Would you find it odd if one of your group-mates consistently showed up on university campus dressed in a suit and tie? If your parents started dressing the same way your favourite rock star does? If the minister of the country dyed his/her hair green? Maybe you have experienced some of these occurrences and maybe you have even taken them in your stride. This point is, though that generally we have **Clothing.** The clothing that we put on is a statement about who we are or in some cases who we would like to be, whether it is a dress designed by a top Paris designer or the turban worn by a Sikh. Although the business suit and tie can be seen in cities all around the world, there are still many cultures that retain their traditional ethnic dress. As with any aspect of culture, it is important to realize that what we see on the surface, whether it will be an African dashiki is a reflection of a much deeper aspect of the wearer’s culture. In some cultures in the Middle East, a strong emphasis on modesty requires that women cover their bodies completely from head to toe. The Arab culture’s emphasis on modesty for women is so great that young girls are not allowed to take swimming classes because they would have to expose their bodies to do so. In some cultures, certain body parts have to be covered by a head garment called *yarmulke* or *Kippah.* The yarmulke is worn by Jews as a sign of respect for God and an acknowledgment of God's presence above. It is also viewed as a device to mark the division between Earth and Heaven. Many members of the Jewish religion continue to wear the yarmulke; however, in spite of their faith, many do not. In some cultures formality and conservatism values to the extent that all businessmen are expected to wear the same “uniform” of a dark suit with dark shoes and socks and a plain shirt. Nurses and doctors usually wear white and often drape stethoscopes around their necks; many executives carry briefcases, whereas students more often tote backpacks. White-collar professionals tend to wear tailored outfits and dress shoes, whereas blue-collar workers often dress in jeans or uniforms and boots. The military requires uniforms that define individuals as members of the group. In addition, stripes, medals, and insignia signify rank and

accomplishments. Similarly in collective cultures, like Japan, the emphasis is social harmony leads to very conservative dress; this conservatism in dress is seen as a way to prevent nonconformist behavior. Most school children in Japan wear uniforms and corporate executives in Japanese companies wear the same “company uniform” of a dark business suit. Of course, within cultures there may be variations in dress among different subcultures, socioeconomic groups, and age groups. However, the important point to remember is that seemingly superficial differences in attire may in fact be related to cultural values that are central to a particular group; these values may include conformity, modesty, social status, conservatism, or the right to free expression. The importance placed on the “right” brand of athletic shoes in many grade schools across the United States is a good example of the power of clothing to ensure “in-group” status and also of the price of nonconformity. Although the American culture is fiercely proud of the individual’s freedoms, they tend to be surprisingly conformist in the matter of what is considered the “in” thing to wear. We need to be mindful of the reasons for the different clothing worn by individuals from other cultures. If we are, we will learn about much more than fashion. We will learn about deep levels of the cultures. As we learn about the clothing worn by other cultures, we need to be careful to avoid stereotyping members of other cultures based on their dress.

**Physical adornments or Artifacts.** In addition to our clothing, there are many other physical adornments that we use as a means of non-verbal communication. These physical ornaments include **tattoos**, **piercings, hairstyle,**

**make-up.** In some cases, the illustrated physical ornaments may represent solidarity and conformity within one’s culture. In other cases, these same adornments may be worn as a symbol of rebellion against the dominant culture and may represent membership in a co-cultural group. In general, the impetus towards conformity in one’s physical appearance is much more likely to be found among members of collectivistic cultures. By contrast, individualistic cultures are much

more likely to tolerate and even encourage nonconformist expressions of the self through clothing and other physical adornments. However, even within individualistic cultures, many instances of conformity in dress can be found within the business world and as an expression of socioeconomic status. J. T. Wood attributes artifacts to personal objects that we use to announce our identities and personalize our environment. More women wear make-up and jewelry. Women are also more likely than men to wear form-fitting clothes and high-heeled shoes. Men’s clothing is looser and less binding, and it includes pockets for wallets, change, keys and so forth. In contrast, women’s clothing often doesn’t include pockets, so women need purses to hold their personal items. S. Gosling (2008) refers to physical adornments as “identity” clams, which give signals about how we want others to perceive us and also remind ourselves of who we are.

**Proxemics and Personal Space. Proxemics** refers to space and how we use it. The classic research on proxemics was done by Edward Hall in 1968. At the time, E. Hall reported that every culture has norms for using space and for how close people should be to one another. According to Griffin’s interpretation, Hall believes all cultures are rooted in a common biology, therefore, he used studies of animal behavior to discover how humans would act. For instance, animals are territorial. Some mark their space with urine to stake a claim for privacy. Hall indicates that people use furniture, walls, and fences to accomplish the same purpose. Also, he maintains that animals respond in two distinct ways when they feel threatened-flight or fight. Distance is the critical factor.

Beasts are unconcerned with potential intruders that remain outside an imaginary ring which marks the zone of threat. Cross that unseen line, and the animal will flee. There’s an inner circle of space that the animal will defend against all interlopers. If by speed or guile an intruder manages to penetrate that perimeter of defense before being noticed, most creatures will instinctively attack. People also have boundaries that mark their personal space. It’s as if we walk around in an invisible bubble. Those with whom we are intimate may enter into the sphere without harm to either party. Invasion by others causes distress. Because of our animal nature, we all have a zone of personal space, but the area of personal space differs greatly from culture to culture. E. Hall describes Arabs as a “contact” people whose ego is deep within the body. To touch another is no offense. He claims that there are no Arabic words for privacy or rape. Josef meant no disrespect; he was merely making an unconscious adjustment to establish an interpersonal distance that his culture held as proper. Hall also regards Latins and Southern Europeans as living in a contact culture. The United States is a “noncontact” culture. According to E. T. Hall American ego extends approximately a foot and a half out from their body. They feel an aversion to casual touch and resent spatial intrusion. Given the cultural background, a retreat in the hotel lobby seems like the right move. Asians and Northern Europeans share our distaste for indiscriminate contact. Hall’s bottom line advice for the international traveler is a corollary of an old adage: When in Rome, stand as the Romans stand. Hall has made a first attempt to determine the limits of American

proxemic zones. He categorizes distance as *intimate, personal, social, or public*. Since we aren’t born with a built-in yardstick, he also details how we use our sense receptors to gauge the space between us.

Not surprisingly, the boundaries fall at points of sensory shift. He acknowledges that he did his research on a small group of friends who were upper-middle-class Eastern professionals, so you’ll want to take care not to consider his results the final word. Unfortunately, continued reiteration of his classification system makes it seem that these distances are set in stone. They’re not.

**Intimate Distance** (0 to 1,5 feet / 45cm). This is the distance of playful wrestling and lovemaking. Enforced closeness in crowded elevators doesn’t count; Hall is talking about the voluntarily selected gap between people who are drawn to each other. At this close range, vision is distorted and any vocalization is a whisper, moan, or grunt. Our main ways of judging the intervening space are through body heat, smell, and touch.

**Personal Distance** (up to 4 feet / 1,2 m). Here we lose the sense of body heat and all but the most powerful odors. Eyesight begins to focus, and vocalization comes into play. Although only ritualized touch is typical, the other person is still at arm’s length, available to be grasped, held, or shoved away. Where a person stands within this range shows the closeness of the relationships.

**Social Distance** (up to 12 feet / 3,7 m). This is the zone of impersonal transaction. We now have to rely solely on what we can see and hear. By the middle of the range, the eye can focus on an entire face. When the distance is more than eight feet, it’s OK to ignore another’s presence and it’s easy to disengage from a conversation.

**Public Distance** (from 25 feet / 7,6 m to infinity). Once you’re this far out, you can no longer pick up subtle nuances of meaning from the face or tone of voice. The eye can take in the whole body at a glance. It’s the distance of the lecture hall, mass meetings, and interactions with powerful figures until such time as they bid you to come closer. Although most cultures recognize the different types of spatial relationships, they do not all assign the same distances to the four types.

**Environmental Factors.** Environmental factors are elements of setting that affect how we feel, think, and act. We feel more relaxed in rooms with comfortable chairs than in rooms with stiff, formal furniture. A recent study found that colour affects cognitive functions. Red stimulates accuracy, recall and attention to details whereas blue stimulates creativity (Belluck). Restaurants use environmental features to control how long people spend eating. For example, low lights, comfortable chairs or booths, soft music often are part of the environment. On the other hand, fast food eateries have hard plastic booths and bright lights, which encourage diners to eat and move on. Studies show that fast music in restaurants speeds up the pace of eating: on average, people eat 3.2 mouthfuls a minute when the background music is slow and 5.1 mouthfuls a minute when music with a faster tempo is played.

In the same way that restaurants and other public places use environmental factors to influence mood and behavior, we choose colours, furniture arrangements, lighting, and other objects to create the atmosphere we desire in our home.

**Chronemics.** Chronemics refers to how we perceive and use time to define identities and interaction. We use time to negotiate and convey status (Levine and Norenzayan). In Western societies, there seems to be an unwritten but widely understood cultural rule stipulating that people with high status can keep people with less status waiting. On the contrary, people with low status are expected to be punctual. Subordinates are expected to report punctually to the meetings, but

bosses are allowed to be tardy. Chronemics expresses cultural attitudes toward time. In some cultures, people saunter whereas in others they dash from place to place. In some cultures business is conducted quickly by staying on task whereas in other cultures it is conducted more slowly by intermingling and social interaction. According to a study of a pace of life, the countries with the fastest pace of life are Switzerland (No 1), Ireland, Germany, and Japan. The countries with the slowest pace of life are Mexico, Indonesia, Brazil, and El Salvador. The United States appeared to be right in the middle (Levine and Norenzayan, 1999).

Western societies value time and its cousin, speed (Bertman, 1998; Calero, 2005; Schwartz, 1989). Everyday expressions like these: “You’re wasting my time”; “This new software programme will save time”; “That mistake cost me three hours”; “I’ve invested a lot of time in this class”; “I can’t afford to go out tonight”, “I can make up for lost time by using a shortcut”, “I’m running out of time” indicate the value place on time.

According to J. T. Wood, however, many countries have more relaxed attitudes toward time and punctuality. In many South American countries, it is normal to come to meeting or classes after the announced time of starting, and it is not assumed that people will leave when the scheduled time for ending arrives. In the Philippines, punctuality has never been particularly values, but that maybe changing. The Philippine Department of Education just launched a 10-year campaign to instill in students the value of being on time (Overland, 2009). Chronemics also involves expectations of time, which are influenced by social norms. For example, you expect a class to last 50 or 75 minutes. Several minutes before the end of a class period, students often close their notebooks and start gathering their belongings, signaling the teacher that time is up.

**Paralanguage** is communication that is vocal but not actual words. Paralanguage includes sounds, such as murmurs and gasps, and vocal qualities, such as volume, rhythm, pitch, and inflection. Vocal cues signal other to interpret what we say as a joke, a threat, a statement of fact, a question, and so forth. Effective public speakers modulate inflection, volume and rhythm to enhance their presentations. We use vocal cues to communicate feelings to friends and romantic partners. **Whispering**, for example, signals confidentiality or intimacy, whereas **shouting** conveys anger and excitement. Depending on the context, sighing may communicate empathy, boredom, or contentment. Research shows that tone of voice is a powerful clue to feelings between marital partners.

**Negative intonation** or vocal tones often reveal dissatisfaction or disapproval. A **derisive** or **sarcastic tone** can communicate scorn clearly, whereas a **warm voice** conveys liking, and playful lilt suggests friendliness. Our voices affect how others perceive us. To some extent, we control vocal cues that influence

image. Most of us know how to make ourselves sound apologetic, seductive, or angry when those images suit our purposes. In addition to the ways we intentionally use our voices, natural and habitual vocal qualities affect how others perceive us. For instance, people who **speak at slow** to **moderate rates** are perceived as having **greater control over interaction** than people who speak more rapidly (Tusing and Dillard, 2000).

Paralanguage also reflects gender. Men’s voices tend to have louder volume, lower pitch, and less inflection, features that conform to cultural views of men as assertive and emotionally controlled. Women’s voices typically have higher pitch, softer volume, and more inflection, features consistent with cultural views of women as emotional and deferential. Socioeconomic level influences pronunciation, rate of speech, and accent.

**Silence.** Silence stands for a lack of communication sound. Although silence is quiet it can communicate powerful messages, e.g.: Silence **can convey contentment** when intimates are so comfortable they don’t need to talk. Silence **can** also **communicate awkwardness**, as you know if you’ve ever had trouble making conversation on a first date. For example, some parents discipline their children by ignoring them; some people deliberately freeze out others when they are angry with them, audiences sometimes shout down speakers they dislike; when angry partners may refuse to speak; people who violate the rules of chat rooms

may be silenced by getting no responses to their messages. Like other forms of communication, silence – and what it means – is linked to culture. European Americans tend to be talkative; they are inclined to fill in silence with words. Among Native Americans, however, historically silence conveys respect, active listening, and thought about what others are saying (Braithwaite, 1990; Carbaugh, 1998).