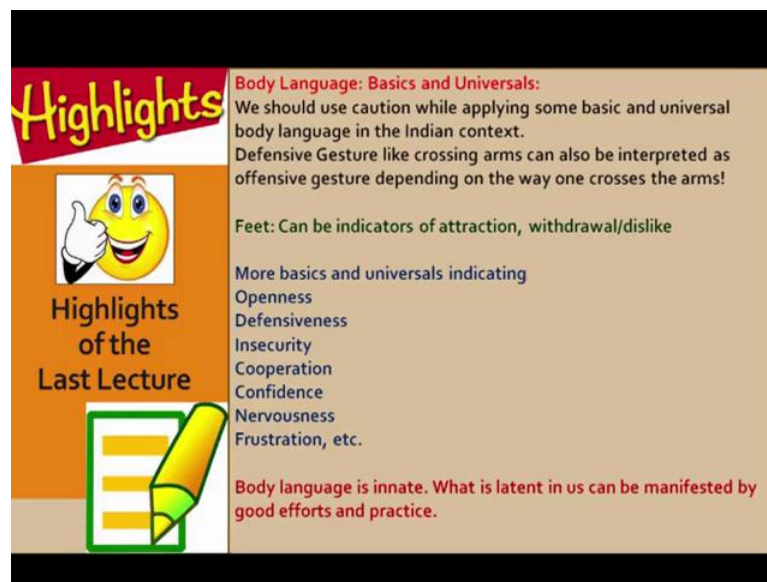


**Developing Soft Skills and Personality**  
**Prof. T. Ravichandran**  
**Department of Humanities and Social Sciences**  
**Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur**

**Lecture - 40**  
**Non- Verbal Communication: Interpreting Non- Verbal Cues**

Hello everyone, welcome back to Developing Soft Skills and Personality course. This is week number 7, module 4, lecture number 40. We have been talking about non verbal communication in general and particular this week we are going to interpret non verbal cues as this is the concluding module on non verbal communication. So, for have thought you a various aspects of non verbal communication body language in particular, but today let us try to understand what are the issues related to interpreting identifying and then exactly trying to co-relate what their inner thoughts are based on the body language. Now, before start as usual let us take a quick review of what did in the previous lecture in the previous lecture is focused on body language and then talked to you about the basics and universals while talking to you about the basics and universals.

(Refer Slide Time: 01:20)



**Highlights**

**Body Language: Basics and Universals:**  
We should use caution while applying some basic and universal body language in the Indian context.  
Defensive Gesture like crossing arms can also be interpreted as offensive gesture depending on the way one crosses the arms!

**Feet:** Can be indicators of attraction, withdrawal/dislike

More basics and universals indicating  
Openness  
Defensiveness  
Insecurity  
Cooperation  
Confidence  
Nervousness  
Frustration, etc.

**Body language is innate. What is latent in us can be manifested by good efforts and practice.**

It started with the kind of disclaimer said that we should use caution while applying some basic and universal body language especially when they try to apply that in the Indian context because in the western context sometimes, what is considered defensive

gesture like crossing arms can mean even a gesture of confidence. In some case it can even refer to a kind of offensive gesture depending on the way a person cross the arms.

Feet; we spends on time looking at feet because they can be indicators of attraction, but they can also suggest withdrawal or dislike and then proceeded to look at more basics and universals indicating openness, defensiveness, insecurity, cooperation, confidence, nervousness, frustration, etcetera towards the end concluded by motivating you with thought that body language is something that is innate, something that is in our system something that is part and parcel of us. You do not have to go for an training and externally take something to imbibe that in you, what you need to do is what is latent in you have to actualize, you have to make it manifested by good efforts, practice and perseverance. So, with all the tips that have been giving you was telling you it will be possible for you to do that.

(Refer Slide Time: 02:57)

Interpreting Non-verbal Cues

➤ **Albert Mehrabian in *Silent Messages* (1971) identified three primary dimensions**

- **Immediacy** cues communicate **liking and pleasure**  
We move toward persons and things we like and avoid or move away from those we dislike. Generally, we instinctively decide whether we like someone or not and then later find 'reasons' to back up our feelings.
- **Arousal** (not sexual) similar to animation. **Responsiveness.**  
Interested in a person—we tend to be more animated. A flat tone of voice and very little movement indicate a lack of interest.
- **Dominance** **balance of power**; information about status, position  
High-status people—relaxed body posture

Now, in this module let us come to the most interesting and challenging aspect of non-verbal communication as such that is interpreting non verbal cues, cues are the small clues tips you are getting indicators that your getting based on which you can actually interpret form a meaning form a coherent idea Albert Meherabian in silent messages way back in 1971 identified three primary dimensions, what are they; what are the three primary dimensions by which we can interpret non-verbal cues, he talked about immediacy arousal and dominance.

These are the three primary dimensions let us look at them and understand what actually they indicate, immediacy indicates the immediacy cues which will communicate liking and pleasure, immediacy which means we move towards persons and things we like and avoid or move away from those we dislike and generally, we instinctively decide whether we like someone or not and then later find reasons to backup our feelings.

So, when we like someone we gravitate we move towards and the same way when somebody is liking us we are also attracting the person towards as, but this is based on the cues immediacy cues our continuous response towards somebody. The next one he refers to yes, arousal now not used in a sexual sense, but it is something similar to animation when you are excited the whole body gets excited and your responsiveness is shown completely from the body starting from the eyes the expansion of the eyes the dilation indicates that you are.

So, much interested in that, but over all body shows a kind of animation in terms of responsiveness if interested in a person, we tend to be more animated more lively more excited and if not interested it tend to become very inactive as if your dead, you do not even show any body language we close our body language a flat tone of voice and very little movement indicate a lack of interest, would you like to have a cup of coffee, yes of course, will be always happy to have it with you this is animatedness would you like to have a cup of coffee may be not sure. So, this is indicating that you are not that much really interested in going to the person for a cup of coffee.

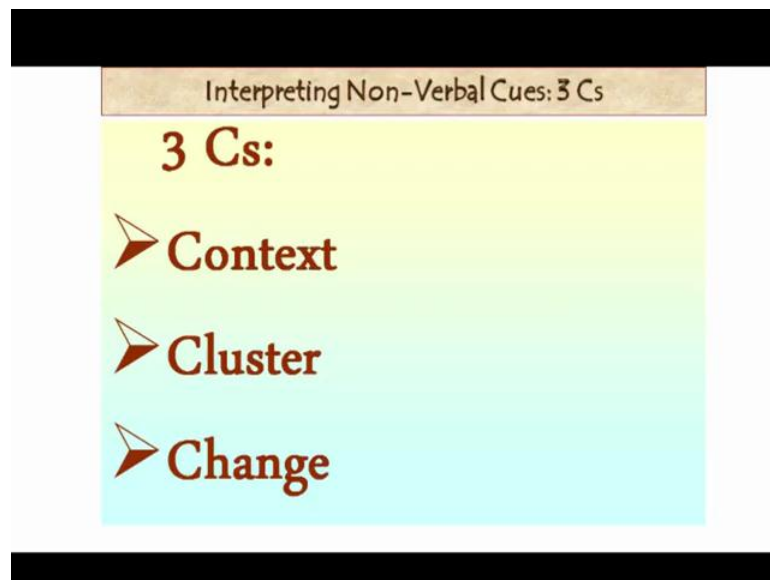
Dominants is the third cue that he gives, its about balance of power, it indicates information about status, position, high status people generally have relaxed body posture as again low status people who have a kind of a fixed constricted body posture. So, that again indicates the balance of power. So, this is one aspect, but at the same time he also suggests a simple way along with this he says that remember the three c's. Look at the context identify the context that is look at the background in which a person is behaving moving exhibiting certain traits and then try to combine that group it that is cluster, when you cluster it you try to see that in a group and then look for change in behavior.

So, a simple example is, the boy is sitting somewhere in the middle in the auditorium and a girl comes then she sits somewhere in the corner first and slowly the room is getting

filled after some time the girl gets up and then looks at the seat next to the boy and then she comes and sits occupies the seat next to the boy. The boy jumps into the conclusion, he is in joy because he understood using the body language cues that if somebody coming close to you it indicates likeness, but he failed to look at the context what is the context, she is slightly feeling feverish and then the AC was so cool and she was sitting next to the AC. So, she wanted to move away and then occupy a place in the center and only space that was the left first next to the boy. So, that is the context.

So, you have to look for external clues which are available in the context that is also trying to modify the behavior of the person, group it and then look for change. Now, grouping is normally let say a person smiles at the boss in the morning, but the previous day he has stolen something. So, he is not smiling and then normally he gives a hand shake he is avoiding. Now, the change in the behavior look at the change instead of not only avoiding the a hand shake because he feels when he gives, it will be a kind of dead fish hand shake he is avoiding that, but there is a change he is saying, Namaste sir or he is just saluting him. So, now, this change indicates that there is something wrong in the behavior.

(Refer Slide Time: 08:58)




So, you have to look at the context cluster and change before you form a kind of opinion.

(Refer Slide Time: 09:06)

Becoming a Non-verbalist: How to identify a liar?

- ✓ Sweating , Biting of fingernails , Chewing of the inside of the mouth
- ✓ Drying up of the mouth, Covering the mouth
- ✓ Rubbing the nose continuously



- This is if they are **bad liars**, or they are lying to someone that knows them well!
- Some people are excellent liars, and can mask all of the above.


Now, we should also look at things like identifying people, one of the very interesting things that we can identify as you try to become a non-verbal sites how to identify somebody who is telling you the truth and how to identify somebody who is telling you a lie particularly identifying a liar is real fun. So, you can easily identify a by some of the symptoms like sweating, biting of fingernails, chewing of the inside of the mouth, drying up of the mouth, covering the mouth and then rubbing the nose continuously.

Now, by these things normally children and then people who are less aware of body language you can easily catch them that they are trying to tell a lie. So, in short it if they are bad liars, they are novice, they are inexperienced or if they are lying to someone that knows them well, but some people are excellent liars and can mask all of the above. So, and some are like by profession they have to hide the truth for example, lawyers. So, they have to sometimes argue in favor of the client, but they may know the truth, but then in terms of differencing them what appears to be a lie. So, they have to say that without showing that they are actually trying to hide the truth. So, they have become excellent in terms of hiding it. Now, if you look at a professional liar that is those who are in profession who are using this they have actual refined their body gestures.

(Refer Slide Time: 10:47)

**Becoming a Non-verbalist: How to identify a liar?**

- **Professional liars have refined their body gestures!**
- ✓ **Observe combinations of behaviours that a person is displaying.**
- **The ability to tell whether someone is lying depends on many factors that must be observed, rather than just one factor that can completely mislead you.**
- ✓ **Differences in behaviour from their 'normal' behaviour**
- ✓ **Variation in the normal eye contact duration**
- ✓ **Tendency to look up (to cook up something!)**
- ✓ **Hand gestures/lack of gestures**
  
- **Police interrogators: suspect's body in full view**
- **The best way to lie is over the telephone!**



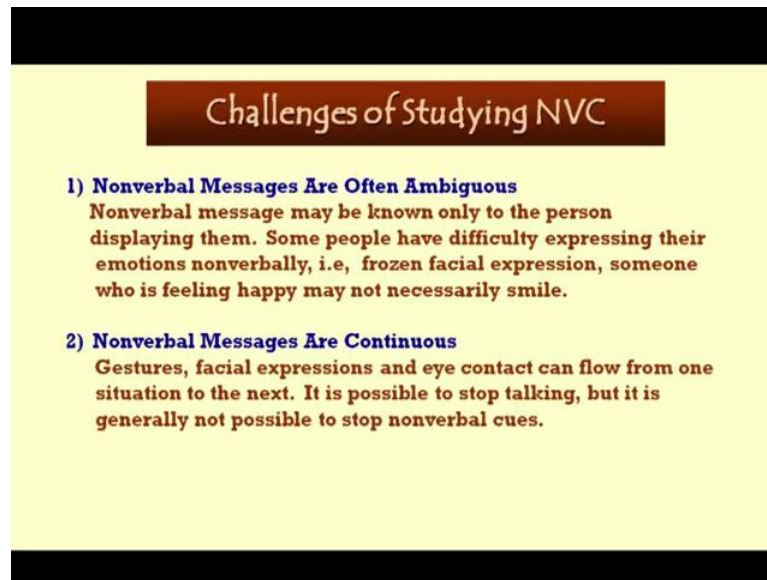
So, you can identify that they are telling lie only by observing the combinations of behaviors that a person is displaying in terms of the three c's and then the ability to tell whether someone is lying depends on many factors that must be observed rather than just one factor that can completely mislead you. So, change differences in behavior from the normal behavior variation in the normal eye contact duration the person is actually a trying to avoid eye contact and even the tendency to look up instead of looking at you looking up, may be to cook up some something, hand gestures, over excessive hand gestures or complete lack of gestures.

So, what do police interrogators do? They will put the suspects body in full view even sometimes they completely remove the dress completely they a make them naked and they just or they keep them with minimum cloths and then put complete flood light on them and they observe even any tiny movement from the face, from the eye, from the hand feet to identify whether the suspect is telling the truth or not.

Now, if you ask me how do we tell a lie? So, as indicated before when we talked about telephone skills the best way to lie is over the telephone because the other person is not sitting with you face to face and it is very easy to lie to the other person over the telephone, again there is a caution to the one who is not so trained in body language to the one who is not. So, intimate and not able to a see the change in your tone see the paralinguistic errors you are committing when you are telling a lie. So, that is for the

very inexperienced one, but somebody who is expert in non-verbal communication even can slightly see when you try to tell lie over the phone, but compared to telling a lie face to face, telling a lie on phone is much easier.

(Refer Slide Time: 13:23)



**Challenges of Studying NVC**

- 1) Nonverbal Messages Are Often Ambiguous**  
Nonverbal message may be known only to the person displaying them. Some people have difficulty expressing their emotions nonverbally, i.e., frozen facial expression, someone who is feeling happy may not necessarily smile.
- 2) Nonverbal Messages Are Continuous**  
Gestures, facial expressions and eye contact can flow from one situation to the next. It is possible to stop talking, but it is generally not possible to stop nonverbal cues.

Now, the next part of this lecture, want to focus on the challenges of studying non-verbal communication, why is it putting you lot of problems? The first thing you should know is non-verbal messages are often ambiguous which means they appear to be one, but they give you more than one meaning will give you an example soon, but understand that the person who is thinking something and displaying a behavior may not the same one what you think the person is trying to express.

So, for example, there are people who have frozen facial expression for everything and some people do not even smile when they are happy, they smile inside may be in the eye there is slight indication that they are smiling, but they are generally by nature serious people. So, you cannot mistake that by thinking that the person is in deep sorrow. The second challenge is non-verbal messages are continuous. So, they do not stop, they keep coming so that is again challenging gestures facial expressions and eye contact can flow from one situation to the next it is possible to stop talking, but it is generally not possible to stop non verbal cues.




(Refer Slide Time: 14:41)

**Challenges of Studying NVC**

**3) Nonverbal Cues are Multi-Channeled**  
Can attend to only one nonverbal cue at a time.  
One researcher believes negative nonverbal command attention before positive nonverbal messages!

**4) Nonverbal Interpretation is Culture Based**  
Positive Gestures in one culture may be seen as obscene in another.  
(thumbs-up gesture in the USA is positive; in Britain, Australia & New Zealand it is considered negative and can indicate abuse/insult).



The next challenge is that they are multi channeled. So, you think that you will look at only the face and you will attend to only one non-verbal cue at a time, but what is happening and what kind of indication is coming from the feet when you look at the face, you ignore what is happening at the feet and what is this guy doing when he is putting the hands on the back. So, that is giving you something, only one channel you are able to observe.

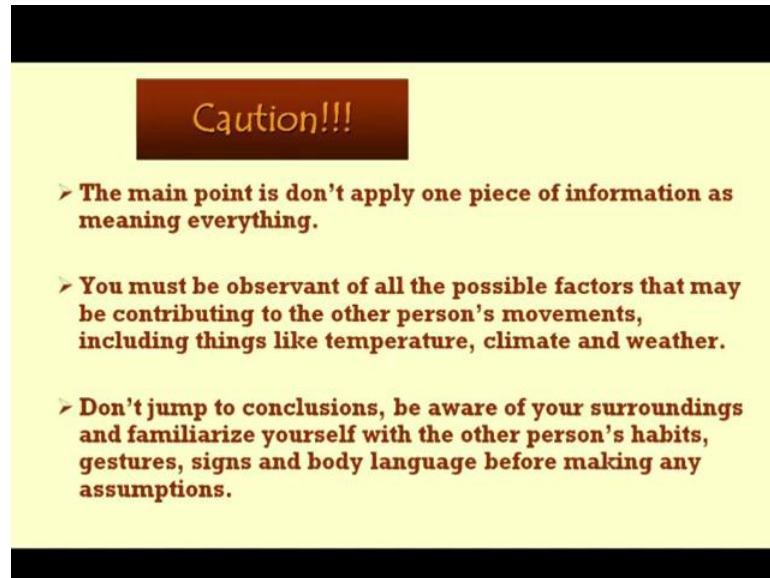
Then the other interesting thing is that people have studied that the negative non-verbal thing commands your attention before the positive one which means if some body's getting angry and then that anger is shown to you first and you try to get the negative inputs and by the time the person changes his or her mind and feels made a mistake and then feels compassionate and changes the expression on the face, but the positive thing you take time to notice. So, this is another danger when you are trying to interpret study non verbal communication.

And the other interesting factor is that it is culture based. So, although there are universals and basics which we studied in the previous one, we should also remember that culturally they are different and the much more interesting thing is that positive gestures in one culture may be seen as obscene in another. So, the thumbs up gesture in USA are considered positive. In Britain and Australia and even in New Zealand, a gesture becomes negative and it can indicate abuse and insult especially when a thumb is



kept in very erect manner. So, it has some abusive connotation. So, you have to be very careful us where you are using this. So, the final caution that I am trying to give you in terms of using non verbal communication is that.

(Refer Slide Time: 16:49).



**Caution!!!**



- **The main point is don't apply one piece of information as meaning everything.**
- **You must be observant of all the possible factors that may be contributing to the other person's movements, including things like temperature, climate and weather.**
- **Don't jump to conclusions, be aware of your surroundings and familiarize yourself with the other person's habits, gestures, signs and body language before making any assumptions.**

The main point is that do not apply one piece of information as meaning, everything you must be observant of all the possible factors that may be contributing to the other persons movements including things like temperature climate and weather. So, somebody comes running to you, you should not think that she is running because she is interested in me. So, it is going to rain and an already it has started dazzling she does not want to get wet. So, she is just coming to the place where you are standing where there is shade.

So, look around what is the climate doing what is the weather doing what is the change that might possibly make this person behaves in such a manner. So, do not jump to conclusions be aware of your surroundings and familiarize you self with the other persons habits especially if you know the person for a long time note the habits note the normal behavior gestures signs and body language before making any assumptions remember the three c's particularly the change in the behavior will give you lot of cues, but at the same time see whether the change is because of something that is happening in the back ground.

(Refer Slide Time: 18:10)

**Aggression?!**



- **At first glance, the pup appears to be showing aggression. However, when you look more closely you will see that the eyes are closed and that the ears are back.**
- **The pup is yawning!**

If that is the case then you have to be very careful, look at this simple example when you look at this puppy, a small dog is opening the mouth and then it look like it is showing aggression and if you go near, it look like it is going to bite you, but however, when you look more closely and then you see that the eyes are closed and then the ears are back because in aggression the eyes are also wide open and the ears are straight and like pointing upwards, this is simply the puppy is yawning. It is feeling sleepy, it is not at all aggressive, it is completely at the other side, it is completely feeling tired and it wants to take rest.

So, it is possible that you jump into conclusion only by looking at the time it opened its mouth and then you thought that it is going to bite you, but actually it was yawning. So, this can happen even in terms of human communication, you may look at one thing and then you try to jump into conclusion.

(Refer Slide Time: 19:17)



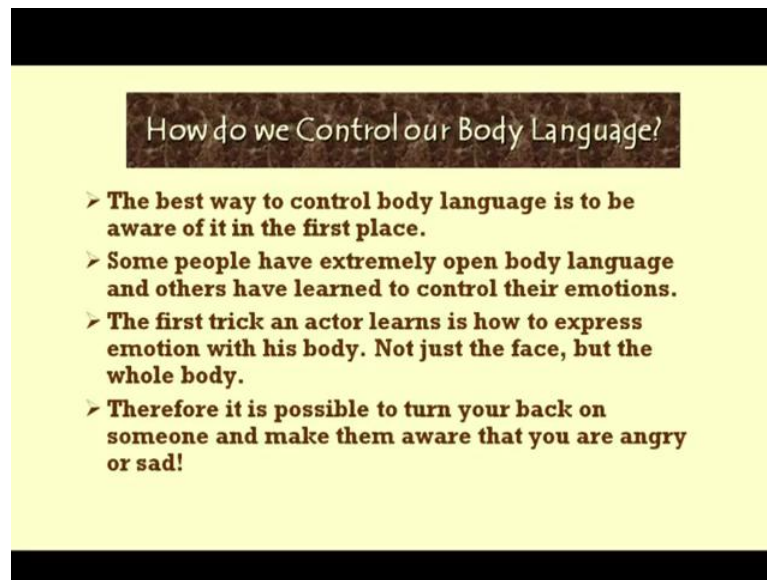
## Clothing and Appearance

- **Clothing and appearance as nonverbal communication tell who we are, our age, gender, status, socioeconomic class and race.**
- **Nonverbal communication is not an exact science, it is easy to make a bad or false first impression based on what you wear and how you look.**
- **All that glitters is not gold!**
- **Appearance is deceptive!**

The other thing that can happen is mostly in terms of clothing and appearance. So, clothing and appearance as non-verbal communication tell who we are, our age, gender, status, socio-economic class and race, but since body language, non-verbal communication is not an exact science. It is very easy to make a bad or false, first impression based on what you wear and how you look a guy who looks very smart, very handsome and the girl who looks really attractive and intelligent may not be really good and hot they could be.

So, mean the guy who looks so funky and then so uncool. So, uncivilized maybe really good at heart and maybe real good friend, maybe really loyal really sincere, some of the sayings which we here about appearance have really some substance in them, sayings like all that glitters is not gold appearance is deceptive. So, keep those ones in mind and then use them with a pinch of salt that whenever you look at some person, it is you may form good impression at the beginning, but then try to corroborate with their action also consistently.

(Refer Slide Time: 20:39)



**How do we Control our Body Language?**

- **The best way to control body language is to be aware of it in the first place.**
- **Some people have extremely open body language and others have learned to control their emotions.**
- **The first trick an actor learns is how to express emotion with his body. Not just the face, but the whole body.**
- **Therefore it is possible to turn your back on someone and make them aware that you are angry or sad!**

Now, the next question that might come to your mind is that how do we control our body language, if all the time we are exhibiting things from our sub-conscious mind which sometimes even we are not aware of. So, how do we control it? Now, the best way to control body language is to be aware of it in the first place. This entire week have been spending more time of non-verbal communication body language, so that you have created an awareness and you know what is good and what is bad, what is positive and what is negative at least the negative body language, if at all you are exhibiting you should try to control and then people are different by nature. There are some people who have extremely open body language they all the time use their gesture their face is so animated.

So, expressive anything they feel you can see that very transparently, but there are others who have actually learned to control their emotions you do not actually see from the face, what they really think inside. Look at an actor the first trick an actor learns is how to express emotion with his body not just a face, but the whole body the very famous actors if you see they are shown on the back side. So, they are sobbing they are crying they are feeling sad, but from the back side of the body they are able to express that and you can also feel the sorrow.

The confidence walk when the hero is introduced you are just shown the legs you are just shown the feet before, actually the camera moves up and then the camera tries to show

the face. Now, how the person is able to show emotions through the feet that is through practice, knowledge, expertise which we can also develop you should understand therefore, that it is possible to turn your back on someone make them aware that you are angry or sad even from the back side not only through face, even by your hand, even by your leg you can emote a feelings on the one hand, but on the other hand you can also try to control when you know that they are not indicating exactly what you have in your mind or you know that they are going to be negative in terms of a giving meaning to the other person then you try to control those negative and unwarranted behavior you should try to become competent communicators in terms of using body language who are competent communicators and what are the indications.

(Refer Slide Time: 23:28)



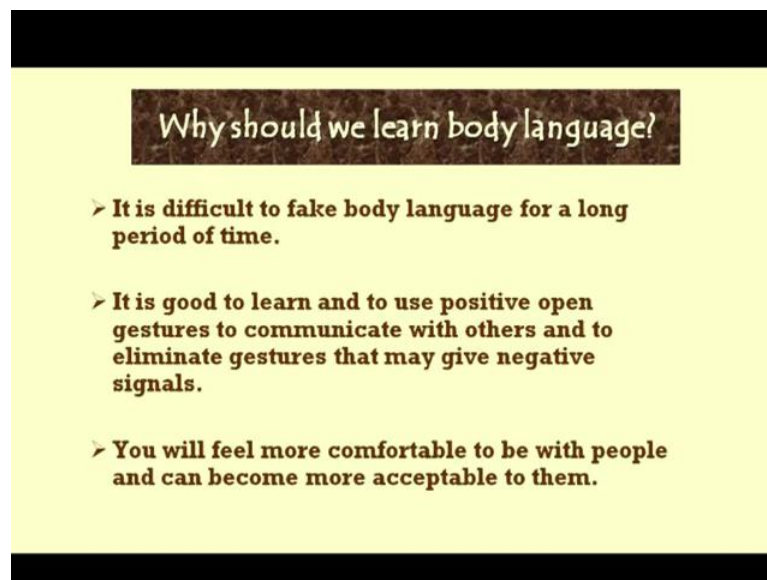
Now, competent communicators are good at monitoring their non-verbal messages. They know how they are sending their messages using body language and they are also able to monitor messages from others. This is a kind of emotional intelligence that your able to study others non verbal behavior as well as you are able to monitor and control your own non verbal behavior and they are able to develop a wide range of non-verbal behaviors to use in different situations.

This means in a form occasion they can be very formal and then informal occasion. They can be just free, they can be very jovial, they can crack jokes and they can be completely free with their body language when they want to control. They can control when they

want to show anger, they can show anger when they know that this is not the context situation where they can show anger they can control it. So, they can develop a wide range of non verbal behaviors to use in different situations.

Now, the next question is which asked at the beginning, but now in a different manner why should we learn body language? Just to recollect some of the arguments which we discussed at the beginning it is very difficult to fake body language for a long period of time. So, if you want to tell a lie using your body language it is not possible so, why not you try to speak the truth using your body.

(Refer Slide Time: 25:05)



And then it is good learn and to use positive open gestures to communicate with others to eliminate gestures that may give negative signals use positive gestures and eliminate negative ones. What will happen you will feel more comfortable to be with people because you know that people are not going to mistake, misunderstand you for any reasons because your good in verbal as well as in non-verbal communication and can pick a mode acceptable to them. They know that you are harmless, you are pleasant, you are nice to talk to and they know that you are not hiding something and then they know that you are honest you are opening in communication that actually will make you live in a very happy and harmonious environment and surrounding.

Towards the conclusion just to sum up what are the positive body language indicators that you should develop?



(Refer Slide Time: 26:00)



I have told them in scattered manner at different points of time during this lecture on non-verbal communication, but quickly smile. So, nothing is going to substitute smile wherever possible even if people are going to make fun of you by saying that you are smiling. So, wide like that actor or actress in that or models in the tooth paste advertisement does not matter, but as much as possible you smile the next one is open posture so closed. So, defensive ones, but then open arms, open hand any kind of open gesture. So, that indicates that you are honest and then forward lean.

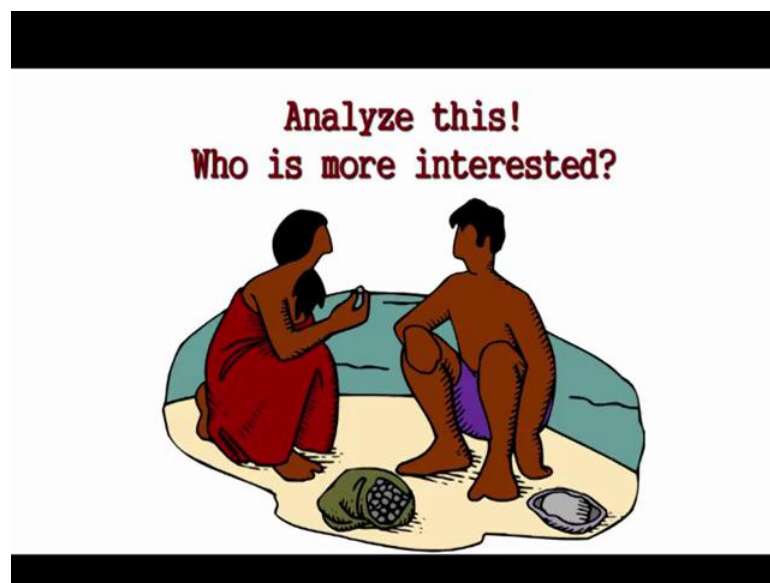
So, while talking to somebody while in discussion, the forward lean indicates empathy, sympathy interest inclination towards the other person and it makes the one who is sitting in front feel more comfortable. So, when you are just lying on the back then putting hand on your neck and then listening, you are aggressive and you are not paying enough attention to the person who is sitting in front of you.

Touch use it gently use it for healing. So, whether it is hand shake or pat or even hug or even just gently a touching somebody. So, it all makes you connect to the other person and communicate more than what words can do and eye contact is something that you should maintain in formal as well as in informal situations, even if you are afraid you try to maintain the eye contact as much as possible gestures and nods which are very important in active lessoning which are very important in communication as such.



So, the more you use the gestures the more you use nods you become more acceptable to people and they start liking you very much. So, these are positive body language indicators expressions which you need to develop by paying attention by even imitating the people you like by even mirroring those good gestures you find before you and even practicing every time like a people whom you like the way they smile the way they a lean forward the way they are using touch the way they maintain eye contact. So, observe that then you try to imitate and then you developed that in you.

(Refer Slide Time: 28:54)



Towards the conclusion just want you to check whether you have become an expert by this time if given a scenario like this picture like this and then ask you to tell me quickly instantaneously who is more interested? So, I have given enough basics and universals and then even if you apply the basics and universals there are two people here, one a women another one is a man who is more interested in whatever is happening here. So, if you have made your conclusion and want you it to be spontaneous, if you made up your mind let me a give my opinion and answer on this.

So, look at what have marked there is eye contact maintained in both cases. So, assume that they are honest with each other at one point. Now, the some of the clues like the hair in the front by the women, her hand is open, she is giving something. If you look at it may be they are involved in a kind of bar trade that is without money they are a exchanging commodity may be she is giving some kind of stone and he is giving some

kind of floor or something in exchange, but in the exchange it looks like she is more interested obviously, because of the hair in the front eye contact and then the hand protruding outside and then more open and then even the feet is this side.

Now, in comparison if you look at him, one hand is almost hidden the other one even the palm is on the back it's indicating that he is rather withdrawn is not that much interested, but if you look at the feet compare to both of them in his case both the feet are open indicating that he is rather more interested and if you look at one of the feet of her is on the back maybe we can think that because there is no seat, there is no chair or anything to sit, so she is supporting by using the other feet, but if you blindly apply the basics like one foot on the back and the other foot in the front.

So, when you observe when you compare to this guy in his case both the feet are in the front and open. Now, it is somewhat misleading to conclude that she is more interested although it is giving more clues. So, it is equally sometimes looking like she is more interested, but maybe she is holding something back and then this guy is also open maybe he is also trying to hold something back now then we can understand that maybe they are in business kind of relationship. So, they are trying to exchange something with each other.

So, they do not want to give someone something. So, easily they want to make the best deal, to make the best deal. So, you do not give in easily you can see that they are interested in transaction both of them, but they are withholding things at their own level. So, for an observer we can know that initially the lady looks to be more interested, but then equally the person also looks more interested because of the open feet and the lady looks withholding something because of keeping one foot on the back.

So, this is how you can analyze and having said this am not going to claim that this is the final message and that is what that they are doing, there is a possibility that might have slightly interpreted this wrongly, but am just trying to tell you, how you can use the basics and universals and most of the times like when you develop and then observe more cues you may not be wrong and this is what we call us intuition, but actually we back our intuition by the non verbal cues we get from the people whom we observe. So, this lecture is actually concluding the general information that have to give about non-verbal communication.

The next two lectures am just going to focus on how you can look at body language in interviews followed by how we can a maintain body language in group discussions. So, thank you for watching this video. Wish you have a very nice day.