Paper: 07, Business Communication
Module: 34, Para Language

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1. Module 34: Para Language

2. Learning Outcomes:
By the end of this module, students will be able to:

- Understand what paralanguage is and how it is different from language.
- Know about voice, pitch, volume, tone, articulation, speed.
- Learn the advantages of paralanguage in conversations.

3. Introduction

Paralanguage is an essential part of non verbal communication and as it is non verbal, it does not consist of words but without it words do not convey the intentional meaning. “Para means ‘like’, hence paralanguage literally means ‘like language’ and ‘paralinguistic’ is the systematic study of how a speaker verbalizes” (Sinha, K.K., 2012). Even without hearing the words Paralanguage conveys the message about what people are communicating.

We all must have heard people talking at the social gatherings, public places and work places, and also at the nearby room, we may not be able to hear the words clearly but by the manner of their speaking, by the voice, tone, pitch, intensity we may make out what they are talking about, i.e. is there some serious matter, or a joke, enjoyment or fight. This is the power of paralanguage that the voice communicates something beyond language.
4. Aspects of Paralanguage

Paralanguage refers to all vocally produced sounds, it includes sound that recommend many emotional touch, and is non lexical. It may be further categories in various aspects:

![Paralanguage Diagram]

Source: “non verbal communication” available online at [http://www.slideshare.net/pratishtha_ram/non-verbal-communication-7463803](http://www.slideshare.net/pratishtha_ram/non-verbal-communication-7463803)

4.1. Voice

As soon as we utter something the first thing which comes out is the voice. Same goes to the other side, whenever someone is speaking the first thing we listen is the voice, even if we are not able to see the speaker but just by the voice we can identify the gender, background, temperament and much more.

4.1.1 Clarity:

The voices can be ambiguous or unambiguous, Pleasant or unpleasant at times. The clear voice will effectively convey the clear message. This is the reason that in some jobs it is essential that the applicant may possess clear and pleasant voice. For instance, job involving the task of the receptionist, or of attending the telephone, in call centres and for radio jockey.
4.2. **Tone**

The tone while speaking can be harsh & loud, soft & gentle, pleasing & comforting, sharp and full of rage etc. tone is that physical level of speech at which the sound of human voice is transmitted. According to Raman & Singh ‘tone’ is the attitude of the speaker as revealed in the choice of vocabulary or the intonation of speech.

Tone is used to convey an outlook consciously or unconsciously. The verbal communication may not be clear without the tone. Intonation helps the tone to refer the pattern of sounds that are felt during communication. In the absence of the intonation or modulation the speech will be monotonous.

It is important and easy to learn the intonations of our own native language but seems difficult while learning the second language. For being the good speaker the person should have command on the tone with the intonations. This may make his speech more influential and interesting.

The change or the modulations in tone changes the meaning of words or actions. For example, a cough can convey different meanings. It can be for actually clearing the throat, or for reminding someone to speak out as it is a right time or it may also convey that one should stop speaking more, i.e. to be careful of the speech as people are listening to you.

4.3. **Pitch**

Pitch is a measure to find out the high and low voice. The rise and fall of the pitch varies every time we communicate, depending upon with whom we are communicating and what we are sharing. Pitch has a lot to do with one’s state of mind.

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![Pitch Diagram](image.png)

**4.3.1 Too High**

When the person is excited or speaks in anger automatically the pitch rises. Too High pitch can irritate the audience; the drawback is that due to high pitch people may not be able to concentrate on words, and try to escape themselves by leaving the conversation area.

**4.3.2 Too Low**

Too low pitch makes the bold words sound dull by separating the energy and strength of those words. Too low pitch with a big audience is a worst situation while delivering the speech. On the other hand it has some positive aspects too; low pitch can be used while talking to someone especially if the person is feeling low.
4.3.3 Monotonous

For the person who is delivering a speech the pitch depends upon the topic or subject matter. The variations in pitch are important to attract the attention of listeners, and to keep them interested in the speech. Without the proper use of pitch, the speech becomes boring and conveys a monotonous sound therefore to maintain the curiosity of the audience it is vital to be at a right pitch.

Therefore in day to day discussions we listens voices at various pitch levels. Many speakers are not aware about this secret, but once they take hold of this small thing the problem is automatically solved and the communicator becomes more competent and dynamic.

The best way to improve one’s pitch variation is to observe the great speakers while they are speaking, or to watch the videos of great presentators. At the same time it is equally important to maintain the pitch level at which the listener gets the point comfortably.

4.4. Volume

The volume variation or the intensity is the essential part of paralanguage as it refers to the loudness and softness of voice. Most of the times people who have a loud voice are considered confident and successful, and the persons with low or dull voice are considered unsuccessful or lacking in confidence.

4.4.1 Variations in volume

“The contrast provides the emphasis. Volume variation puts life into our speaking”.

-Sinha, K.K.

The variations in volume are important whenever we speak. The volume of the voice should be adjusted according to the number of audiences and the place. If the number of listeners is huge it is evident that the speaker needs to be more loud so that his/her voice can reach to all otherwise the speech will be a waste if everybody is not able to listen carefully. On the other hand if the number of audiences is less the speaker should be soft, as at this time even the softness of voice can solve the purpose of communicating the message.
4.4.2 Space or environment

With the size of audience the place also matters, if the conversation is done at open space, here the speaker needs to be bit loud even if the number of listeners is less. Due to the fact that in open environment the voice spread, and will not be clearly audible if the speaker is too soft. The situation will be vice versa in a closed small cabin where soft voice works wonders.

4.5 Articulation

According to Raman & Singh “Articulation is the process by which sounds, syllables, and words are formed when your tongue, jaw, teeth, lips, and palate alter the air stream coming from vocal folds”.

Poor articulation is a result of changing the sounds due to omitting, substituting and distorting the words. The problem area for poor articulation can be found in two major reasons:

4.5.1 Joining or blending the two nearby words together.

For example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actual Word</th>
<th>Distorted word</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Going to</td>
<td>Gonna</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would have</td>
<td>Woulda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Could have</td>
<td>Coulda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finally</td>
<td>Finely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probably</td>
<td>Probly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Give me</td>
<td>Gimmie</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.5.2 Excluding the sounds which come at the end of words:

Removing ‘g’ from any word ending in ‘ing’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actual Word</th>
<th>Distorted Word</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Important</td>
<td>Importn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dropping</td>
<td>Droppn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>thinking</td>
<td>Thinkn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vibrant</td>
<td>Vibrn</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The ability of proper articulation is not gifted to all, but the one who can articulate properly should not switch to distorting of words. Now days the distorted words are very much common among young generation but they must be aware of the fact that this can be the hindrance in their job opportunities. Though their resumes may shortlist but as soon as they will speak in interviews using the distorted language they will be rejected. Therefore people must have control over their articulations.
Poor articulation is also caused due to some uncontrollable reasons of physical and mental disorders or due to the prolonged bad habit of using wrong words. But it is good to know that if practised poor articulation can quickly replace the bad one. As articulation is important for our speech whenever we interact in social, emotional, educational or professional gathering, therefore we must put our efforts to improve it.

4.5.3 Steps for developing the right articulation:
- Be aware of your articulation
- Each time notice whenever you disgrace your words
- Make a conscious effort to no more slur the words
- Be active while speaking, as poor articulation is just being lazy

As soon as people shift to good articulation others start valuing them and it also increases their self-confidence, having more success opportunities in future.

4.6. Pause

Speaking should also go together with pause. While speaking with a pace, small temporary halt is important; we should not go on speaking without giving a pause. It is vital to pause at the right moment because if the pause is used in a wrong way, or at a wrong place it can create many problems. A pause can be highly effective in gaining the audience attention as it will make the content clear and easy to understand to the listener.

But too many and frequently used long pauses can ruin the speech and divert the attention of audience and give the listener the chance of day dreaming. It is thus very essential for a speaker to observe his/her speeches vigilantly.

4.7. Pace of Speaking

Pace or speed of speaking refers to the rate at which a person speaks. This is the essential factor in understanding the reliability of the message and of the communicator. If a person speaks too slowly the audience will lose the interest and the value of speaker will decrease. Speaking too fast also lower the credibility as many times in this situation the words are overlapped and the meaning is lost.

Words used while communication show the different feelings, but are not able to communicate the exact meaning without the support of the non-verbal element. Thus speaking speed here plays the crucial role.

4.7.1 Balanced Pace:

The speaker should speak in a balanced pace, getting fast while communicating the easy and common topic and slowing down when using the difficult terms or the subject matter that is new for the listeners. Getting hold of the speed will make the voice clear and send the convincing messages. Understandable voice from balanced rate is the strong and easiest instrument through which we can convey our intentions and thoughts.

“The human voice is the organ of the soul”
The voice is the invaluable source for social and professional interactions. If the speed is balanced voice improves and even the relationship improves as it helps in making the impression in the mind of spectators.

4.8. Non fluency or Dysfluency

Communication is not always a constant series of momentous words, there are breaks in between the fluent speech, and we call it as dysfluency. A person if says “all is fine” but at the same time stammers and seems afraid and nervous, it will reveal the truth that all is not fine.


There are different kinds of non fluency which we hear in day to day conversations are discussed below:

4.8.1 Silence:
The dysfluency of silence have both negative and positive effect on communication. It provides a connection between messages and also makes the environment of stress and peace. It can also be judgemental by being in favour or against; it may be used for the agreement or disagreement of proposal.
During the conversation, one may use silence to aid the reader forecast that what the speaker is going to say now. The silence probably gives the answer better than the long explanations. It is even said that at times silence can communicate more than words.

4.8.2 Fillers:
Fillers are the words which creates hindrances between speech by various sounds like; Uh...Ahhh!, Mmmnnn!, Shhh..h, Hmmnnnn...! and many more.


4.8.3 Hesitation:
This is caused due to the perception in the mind of the speaker that he /she will not be able to speak nicely, this hesitation due to lack of confidence makes the speech more dull even before the speaker starts communicating.

4.8.4 Repetition:
It is the unnatural stretching out of sounds or repetition of some words like; i mean to say.. that what I mean to say  !, you see..!, ok..ok..ok ! etc

It is interesting to know that some of these dysfluencies, if used at the proper place also aids the speaker to breathe and relax for some seconds between the speech. But too frequent use of these dysfluencies irritates the listener.
4.9. Word Stress

Word stress is of great significance in communication and for the correct transmission of message. By putting stress or importance on different words in a sentence while uttering them can change the whole meaning of the message. For instance, the following series of sentence is stressing at different word (which is underlined) each time it is pronounced:

- She writes excellent business mails.
- She writes excellent business mails.
- She writes excellent business mails.
- She writes excellent business mails.
- She writes excellent business mails.

Although the similar words are used in each sentence it depicts the different meaning by stressing on the underlined words. It is important for every speaker to know that how much important it is to put emphasis on the word in the sentence to convey its real meaning.

4.10. Diverse Indicators

People very often use the way of communication which depicts the diverse or mixed feelings behind the message. Using the words which conveys the message but the way of saying depicts the opposite meaning. It is said that words can denote and connote the meaning, i.e. one can be the literal and other the implied meaning.

For example, an employee is overburdened with work in the office and the deadlines are near to finish the work, at that particular moment of stress one of the old friends of that employee comes after a long period of time to greet him. The employee on the one side is happy to see him, he says, “Welcome! I am glad to see you here after a long time”, but on the other side in his heart he must feel that, “why he appeared at this moment of time when I am overburdened”, and wishes that he must not stay for long. This mixed feeling signals the ambiguous message, where we are not able to convey the true meaning, and the welcome of a friend will also lack the warmth of pleasure.

To make the communication effective it is important to notice that ‘what’ and ‘how’ of the message should be in harmony, i.e. what we are saying and how we are saying should be in right blend.

These factors influence the aspects of paralinguistic in the process of communication as if the signals get mixed up, the intended message will not be rightly expressed or wrongly understood.

4.11. Quality

As it is important to use the good quality of words while communicating, at the same time it is vital to have good quality of voice. People ignores to pay attention to the harsh, cracked and dull voice, and are willing to listen the soft, soothing, motivating and the voice full of energy.

The voice varies a lot according to the gender; adult men have the deeper and heavier voice in comparison to women. This is due to the reason that men have longer cords and the pitch of voice depends upon the length of those vocal cords.
The quality of voice also depends on few other reasons such as the space in nose, sinuses, movement of tongue, shaping of lips and the distance between teeth also bring changes in the voice. Since all this structure of individuals is different from each other, or as each individual is unique in these features, so the voices of each person will also be unique, no two persons in the world can have the same voice.

4.12. Rhythm

In the course of speech the strained and unstrained fundamentals which provides the varied modulation to statement is known as Rhythm. During the speech it ranges from swiftness to jerkiness. Rhythm is basically used to express emotions, and can be used when appealing the feelings or emotions of peers.
Rhythm should be avoided in business communication, such as presentations, discussions and in board meetings. But can be used in informal talks.
It is difficult to have command on rhythm, the best way to use it, is to be more flexible as a speaker, and with speaking styles.

5. Advantages of Paralanguage

- Paralanguage is closely related to language, as no verbal message is clear and complete without it.

- On the basis of voice quality of a person’s paralanguage his/her position in the organization is easily judged, thus the paralanguage aids in indicating the place of a person in the organizational hierarchy.

- It also clearly talks about the individual’s educational background.

- The regional or national background of speaker is also depicted as paralanguage talks a lot about it.

- Paralanguage gives the hints regarding the speaker’s mental and emotional state.

- The use of speed, pitch and pauses convey that how much the speaker is skilful in communication.

- Paralanguage has a great enlightening value, as a vigilant listener can learn a lot from the efficient speaker.
6. Summary

Paralanguage is the part of non-verbal communication. It is in fact significant and a step ahead than words. It is not the language but it is like the language which depicts the manner in which the words are spoken which makes the speakers thought more influential. It involves the tone, voice, pitch, articulation, volume, rhyme, speed, fluency and the quality of voice. The balanced use of paralinguistic helps in conveying the message more valuable. To make the speech effective it is important to avoid long pauses, duplication of words and frequent use of fillers. A good blend of different aspects of paralanguage or a balanced volume, pitch, tone, speed and the correct fluency makes the speaker an energetic and successful communicator.

In business organizations the focus on paralanguage is increasing day by day. The reason behind this is the continuous interaction of marketing people with the customers. The quality of speech plays the vital role in influencing and convincing the customer. Paralanguage is also used in the jobs which are more based on speaking, like in call centres or the job of talking on phone etc. Hence the paralanguage has become the vital root for the speakers to have a command on it for delivering the better and influential speeches.