
UNIT 1 BODY LANGUAGE

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1.0 OBJECTIVES

This Unit will familiarize you with the essentials of body language. Here you will learn to:

- Understand non-verbal communication
- Recognize the importance of body language
- Improve your own body language
- Use the right body language at interviews

1.1 WARM UP

- Have you ever met somebody and taken an instant liking or an instant dislike to them without exchanging a single word?
- Why do you think this happens?
- How often have these first impressions been correct?
- Do you prefer people who speak softly or those who talk really loudly?

1.2 READING

1.2.1 Body Language Essentials

Body language, or non-verbal language, is the most powerful visual tool in your face-to-face interaction at the workplace. Studies show that your words account for only a small percentage of the messages you convey. A major part of your communication is non-verbal. Some of this non-verbal communication is based on what people see and the rest is transmitted



through your tone of voice. Words alone are insufficient in conveying what you truly feel and think. Your non-verbal communication needs to endorse what you say in words. Especially at work, people are keen to see what you are not saying. If your body language doesn't match your words, you will have a tough time making people believe you. Your body language is also a reflection of your personality. At job interviews, it is what conveys your very first impression to the people sitting there to test you. Your body language reflects your confidence, shyness, nervousness, boldness or smartness.

Here are the chief constituents of body language:

Eye contact

Eye contact can play a crucial role in communication. When you are trying to make a point, eye contact reflects your confidence in dealing with the person in front of you. It shows you are truthful and sincere and have nothing to hide. On the other hand, if you keep looking away from the person, s/he would most probably think you are not confident about what you are saying, or have something to hide.

When you are listening to someone, eye contact indicates that you are interested in what the other person is saying. If you look away, you show your disinterest in him/her, which would be impolite. So whether you are speaking or listening, you must make eye contact. Just make sure you don't stare and scare the other person. Staring is also impolite.

Facial expression

This is one of the most visible and noticeable forms of communication that conveys mood, attitude, understanding, confusion and a whole range of other emotions. A smile is an indication of a pleasant and confident personality, whereas a frown tells the other person that you have no pleasure in his/her presence or patience for listening to his/her point of view. It may also give the other person the impression that you are an unfriendly and ill-tempered person.

Posture

Your posture can convey a whole range of attitudes. You should sit or stand erect if you want to be seen as alert and enthusiastic. When you slump in your chair, you look tired. No one wants to work with someone who has no energy. Sitting slumped also shows a lack of interest. On the other hand, tilting your head to one side and leaning forward while listening shows your interest in the speaker. Keeping your head straight makes you appear self-assured and authoritative. People will take you seriously.

Gesture

When we use our hand, arm, or face to indicate something it is called a gesture. Gestures are often used to replace verbal communication.

- Many good speakers use hand gestures to emphasize their point.
- Giving thumbs up to indicate approval is common.
- Pointing in the direction of a particular thing is the fastest way of drawing attention to it, to indicate its position, or a preference for it, or for any other reason.

Proximity

Though this is not a very obvious form of body language, it can be equally as meaningful.

How close you sit or stand next to another person may have different meaning in different cultures. It is sufficient to remember that at work, keep a reasonable distance from the other person. It is impolite to stand too close. Also, you should not touch the other person to draw attention while speaking, unless you are on very friendly terms with them.

Check your progress 1

Based on the reading passage state whether these statements are true or false:

1. We communicate almost entirely with words.
2. You should avoid making eye contact with your seniors at work.
3. If you look away from the person you are talking to, he/she may think you have something to hide.
4. Facial expression can communicate very few emotions.
5. Leaning forward to listen while someone is talking is positive body language.
6. Gestures help to explain your point to the listener.

Activity 1

Now find words in the text similar in meaning to the words below:

1. to stress
2. keen to do something
3. the use of hands to indicate something
4. not enough
5. the way you sit or stand
6. an image
7. support
8. able to take responsibility
9. important
10. not well-mannered and polite

1.3 VOCABULARY

Activity 2

Match the following to the type of body language they represent:

- a) Raised eyebrows
- b) A shrugging of the shoulders
- c) Leaning forward
- d) Rolling your eyes
- e) Poking someone with your elbow
- f) Puffing of the chest
- g) Putting your collar up
- 1) A gesture
- 2) Body movements that indicate interest
- 3) Body movements indicating boredom
- 4) Signals exhibiting authority or power
- 5) Movements that convey pride.
- 6) Facial expressions that convey surprise
- 7) A gesture

1.4 LISTENING

You have read about the importance of body language in communication. Now listen to a lecture on the role body language plays in an interview.

The first impression you create in an interviewer's mind is very important. And you convey your very first impression the moment you walk into the interview room. What this means is that you need to be prepared to make this moment positive. What is on show here is your attire, and how you hold yourself as you walk in. For the first, try to find out what kind of organization it is where you are going for an interview. Do they stress on very formal office wear? Or is a semi-formal look more desirable to them? How you dress is an important part of non verbal communication, especially at a job interview. A job that requires you to interact with clients may require you to be dressed formally in a suit, a shirt in a solid color and tie. On the other hand, many software firms are perfectly comfortable with their employees dressing casually, say in a striped or checkered shirt and cotton pants. For the second, see that you hold yourself straight, don't slump, and hold your head straight. Enter with a smile, but keep it small.

When you sit, let your hands rest lightly in your lap. Do not fold your arms – folded arms can be interpreted as a defensive gesture. Some even read it as having a closed mind. Do not slouch, sit up straight. You could change your posture in some time, and even lean forward a little while listening to your interviewer(s). If you sit on the edge of your chair you come across as being tense and uncomfortable. Fidgeting, shaking your leg, drumming your fingers against the table or touching your face are all indicators of nervousness. Avoid them, even if you are actually nervous. If you are very nervous, just before entering, pause for a moment and take a deep breath. You'll feel better instantly. If there are two or more people on the interview panel be sure to make eye contact with each one of them in turn. However, do not keep shifting your eyes rapidly as that too indicates discomfort on your part. If you use gestures while explaining something, see that your arm movements are gentle and restricted. Using gestures shows you are at ease and relaxed.

Remember that the basic idea is to adopt a posture that shows keenness and confidence but still comes across as being relaxed.

Check Your Progress 2

- A. List all the negative body language indicators that you have just heard:
- B. Now write down as many negative body language examples as you can from your observation of others.

1.5 GRAMMAR

Modals

You **will** have a tough time making people believe you.

You **must** make eye contact.

It **may** also give the other person the impression that.....

The words '**will**', '**must**' and '**may**' here and others like '**should**', '**would**', '**could**', '**can**', and '**ought to**' are auxiliary verbs known as **modals** or **modal verbs**, the use of which is very important in polite language, for suggestions, advise, and in framing questions. Many questions begin with modal verbs. Unlike other auxiliary verbs like '**be**', '**do**' and '**have**', modal verbs are only auxiliary, and cannot be used as the main verb in a sentence.

The table below will help in identifying the uses of modal verbs.

Modal	Example	Uses
Can	I can help you if you want me to. Can I call you tomorrow? I'm afraid I can't help you with that. You can call him at 10 tomorrow.	Expressing ability Asking for permission Expressing inability Stating possibility
Could	Could you repeat that? Could I borrow your pen?	Request Permission

	You could speak with your manager about it.	Suggestion
May	May I know who is calling? The meeting may be cancelled. How may I help you?	Enquiring/Requesting Expressing possibility Offering help
Might	They might reduce the rates for us.	Future possibility
Would	Would you mind mailing me the brochure? I would like to meet Mr. Sharma today. Would you like some tea or coffee? Would you mind if I wrote this down? Would 2.30 on Friday be okay?	Request Stating wish Offering help Asking for permission Making arrangements
Should / Shouldn't	You should discuss this with Mr. Mehra first. You shouldn't wear this to the interview	Suggesting/Advising/Recommending Advising
Will	I'll mail the details to you right away. He won't be back before Friday.	Giving word/Promising/ Assuring Certain prediction
Must/ Mustn't	You must prepare all papers in advance You mustn't sit slumped in the chair like that!	Strong advise

Check Your Progress 3

1. Who _____ you like to speak to?
2. _____ inform the Manager as soon as he comes in, Sir.
3. _____ you like to borrow my briefcase?
4. You _____ ask your boss first.
5. I'm afraid our trip _____ be cancelled.
6. _____ you give me a brochure, please?
7. _____ I call for a taxi for you?
8. I'm afraid I _____ help you with this work.
9. You _____ find out more about the company before agreeing to work there.
10. I think petrol prices _____ go up again soon.

Activity 3

Using modal verbs make appropriate sentences for the following situations. Try to make more than one sentence per situation.

1. Giving advise to your friend about what to wear to his interview
2. Telling him what not to do at the interview
3. Suggesting some questions for him to ask at the interview
4. Asking for permission to use somebody's phone
5. Telling your friend what you definitely intend to do today.
6. Asking somebody for directions to a particular place

1.6 SPEAKING

Activity 4

Practice speaking on each of these aspects of body language. See that you speak at least three to five sentences on each. See that you use modals in your speech as practiced in the grammar section. You may re-read the Reading section and go through the listening tape script for help, but do not refer to them while writing. One example is done for you in the answer key.

- a. Posture
- b. Gesture
- c. Eye contact
- d. The way you sit



1.7 WRITING

Activity 5

You have been asked to give a speech to a group of young people on “body language of a good listener”. Write out a speech to be delivered to these young people, just out of college, starting out to look for jobs. Use the following phrases for help. Use modals wherever you can.

- Eye contact
- Lean forward
- Look out of the window
- Turn towards the speaker
- Send SMS

- Hunched shoulders and lowered head
- Nodding the head - appreciation

1.8 LET US SUM UP

Communication plays a major part in our lives. Much of this communication is unspoken. In this unit you have learnt about the role of body language in non-verbal communication. This will not only help you in using your own body language in conveying a good impression of you to others, and in communicating with others, but also help you to understand them, by reading their body language. You have got tips on positive and negative body language at the interview. You have also had the opportunity to enhance your vocabulary, and to use modal verbs. Besides, you have practiced preparing and giving a speech.

1.9 ANSWER KEY

Check Your Progress 1

1. We communicate almost entirely with words. **False**
2. You should avoid making eye contact with your seniors at work. **False**
3. If you look away from the person you are talking to, he/she may think you have something to hide. **True**
4. Facial expression can communicate very few emotions. **False**
5. Leaning forward to listen while someone is talking is positive body language. **True**
6. Gestures help to explain your point to the listener. **True**

Activity 1

1. to stress - emphasize
2. keen to do something - enthusiastic
3. the use of hands to indicate something - gestures
4. not enough - insufficient
5. the way you sit or stand - posture
6. an image - reflection
7. support - endorse
8. able to take responsibility - authoritative
9. important - crucial
10. not well-mannered and polite - impolite

Activity 2

Match the following to the type of body language they represent:

- a. Raised eyebrows - Facial expressions that convey surprise
- b. A shrugging of the shoulders- A gesture
- c. Leaning forward -Body movements that indicate interest
- d. Rolling your eyes - Body movements indicating boredom
- e. Poking someone with your elbow - A gesture
- f. Puffing of the chest - Movements that convey pride.
- g. Putting your collar up - Movements that convey pride.

Check Your Progress 2

A. List all the negative body language indicators that you have just heard:

1. Shifting your eyes all the time
2. Sitting on the edge of your chair
3. Sitting with folded arms
4. Dressing inappropriately for the interview
5. Slouching or slumping
6. Fidgeting
7. Shaking your leg
8. Drumming your fingers against the table
9. Touching your face

B. Some more negative body language examples:

1. Chewing your nails
2. Scratching yourself
3. Picking your nose
4. Fiddling with something in your hand

Check Your Progress 3

1. Who **would** you like to speak to?
2. I **will** inform the Manager as soon as he comes in, Sir.
3. **Would** you like to borrow my briefcase?
4. You **should** ask your boss first.

5. I'm afraid our trip **may** be cancelled.
6. **Could** you give me a brochure, please?
7. **Shall/Should** I call for a taxi for you?
8. I'm afraid I **can't** help you with this work.
9. You **must/should** find out more about the company before agreeing to work there.
10. I think petrol prices **will/may/could** go up again soon.

Activity 3

These are possible responses. Yours may be different.

1. Giving advise to your friend about what to wear to his interview
You should wear a white shirt and a formal pair of trousers.
You could borrow my suit.
2. Telling him what not to do at the interview
You shouldn't slouch when you walk in.
You should walk in with a smile.
3. Suggesting some questions for him to ask at the interview
You could ask them about growth prospects of the company.
You must ask them how long you will be on probation.
You should find out when they do the first performance review.
4. Asking for permission to use somebody's phone
May I use your phone?
Could I borrow your phone?
5. Telling your friend what you definitely intend to do today.
I will clean my room today.
I will finish this work before going home.
6. Asking somebody for directions to a particular place
Could you tell me where Mr. Mehra's office is?
May I know where Mr. Mehra's office is?

Activity 4

One example is done for you.

- a. **Posture - Your posture is a very important part of your body language. That is why we all need to have a good posture. You should hold yourself straight, with held too held straight. You must not slump, and your shoulders should not droop. While sitting also, your back must be straight. You may lean forward while listening. This shows that you are interested in what the speaker is saying.**

Activity 5

This is a possible response. Yours may be different. The modals are in bold.

You have been asked to give a speech to a group of young people on “body language of a good listener”. Write out a speech to be delivered to these young people, just out of college, starting out to look for jobs. Use the following phrases for help. Use modals wherever you can.

A good listener can be easily recognized from his/her body language. A good listener frequently makes eye contact with the speaker. His/her facial expressions too show his/her interest in the speaker. S/He nods her/his head in appreciation, leans forward to listen better, and turns towards the speaker if the speaker changes his/her position.

You **must** remember that if you learn to become a good listener you **will** learn a lot from others. But you **must** remember to not overdo the gestures. You **must not** nod all the time – it is distracting and does not seem sincere. You **should** also avoid using your mobile phone to send messages while the other person is talking. Most of all, you **should not** sit hunched with your head bowed. This shows a complete lack of interest and considered very impolite.