VERBAL AND NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION

Communication is fundamental in our everyday lives and it is also important to produce effective communication, i.e. to convey on our reader’s / listener’s mind exactly the meaning we want to convey.

We are constantly in a process of communicating, either as SENDERS of messages or RECEIVERS of messages.

We produce ACTIVE COMMUNICATION:
   a) **Orally** (when we speak to and interact with other people. We do this face-to-face or on the telephone. We communicate in formal situations – such as speaking in public for a lecture – as well as in informal situations – chatting with friends and family).
   b) **Written** (when we use written language to communicate: we read and write letters, notes, reports, essays, instructions and even shopping lists. We use technology to send and receive e-mails or to surf the Internet.)

We are subjected to PASSIVE COMMUNICATION:
   a) **Orally** (when we listen to someone speaking; we listen to the radio or to CDs; we watch television and DVDs).
   b) **Written** (wherever we go we are the receivers of messages: when you are sitting in class listening to a teacher; when we read newspapers and magazines; but also street signs, billboards, advertisements, shop windows, public announcements and even traffic lights all send us messages. They compete for and demand our attention and it is impossible to ignore them).

There is eventually INTERIOR COMMUNICATION:
   (when we communicate with ourselves; when we think, consider or plan something).

NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION includes:
   Proxemics, orientation, eye contact, facial expression, gesture, dress, posture, paralanguage (i.e. sounds, pauses, hesitations, little laughs or coughs, etc.)

Even when we think we are not communicating, we usually are. Facial expressions, bodily posture, even the way we occupy the space about us, are all methods of communicating our attitudes, ideas and feelings to the world.

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

Being able to communicate well is a skill. As a skill, it can be learned.

Different situations require different registers:
   a) **formal** communication (e.g. making a speech or writing a report)
   b) **informal** communication (e.g. sending a note to a friend or chatting on the bus)

One of the useful guidelines to produce effective communication relates to the **concept of empathy**.

1) **Empathy** is the act of putting yourself in someone else’s shoes in order to see issues and ideas from their perspective rather than your own.

This means that you should be sensitive to the needs of your audience. One way to do this is to consider how you would respond to the message if you were one of them (e.g. be careful when you
listen to the answer somebody is giving you after your question, or observe the person in front of you while you’re speaking).

2) The second point relates to the **organisation of information**. It’s important to organise the information you want to provide, in order to make it comprehensible to the receiver, to make it clear and simple.

This is especially important for a formal communication situation, where the need to plan and organise information into a logical and user-friendly structure is fundamental.

E.g.: When you need to telephone someone in order to obtain information, planning what you are going to say in advance will produce a more positive result than dialling the number and finding yourself tongue-tied and stammering when the caller answers. Often it’s enough to make a simple checklist of the points you want to make.

3) The third point to remember is the **importance of feedback** and learning to recognise feedback and respond to it by adapting your communication. Feedback is the way people let us know how they are responding to the information we are giving them.

E.g.: People with puzzled looks on their faces in a room indicate to a presenter that his information is unclear and people do not understand well what he’s saying. Or people falling asleep while you’re speaking may not mean that they need to rest!

Each communication act requires to take into account the **context** and the **purpose** (a note written in a hurry, an academic essay or a love letter are different). Moreover, each **country and culture** demand the use of a different set of **conventions** if the message is to be effective. If we ignore these conventions, our message loses its impact and will sound inappropriate, or we will cause misunderstandings and risk offending people.

**NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION**

**Paralanguage** = Communication which is in the form of utterances other than words themselves (e.g. the volume of one’s voice).

When we communicate, we are offering data to the world: information about ourselves, our feelings and attitudes and our relationship to the people we are addressing.

**Non-verbal channels**: our tone of voice, the look on our face, the way in which we position our body. These can reveal to the receiver our feelings as we transmit the message.

E.g. The message “Nice day again” is intended to be a deeply ironic comment on yet another day of bad weather. A sardonic grin or shake of the head may communicate a despairing comment on such depressing weather.

Forms of non-verbal behaviour change in our skin pigment such as blushing when we are embarrassed.

An interesting issue is: how much control do we have over the non-verbal signals we transmit? Blushing is an involuntary action. Smell signals both attract and repel.
Verbal and non-verbal communication are closely linked. The non-verbal message may contradict the verbal one to invert the meaning of the message, and this is not necessarily deliberate or voluntary. Non-verbal behaviour may give away a person’s true intentions or state of mind. The term “leakage” is used to describe this process.

**Non-verbal leakage** is the tendency of non-verbal codes wholly or partly to contradict intentional and verbal communication.

The **main types of non-verbal signal** that people transmit are:

1) Proxemics
2) Orientation
3) Eye contact or gaze
4) Facial expression
5) Gesture, especially use of hands and arms
6) Dress
7) Posture
8) Paralanguage

1) **PROXEMICS**

Proxemics, a word coined by E.T. Hall in 1959, is the study of how we handle the space around us, especially in relation to other people. Territory reflects the power relations within groups of people. The more powerful a person, the larger and more impressive the space they will occupy. Each of us has an individual invisible space that we protect from outside intrusion, an invisible bubble around our body. There are important cultural differences in our attitudes to the proximity, or nearness, of other people. It is typical of British people that they do not encourage physical contact with other people. We are taught that touching things, other people, or even our own bodies, is socially undesirable. We may be wary of other people who are tactile and touch us. Continental teenagers greet one another by kissing on both cheeks. In Britain kissing tends to be reserved for close family members and intimacy between sexual partners. Proxemics can provide us with important information about communication acts between people. It can shed light on:

- The situation that they are in (whether they are whispering intimately or making a public speech);
- The relationship between two people (whether they are intimate friends or strangers);
- The relationship they might like to have with each other (e.g., if one person invades another person’s space, the reaction of that person may suggest whether this is welcome or not);
- Their cultural background or even their social attitudes (an invasion of personal space – by a police officer – may be intimidating).

2) **ORIENTATION**

Orientation means the way in which people place themselves relative to one another. When someone comes to sit next to you, it is seen as a friendlier orientation than someone who sits directly opposite you. The latter position is potentially confrontational while the former suggests closeness and support.
Sitting at a table create a relaxed atmosphere and encourage conversation. We feel uncomfortable when people stand behind us.

3) **EYE CONTACT**

Eye contact is an important way in which we communicate our feelings towards other people. British are told “it is rude to stare”. Eye contact betrays our animal origins: We need to make initial eye contact to assess a stranger. Prolonged staring, however, is a threatening form of behaviour. If you stare at someone, their behaviour will become either defensive or, at the other extreme, aggressive. We tend to be suspicious of people who “cannot look us in the eye”, seen as people with something to hide. Avoiding someone’s gaze can be seen as a means of avoiding conflict (i.e. weakness and vileness).

Gazing is also to some degree gendered: men gaze at women, sometimes in an intimidating way. Eye contact can be an index of the closeness of a relationship that people share. Lovers gaze into each other’s eyes. There is a popular belief that you can detect the truth in people’s eyes. Eye contact has some degree of ambiguity. It depends on the context: it indicates an ironical statement. (A teacher who says “You obviously have a profound grasp of communication theory” but accompanies it with a despairing look upwards is most likely telling an unfortunate student just the opposite.)

4) **FACIAL EXPRESSION**

Facial expressions are an index of our feelings. The smile indicates that we are happy and content, that we are pleased to see the other person and that we mean them no harm.

The frown is adopted during conflict. When we are angry and feeling aggressive, we tend to tighten our lips around our mouth and lower our eyebrows. This latter action is a means of protecting our eyes in an ensuing fight. We accompany these gestures with an unblinking stare, which is an attempt to intimidate another person.

When we become afraid after having committed ourselves to a conflict, we tend to smile, to pull back the corners of our mouth. This is a typical “fear face” which is a submissive gesture to suggest we are not a threat.

There are some occasions when we smile in a forced way: we are told to say “cheese” when a photograph is taken. We may also fake a smile to pretend we are pleased to see someone when we are not. Generally people can detect a false smile.

When people are lying, they touch their faces and blinks more frequently as though try to cut themselves off from the lies they are telling.

5) **GESTURE**

The handshake has countless variations. It may have its origins in the idea that people meeting are able to demonstrate to one another that they are unarmed by offering an open palm. Then it has developed as a social greeting.

Gestures, just like language, are also capable of changing their meanings over a period of time. On occasions gestures are a replacement for speech. (E.g. Put your finger to your mouth to tell someone to be quiet.) Financial markets employ extensive use of hand gestures for conveying information. Many gestures are automatic. Wringing our hand or gripping the seat tightly both indicate stress.
They often function to reinforce the message that we are uttering by means of language.

6) **DRESS**

Dress is an example of a code. As with all codes, there are certain conventions, which have to do with the way in which we combine items of clothing and the appropriateness of certain types of styles of dress to specific situations (context). If we fail to observe the conventions, we risk giving offence. We may deliberately choose to challenge conventions. A ‘well dressed’ person avoids colour clashes and usually avoids combining formal and informal garments. However, people can choose to ignore, invert or play with those codes. You might describe your wardrobe as a paradigm and particular outfits as syntagms. The clothes we wear make a statement about ourselves. Uniform is used to signify the role or function that a person performs. It distinguishes the wearer from other people. Police officers wear uniform as a symbol of power and status as well as for making them recognisable. A uniform provides a person with a sense of belonging to a group. It bestows a sense of authority. The clothing of different subcultures act as a uniform to identify people with shared values. Hippies, skinheads, punks and grungers are examples of such subcultures. The vogue for designer labels, sports clothing and trainers signify allegiances, such as the wearing of football shirts of a particular team. We are all subject to a pressure to conform and we make a lot of judgements about people because of their clothes. The business suit distinguishes people who have ‘important’ jobs that require them to meet people and make important decisions. Casual clothes are often seen as inappropriate in a business environment. Yet, when there is no direct contact with customers, i.e. on ‘Dress Down Days’, such as Friday, employees can leave their suits behind and are encouraged to wear jeans and t-shirts or other casual clothes. This practice was first introduced by computer companies in the USA and was designed to help break down barriers between different levels of workers and to encourage teamwork and improve communication on an interpersonal level. Dressing formally for an interview or a court appearance is clearly important. While looking smart, we are also signalling our willingness to conform to the demands of authority (this is important in both the job market and the magistrates’ court). Dressing casually is more appropriate when we are relaxing or socialising. Casual clothes are more comfortable. Some teachers dress informally to signify a less authoritarian relationship with their class.

Dress is just one aspect together with hairstyle, jewellery, make-up, body adornment and body modification. They make statements about ourselves and our system of values (e.g. hair length or facial hair in men; the type and style of jewellery; tattoos or piercings all act as signals). Like all signals, they are open to being read in a variety of different ways according to the attitudes, values and backgrounds of the ‘reader’.

7) **POSTURE**

Posture is about the way in which we position our bodies. We are always told about the importance of an erect posture, to hold ourselves upright and straight. On the contrary, slouching is associated with poor posture and implies laziness or slovenly behaviour. “Sit up straight”, “shoulders back”, or “chin up” are instructions regularly heard at home and at school.
We associate an upright posture with people who are confident about themselves. Low self-esteem is reflected in our posture, meaning lack of confidence. People bending their bodies into a foetal position are seen as though seeking the reassurance of the womb. We use posture as one means of indicating to another person our feelings of friendship or hostility. Standing with hands on hips can be construed as confrontational and hostile. In Japan people bow to say hello, when they introduce themselves and when they give business cards. In India people bow with their hands put like in prayer.

People unconsciously imitate the postures of the people they are with. This process is called mirroring or postural congruence. An example is the way in which people often cross their legs or fold their arms. Part of the function of such actions is to reinforce group identities and to suggest conformity.

8) PARALANGUAGE

We don’t just communicate with words: we also make noises that aren’t words. We raise and lower our voices. We pause. We stress some words (almost like underlining words when writing). E.g. Noises such as ‘um’ or ‘ah’. Pauses, hesitations, little laughs or coughs.

Hesitations serve to stop the flow of speech. A newsreader rarely hesitates. Any hesitations usually indicates that something has gone wrong. In conversation, instead, hesitations are commonplace, because they give us time to consider what we are saying, before answering.

People tend to have individual speech patterns which make their voices distinctive and memorable. Such factors as pitch, stress, accent and pace, determine how the messages we utter are interpreted. Paralanguage is important to determine the way in which people respond to our spoken messages. When we ask a question, the pitch of our voice tends to rise as we near the end of the sentence. The rising pitch is generally interpreted by listeners as an indication that we are asking a question. Some people find it almost impossible to detect when other people are being ironical.

Pitch: To shout the sentence loudly would be perceived as a warning, an alarm and a plea for help. Volume: We tend to shout when we get angry or excited. Pace: Our speech will tend to speed up when the message is emotionally charged. Accent: Regional accents are spoken with unique intonations and rhythms. Many of these accents carry with them connotations which are stereotypical.
GREETINGS AND NON-VERBAL CUSTOMS IN OUR COUNTRIES

IN REUNION ISLAND

The first time you meet a Reunionese woman you can give her kisses on cheeks, it's not impolite. But if you meet a man you must shake his hand. Between adults and kids or teenagers, kisses on cheeks are allowed.

In Reunion, for teenagers, there are different ways to say hello. If there are two girls, they give hugs and kisses on cheeks. It's the same between girls and boys. But if there are two boys, they say hello in a particular way: they fist-bump each other (the first boy slaps into the other boy’s hand, then he puts his fist opposite to the other boy’s fist).

Hugging, kissing and touching is usually reserved for family members and very close friends.

When adults meet teenagers or kids, they always give kisses. Between an elderly person and young people, handshaking is a sign of respect. In a family living in the same house, a brother and a sister don't usually kiss each other unless they miss for a long time. Of course, at work or when you meet a person who has a certain authority, you must handshake.

In the street, two girls who are close friends can hold their hands but it's totally forbidden between two boys. People in Reunion Island won't hesitate to greet people they know by giving each other a kiss on each cheek. They say hello when they cross people in the street. They usually gesticulate while talking. The distance they will keep depends on familiarity and level of comfort.

IN ROMANIA

In Romania handshaking is the most popular form of greeting, not only when you meet them for the first time. Although they are friends, Romanians shake their hands between men, women and teenagers. When a Romanian man introduces himself to a woman, he will probably kiss her hand.

Sometimes men and women, or just women, can kiss each other on cheeks but they have to be close friends or join the same family.

Romanians smile every time they meet their friends on the street. They enjoy when the person look them into eyes during a conversation but they must keep a certain distance: about 2 meters. During conversations, Romanian people use a lot of gestures and facial expressions; they touch themselves on the arms, shoulders, hands. But pointing at someone is considered rude.

NVC when initiating contact in Romania:

FORMAL
People shake their hands, greet each other respectfully, the proximity is 1.5-2 metres.

Men-women
They shake hands saying, ”Nice to meet you!”
It is always nice to smile and start with a compliment.
INFORMAL

Men-men
They shake hands tightly while standing straight, so that they can have eye contact, and say, "Hi!". Men/boys tend to increase the distance between them.

Women-Women
They shake hands, maybe kiss on their cheeks, smile and say "Hello!"
The eye contact is about 3 seconds. The proximity is smaller than in men’s case.

Peers
At first they greet each other and shake hands.
People appreciate it if you look them in their eyes. The proximity is personal, about 40-75 cm.
They dress according to group values and personal taste.

IN CROATIA

Croatian people tend to be formal and reserved when greeting for the first time.
Close friends and family may greet each other with a kiss on each cheek. Croatians use gestures a lot in communication.
It is customary to shake hands with both men and women, not only when you meet a person for the first time, but every time you meet. It's the same for friends, between men, women and teenagers. In some cases, if they are close friends or members of the same family, men and women will give each other a kiss on each cheek, which is a sign of a good friendship.

In a job interview or when greeting, people always shake their hands and have direct eye contact.
To maintain eye contact is very important when you are talking to a Croatian. Direct eye contact is usually expected and appreciated. In fact, regular eye contact should be maintained, and a refusal to make eye contact would be regarded as a sign that you do not care for that person.
Professionally, eye contact is particularly important.

There are some gestures that are considered rude: for example, pointing at someone.

Saying hello and goodbye in Croatia

1) **Handshake** - used for:

   - Introduction
   - Friends who haven’t seen each other for awhile
   - Formal occasions (business meetings, weddings, saying congratulations)
- Male friends saying hello

2) **Kiss** ➔ used by female friends saying hello
   combined with handshake to say congratulations

3) **Hug** ➔ used by close friends or family to say hello or goodbye
4) **Nod** ➔ used for saying hello to teachers outside the classroom

5) **Wave** ➔ Saying hello or goodbye from a distance
Saying hello and goodbye with gestures in Poland

Handshake → friends can shake hands to say hello. People also use it when they introduce themselves and at the end of a meeting.

Fist bump and high five → these are gestures friends use to say hello
**Hug** → close friends and relatives hug when they want to say hello or goodbye

**Kiss in both cheeks** → only people who are very close use this gesture

**Hand wave** → is used both for hello and goodbye
**Head bow** → is used in formal situations along with words (for example, “Good morning!”)

**Kissing hand** → is a very old fashioned gesture, sometimes used in very formal situations
- ITALIAN POPULAR GESTURES -
  (JUST A FEW.)

- WHAT? (WHERE) (WHY)
- FINITO (no more)
- I DON'T CARE
- APPROVED! (good)

- GO AWAY!
- LOOK AT THAT CREATURE
- ALONE (like a dog)
- IF YOU COULD ONLY IMAGINE.

- LET'S GO
- YOU SHITTED YOUR PANTS EH?
- GO FUCK YOURSELF!
- FORGET IT!
ITALIAN POPULAR GESTURES

CHAPTER II

1. I'LL MAKE YOUR ASS THIS BIG!
2. WHAT A SMELL!
3. UH-HA (UNDER THE TABLE)
4. HAZZATE! (YOU WANT TO BE BEATEN!)
5. DEAD
6. GAY
7. BLAH BLAH
8. FUNNY... (IRONIC)
9. YOU ARE NUTS
10. BASTA! (ENOUGH!)
11. LOOKING TIME AGO
12. LET'S FUCK!

* THE HANDS DISPLAY THE SIZE OF THE ANKE.
ITALIAN POPULAR GESTURES

CHAPTER III

HUNGRY

AH, WHAT WOULD I DO TO YOU!

IF I CATCH YOU...

ANGRY

YOU DIDN'T FOOL ME
- OR -
I FOOLED YOU

ARE YOU NUTS?
- OR -
MY ASS!

COOL

THIS LONG
- OR -
TAKING IT IN THE ASS

TIE'!
(TAKE THIS!)
HERE ARE SOME TURKISH GESTURES AND THEIR MEANINGS

Turkish people shake their hands when they meet for the first time or while they are greeting each other.

Turkish people kiss their elders’ hands and as a show of respect on special occasions.
This gesture stands for appreciation in Turkish culture.

Kissing on both cheeks is used to show love and affection and people kiss each other for greeting.
Turkish people hug when they miss each other. They also hug while greeting and leaving.

Bending is another way of showing respect for Turkish people.
Meeting new people and introducing yourself in BULGARIA

COMMUNICATION STYLE

Bulgarians are direct but use non verbal communication extensively. They are champions at indirect communication. One needs to observe the manner and tone of the speaker to understand fully.

Making Contact

• Normally Bulgarians shake hands when meeting and maintain direct eye contact.

![Handshake](image)

• With members of the opposite sex and business colleagues, it is appropriate to keep a moderate amount of space when conversing.
• Between friends and family, the need for personal space is less.

Light hugs are something typical between close friends and family.

![Light hug](image)
A kiss on each cheek is a usual greeting between women who know each other.

GREETINGS

**Man greeting Man** - Men shake hands when greeting one another and maintain direct eye contact. A relatively firm handshake is the way to go. Light hugs are common between good friends and family.

**Woman greeting Woman** - A kiss on each cheek is common if two women know each other. A light handshake is the norm if they are meeting for the first time.

**Man greeting Woman** - At a first meeting a handshake will do.
EYE CONTACT

Direct eye contact is fine in most situations. Looking in a person's eyes while conversing shows honesty.

In communication between men and women, holding the gaze a bit longer is usually viewed as a sign of interest (goes both ways). Between men this is usually viewed as a threat or competition.

PERSONAL SPACE AND TOUCHING

Depending on the relationship, personal space when speaking may vary. Between family and friends there is little personal space.

With members of the opposite sex and business colleagues, it is appropriate to keep an arm’s length of personal space when conversing.
GESTURES

Unlike most of the world, Bulgaria has different head gestures to signify “no” and “yes.” Shaking your head from side to side indicates “yes” and an up and down movement means “no.” This is an extremely hard habit to break and very confusing for Bulgarians to understand when speaking to a foreigner. The best thing to do is keep your head still and just say “yes/da” or “no/ne.”

MEETING PROTOCOL

Bulgaria is a moderately formal society, which means that initial greetings are always formal. When meeting people shake their hands firmly, maintain eye contact and use a suitable greeting for the time of day. It is better to refer to people by their titles (if you are familiar with them) or using Mr ‘Gospodin’ / Mrs ‘Gospozha’ with the surname. Only friends and family members will address each other by their first names and give each other a hug or kiss in public.

PERSONAL TITLES

Mr. and Mrs. are the titles used during formal occasions and when meeting someone for the first time, but it is not uncommon to be called by your first name and formality lessens as time goes on. It is normal to exchange business cards at the beginning of a business meeting. The use of formal titles is mainly limited to the workplace and even in situations where the person is highly-regarded, they might prefer to be addressed by their given name. Terms of address between spouses are also very informal and women are no longer solely identified as ‘the wife of’ and addressed by their husband’s name.

VIEWS OF TIME

- For business, punctuality is expected for meetings, arriving to the workplace and deadlines. However for social situations and engagements time is much more fluid and negotiable.
- Dinners in usually take at least a couple of hours, and if it is for a special occasion expect at least 4 hours of eating and drinking.
- When socializing Bulgarians take their time and enjoy the others’ company. Sometimes it is helpful to ask the same question numerous times to see if the response changes. For example, when inviting someone out the initial answer might be “no” but if asked again the response sometimes changes with a little encouragement by asking again. Bulgarians are not afraid to raise their voices. Even if they sound upset and it appears they quarreling, usually they are not and the conversation will end in a friendly manner. The closer people are the more they may actually argue and fight but it's never taken personally.
• Bulgarian culture is very vocal; people are generally quite talkative and enjoy conversations. They feel uneasy about sudden breaks in conversation and although interruptions are not well accepted, they can demonstrate that someone is interested and paying attention to the subject matter. In most cases, it is considered very rude to interrupt. At first, it may be difficult to start a conversation but with a little perseverance, Bulgarians will normally open up and may start talking a lot, at times with several people speaking at once.

MAKING A GOOD FIRST IMPRESSION

• The way you introduce and present yourself provides people with a first impression of you. Most people begin forming an opinion of you within 3 seconds and these judgements can be difficult to modify.
• When we introduce ourselves to someone, we're saying we're interested in establishing some sort of ongoing rapport for mutual benefit. There are 3 parts to our introductions:
  • the handshake (often, but not always)
  • introducing yourself
  • moving into conversation.

• Good topics: family, and home life
• Bad topics: politics and social conditions in Bulgaria