

---

**Understanding Non-Verbal Communication Through A Short Story**

---

**Dr. Sambaiah Medikonda**

Associate Professor of English

Dept. of Humanities and Social Sciences

JNTUA College of Engineering Pulivendula (A)

Pulivendula, KDAPA District.

Phone(o):91 7670902311,(P)+91 8333853063

---

**Abstract:**

Body language plays a crucial role in communication, often conveying messages more powerfully than words. This document explores various aspects of non-verbal communication, focusing on gestures, facial expressions, posture, and dress. Through an analysis of Stephen Leacock's "With The Photographer," it examines how body language influences perception and interaction. The study highlights how body movements, including eye contact, hand gestures, and facial expressions, shape communication and social relationships. Furthermore, it delves into the psychological and cultural significance of body language, emphasizing its impact on professional, social, and personal contexts. Understanding body language enhances communication effectiveness, builds trust, and helps in interpreting unspoken emotions. The document also provides a self-assessment to improve one's awareness of non-verbal cues. Ultimately, it underscores that mastering body language is essential for fostering better interpersonal relationships and self-presentation.

**Keywords:** body language, non-verbal communication, gestures, facial expressions, posture, social interaction, communication skills.

**1.Pre-Reading Activity:**

*We use hands for various gestures. But when we bring both hands get together for clapping, they give totally different meaning. Here are the some implications for people generally clap their hands. Match the following against that intention behind clapping.*

When to clap	What to mean
1. If you clap before a speech starts	A. Speech is good ! [ ]
2. If you clap while speech is going on	B. Just look at me ! [ ]
3. If you clap when speech is completed	C. Inviting speaker ! [ ]
4. If you clap continuously while speech is going on	D. Stop the speech ! [ ]
5. If you clap for people who are far way	E. I like that point ! [ ]

**2.Think before you start:**

*Do you remember how were you treated or suggested different position by the photographer when you visited photoshop last time? Why did he give that much importance to sitting or standing positions? How*

## Delmon Publications

### International Council of English and Literature Journal (ICELJ)

An International Peer-Reviewed Journal; Volume-4, Issue-1, February;2024, pp.34-44

*hard did he try to capture better face from you? Did he suggest any facial expressions to put in front of camera? What type of clothes or colors did he ask you to wear? Why? Do they have any meaning? Do they represent your personality wherever you use photo for various occasions? It is true that each and every part in our body has meaning and every movement is intentional. Body speaks louder than mouth. In fact body language sends strong message in our day to day communications.*

*Read the story by Stephen Leacock, with the intention of understanding the photographers' idea of doing various things with the posture and face of the author and derive the importance of body language.*

#### With The Photographer

I want my photograph taken," I said. The photographer looked at me without enthusiasm. He was a drooping man in a gray suit, with the dim eye of a natural scientist. But there is no need to describe him. Everybody knows what a photographer is like.

"Sit there," he said, "and wait."

I waited an hour. I read the Ladies Companion for 1912, the Girls Magazine for 1902 and the Infants Journal for 1888. I began to see that I had done an unwarrantable thing in breaking in on the privacy of this man's scientific pursuits with a face like mine.

After an hour the photographer opened the inner door.

"Come in," he said severely.

I went into the studio.

"Sit down," said the photographer.

I sat down in a beam of sunlight filtered through a sheet of factory cotton hung against a frosted skylight.

The photographer rolled a machine into the middle of the room and crawled into it from behind.

He was only in it a second,--just time enough for one look at me,--and then he was out again, tearing at the cotton sheet and the window panes with a hooked stick, apparently frantic for light and air.

Then he crawled back into the machine again and drew a little black cloth over himself. This time he was very quiet in there. I knew that he was praying and I kept still.

When the photographer came out at last, he looked very grave and shook his head.

"The face is quite wrong," he said.

"I know," I answered quietly; "I have always known it."

He sighed.

"I think," he said, "the face would be better three-quarters full."



## Delmon Publications

### International Council of English and Literature Journal (ICELJ)

An International Peer-Reviewed Journal; Volume-4, Issue-1, February;2024, pp.34-44

"I'm sure it would," I said enthusiastically, for I was glad to find that the man had such a human side to him. "So would yours. In fact," I continued, "how many faces one sees that are apparently hard, narrow, limited, but the minute you get them three-quarters full they get wide, large, almost boundless in----" But the photographer had ceased to listen. He came over and took my head in his hands and twisted it sideways. I thought he meant to kiss me, and I closed my eyes.

But I was wrong.

He twisted my face as far as it would go and then stood looking at it.

He sighed again.

"I don't like the head," he said.

Then he went back to the machine and took another look.

"Open the mouth a little," he said.

I started to do so.

"Close it," he added quickly.

Then he looked again.

"The ears are bad," he said; "droop them a little more. Thank you. Now the eyes. Roll them in under the lids. Put the hands on the knees, please, and turn the face just a little upward. Yes, that's better. Now just expand the lungs! So! And hump the neck--that's it--and just contract the waist--ha!--and twist the hip up toward the elbow--now! I still don't quite like the face, it's just a trifle too full, but----"

I swung myself round on the stool.

"Stop," I said with emotion but, I think, with dignity. "This face is my face. It is not yours, it is mine. I've lived with it for forty years and I know its faults. I know it's out of drawing. I know it wasn't made for me, but it's my face, the only one I have--" I was conscious of a break in my voice but I went on-- "such as it is, I've learned to love it. And this is my mouth, not yours. These ears are mine, and if your machine is too narrow--" Here I started to rise from the seat.

Snick!

The photographer had pulled a string. The photograph taken. I could see the machine still staggering from the shock.

"I think," said the photographer, pursing his lips in a pleased smile, "that I caught the features just in a moment of animation."

"So!" I said biting,--"features, eh? You didn't think I could animate them, I suppose? But let me see the picture."

"Oh, there's nothing to see yet," he said, "I have to develop the negative first. Come back on Saturday and I'll let you see a proof of it."

On Saturday I went back.

The photographer beckoned me in. I thought he seemed quieter and graver than before. I think, too, there was a certain pride in his manner.

He unfolded the proof of a large photograph, and we both looked at it in silence.

"Is it me?" I asked.

"Yes," he said quietly, "it is you," and we went on looking at it.

"The eyes," I said hesitatingly, "don't look very much like mine."

"Oh, no," he answered, "I've retouched them. They come out splendidly, don't they?"

"Fine," I said, "but surely my eyebrows are not like that?"

"No," said the photographer, with a momentary glance at my face, "the eyebrows are removed. We have a process now--the Delphide--for putting in new ones. You'll notice here where we've applied it to carry the hair away from the brow. I don't like the hair low on the skull."

"Oh, you don't, don't you?" I said.

"No," he went on, "I don't care for it. I like to get the hair clear back to the superficies and make out a new brow line."

"What about the mouth?" I said with a bitterness that was lost on the photographer; "is that mine?"

"It's adjusted a little," he said, "yours is too low. I found I couldn't use it."

"The ears, though," I said, "strike me as a good likeness; they're just like mine."

"Yes," said the photographer thoughtfully, "that's so; but I can fix that all right in the print. We have a process now--the Sulphide--for removing the ears entirely. I'll see if----"

"Listen!" I interrupted, drawing myself up and animating my features to their full extent and speaking with a withering scorn that should have blasted the man on the spot. "Listen! I came here for a photograph--a picture--something which (mad though it seems) would have looked like me. I wanted something that would depict my face as Heaven gave it to me, humble though the gift may have been. I wanted something that my friends might keep after my death, to reconcile them to my loss. It seems that I was mistaken. What I wanted is no longer done. Go on, then, with your brutal work. Take your negative, or whatever it is you call it,--dip it in sulphide, bromide, oxide, cowhide,--anything you like,--remove the eyes, correct the mouth, adjust the face, restore the lips, reanimate the necktie and reconstruct the waistcoat. Coat it with an inch of gloss, shade it, emboss it, gild it, till even you acknowledge that it is finished. Then when you have done all that--keep it for yourself and your friends. They may value it. To me it is but a worthless bauble."

I broke into tears and left.

### **3. Understanding the Story:**

*Answer the following questions. Later you may discuss your answers in the class.*

1. How did the photographer's --eyes, grey suit, and look- present typical features of a photographer?
2. Why did the author feel irritated for the sitting posture suggested by Photographer?
3. Why was face so important for photography? Discuss.
4. Why did the author think that the photographer was praying? Trace out the relationship between prayer and silence.
5. What kind of facial features discussed between the author and photographer?
6. Was there any wrong with authors head? Or it only position of head? Explain.
7. Was there any point in opening or closing mouth with the author? What?
8. How could the author use the word 'stop' emotionally but with dignity? Can the way we utter the words carry the multiple meanings? How?
9. What changes made author's photo artificial? Why?
10. How does one generally show pride in manners? How did the author identify pride in photographer?
11. How did the author express his disappointment and frustration with the photographer at the end?
12. Why did author call the photographers' brutal work?

**4. Learning from people:**

*Various words related to body language are used in the story. Discuss with your partner trace them out and their corresponding meanings. Consult the dictionary if required.*

	<b>Body Movements</b>	<b>Used to express Meaning in the story</b>
1.	Looked at	without enthusiasm
2.	Drooping man	
3.	Dim eye	
4.	Praying kept still	
5.	Looked grave	
6.	Three-quarters full face	
7.	Taking head into hands	
8.	Full face/quarter face	
9.	Droop ears good	
10.	Rolling eyes	
11.	Expand the lungs	
12.	Hump the neck	
13.	Contract the waist	
14.	Twist the hip	
15.	Pursing his lips	

**Say true or false:**

- |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Do you think keeping people on waiting makes others believe that you are busy? | [ | ] |
| 2. You breathe slow when you feel tension?  | [ | ] |
| 3. Putting your hand on our head make you more honest when promising.             | [ | ] |
| 4. Laughter is a strong exhibition of tension.                                    | [ | ] |
| 5. When somebody stretches his hand for shaking you feel friendly with him.       | [ | ] |
| 6. Folding the hands across the chest shows your disrespect.                      | [ | ] |
| 7. Shaking hands/fingers while eating show that you are feeling inferior.         | [ | ] |
| 8. Good dress enhances your confidence in public.                                 | [ | ] |
| 9. Shouting is the result of angry.   | [ | ] |
| 10. If you sit straight you are sleepy.   | [ | ] |

**5. Applying the story:**

Being able to read body language can provide a deeper understanding of what people are trying to say and help interpret the words left unsaid.

In a world where people can be dishonest and corrupt, knowing how to read non-verbal cues

becomes important. Following are some body language categories of non-verbal language.

Verbal Skills	Non-verbal
Listening Skills	<u>BODY LANGUAGE</u>
Speaking Skills	Body Posture
Reading Skills	Gestures
Writing Skills	Eye Contact
Net Etiquettes	Facial Expressions
	Appearance
	Space Distance /Proxemics
	Touch/Haptics
	<u>PARA LANGUAGE</u>

***Body language is the crux of the communication:*** We can sense when others are silent and digesting information, or when they are silent and confuse. We can share feelings too strong or too difficult to be expressed in words. We can decode secret messages passing silently from person to person. We may spot contradictions between what others say and what they really mean. We can learn to be more sensitive to our own bodies – to see how they express our feelings and to see ourselves as others see us.

***Becoming sensitive to the clues of body language can help us communicate more effectively with others:*** The author was angry for too many directions given by the photographer because he came to take photograph with whatever he had but not to change. He wanted to reflect whatever he had because the felt that he did not have body but he was his body.

***Body language speaks before speaking:*** We can understand what others are saying even when they are not talking. The photographer kept the author on waiting for one hour and sent a message that there as a problem with his profession.

***Dress code speaks your personality:*** Photographer's grey colour suit made a negative first impression in author. Professional and healthy dress code will be highly fetching in interview room. Dress reveals some crucial things like your professionalism or seriousness about occasion and status too.

***Posture shows your confidence:*** The way one moves, walks, and sits can give volumes of information about him or her at that situation. Author's posture was not felt well by the photographer.

***Gestures elaborate your feelings:*** The language of gesture is rich in ways for individuals to express a variety of feelings and thoughts, from contempt and hostility to approval and affection. Authors eye, mouth, ear, head, hair and many more was distorted hence they lost sense or missed originality.

***Eye contact relates you with others:***Eyes are said to be the windows of the soul. The level of confidence, quality of promise, and quantity of inhibition can be abundantly expressed through eye contact. The excitement of putting posture for photo was corrected by the photographer by asking droop a little.

***Facial expressions establish very identity of individual:***Face is the index of mind. Smiling face wins many things in both professional and general situations. Most of the emotions can be expressed through face. Familiarity and understanding facial expressions will not only help us to communicate with others but also improve our ability to what other people are communicating. The very identity of the author was distorted by the photographer by making drastic changes in the efface which make author bitter.

***Haptics builds mental space between people:***Touching and being touched are essential to a healthy life. Touch can communicate power, empathy, assurance, modesty, and understanding. Photographers touching authors head made him to think that he as kissing.

***Para- language :***Photographer's making sighs at occasions denote his dissatisfaction about the body language of the author. Para-language is not strictly of the verbal message, but it includes voice tone and pitch, the speed and volume of message delivery and pauses and hesitations between words. These are signals that convey the feeling behind the words. Emphasis on certain words can imply whether or not a feedback is required.

**6.Do you have good body language?( Self-assessment test)**

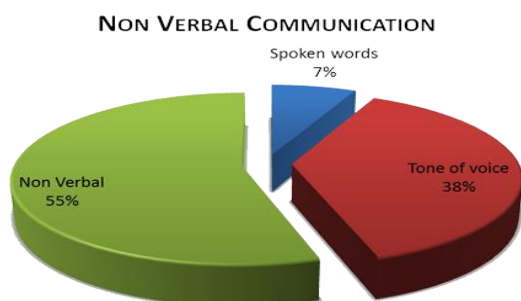
*Read the following 'yes' or 'no' questions carefully. If your answer is YES, wrote 1 .If NO write 0.*

	<i>Questions</i>	<i>1 or 0</i>
1	Do you smile while you speak with people?	
2	Do you look into others eyes when you speak?	
3	Do you stand on both legs while you speak on the dais?	
4	Do you put your hands on the face when you talk?	
5	Do you wear dress according to your wishes or follow celebrities?	
6	Do you use hand gestures while speaking?	
7.	Do you always sit comfortably in the class?	
8	Have you asked any of your friend about your body language?	
9	Do you follow trendy hair styles?	
10	Do you maintain proper distance when walking with people?	
11	Do you use the word' excuse me' before disturbing others?	
12	Du you shake your hand when you meet people first time?	
13	Do you feel nervous when speaking with strangers/elders/opposite sex?	
14	Do you feel excited for future projects or studies?	
15.	Do you put your elbows on the table while eating?	
16	Do you use all kinds of glasses confidently while drinking water?	
17.	Do you know how to wear tie?	
18	Do you know what color dress is apt for you?	



19	Can you confidently speak in front of a camera?	
20	Do you speak continuously without muttering?	

## 7. Thinking about Body language:



Nonverbal communication has been defined as communication without words. It includes behaviors such as facial expressions, eye contact, and tone of voice, as well as less clear messages such as dress, posture and spatial distance between two or more people.

Nonverbal communication is acquired shortly after birth and improved and refined throughout one's lifetime. Children first learn nonverbal expressions by watching and imitating, much as they learn verbal skills. According to the social anthropologist, Edward T. Hall, in a normal conversation between two persons, less than 35% of the social meanings is actually transmitted by words. So, at least 65% of it is conveyed through the body (non-verbal channel).

*"The most important thing in communication is hearing what isn't said."* --Peter F. Drucker.

## Good body language is essential for students:

- *You can create positive picture about yourself:* The first 7 minutes on a job interview can be crucial to the prospect of landing the job. As we already know, it only takes a fraction of second for us to create a picture in our minds about others. So in job interviews, it's imperative to make first impressions count
- *You can establish trust while you dealing with people:* A person's body posture, movements and positions more often reveal us exactly what others mean which may be the exact reverse of what they are speaking.
- *You can avoid communication gap in your relationships:* Many people are unaware of how loudly they communicate with their bodies as our use and reading of body language is largely unconscious.
- *You can understand others effectively:* We understand what a person tells with his gestures and body positions and we send out our own messages - but we rarely stop to think about how we do it constantly occurring.





- *You can behave wisely in all situations:* One who is aware of his body language can manage any situation depending on context. Nonverbal communication occurs when it is impossible to tell what it means.

#### The Philosophy Behind Non-Verbal Skills:

English naturalist and geologist Charles Darwin suggested that all mammals, both humans and animals, showed emotions through facial expressions. American anthropologist Ray Birdwhistell estimated that humans could make and recognize around 250,000 facial expressions. Besides these two great scholars, researchers have studied the relationships between eye contact and conversational distance and between personal space and the environment. Remember:

- It takes just one-tenth of a second for someone to judge and make a first impression.
- You can play with words, but your body never lies.
- Your actions speak louder than your words.
- What you say may not matter, but the way you say it matters a lot.

*The human body is the best picture of the human soul.* —Ludwig Wittgenstein

#### Improving good body language:

We are constantly communicating irrespective of whether or not we are speaking. When we face or lean towards a person, we are conveying our attitude towards the person as well as our desire to control the environment; when we tap our fingers and jiggle coins, we are communicating our restless emotional state. We can make more than 700,000 possible motions, which makes it impossible to categorize them all. So it is next to impossible to decode every single non-verbal cue. But we could do well to be aware how our body movements and positions are sending messages. The subsequent paragraphs give you suggestions on how to learn about body language.

- *Change your value system:* Man behaves, as he believes. So, our belief system which determines your attitudes and behaviour should be very clear and strong.
- *Read books:* Many popular books on non-verbal communication are available in the market. These try to decode the implication behind nods, eye movements, and gestures to help you get behind the façade and make sense of what is being communicated to you.



- *Be conscious about your body:* You could unknowingly communicate information in numerous ways. So be conscious of your how you make eye contact, how you gesticulate, how you use your voice, how your use your postures and body movements. By paying closer attention to other your body language, you could improve your own ability to communicate non-verbally.
- *Watch out for incongruent behaviors:* Pay special attention to see if the speaker's words match their non-verbal cues. Research indicates that when there is word – non-verbal signal mismatch, people tend to ignore what is being said and focus instead on the unspoken expressions of moods, thoughts, and underlying emotions.
- *Get feedback from well-wishers:* If you are confused about another person's non-verbal signals, ask questions. A good idea is to repeat your interpretation of what was said so that the speaker knows he or she has been correctly understood.
- *Practice in front of mirror:* When communicating with others, always consider when and where the communication would occur. Some situations require formal behaviors that might be interpreted differently in any other setting. Consider whether your non-verbal behaviors are appropriate for the context. If you wish to improve on your own non-verbal skills, concentrate on ways to make your signals match your words.
- *You need integrity:* Match your words and actions. It is found that people who maintain same behaviour at all places, at all times with all people found to be no problem with body language.

Smile costs nothing but buys everything!

**8 .Post -reading activity:**

1. Form a group of four or five and discuss why there are dress codes for various professionals like lawyers, doctors, police, army, priests, men and women and so on. The group leader may then present the answers to the class.
2. Form in pairs and ask your partner to deliver a speech on choice of own. Note down the following points and allot marks .You may discuss with your partner later and suggest some improvements in his body language.

Name	Standing Posture	Facial expressions	Eye contact	gestures	Confidence

**9. Questions:**

*Answer the following questions and collect additional information.*

1. What is the role of body language in communication?

2. What are the various functions of body language?
3. Why is good body language essential for students?
4. What the philosophy behind non-verbal Skills?
5. What are major areas of body language?
6. How to improve good body language?

**References:**

1. Andersen, Peter A. *Nonverbal Communication: Forms and Functions*. 2nd ed., Waveland Press, 2007.
2. Argyle, Michael. *Bodily Communication*. 2nd ed., Routledge, 2013.
3. Burgoon, Judee K., et al. *Nonverbal Communication*. 2nd ed., Routledge, 2016.
4. Hall, Edward T. *The Hidden Dimension*. Anchor Books, 1966.
5. Hall, Edward T. *The Silent Language*. Anchor Books, 1959.
6. Knapp, Mark L., and Judith A. Hall. *Nonverbal Communication in Human Interaction*. 9th ed., Cengage Learning, 2021.
7. Mehrabian, Albert. *Nonverbal Communication*. Aldine-Atherton, 1972.
8. Pease, Allan, and Barbara Pease. *The Definitive Book of Body Language*. Bantam, 2006.
9. Matsumoto, David, et al. *The Nonverbal Communication Reader: Classic and Contemporary Readings*. 3rd ed., Waveland Press, 2013.
10. Fast, Julius. *Body Language*. MJF Books, 2002.