Body Language: Key to Professional Success Prof. Rashmi Gaur Department of Humanities and Social Sciences Indian Institute of Technology, Roorkee

Lecture - 19 Gustorics and Silence

Welcome dear participants. In the fourth module of the fourth week we would take up digital body language which is an emerging aspect of nonverbal communication. In the previous modules, we have looked at those aspects of nonverbal communication which have been traditionally associated with its studies.

As a society is developing with the interface of technology we find that newer dimensions in our understanding of nonverbal communication are being added. One major aspect is digital body language, which we would discuss today. When these studies and researches were taken up in nonverbal communication, they excerpt different responses to it.

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Changing Contours Interventions of technique and media are changing contours of conventional understanding of Body Language Spurred a featuring of regular columns in its earlier phase: influencing professional settings and media Conventional personalization has become inadequate in the current Al based use of networking platforms In the realm of computer-mediated-communication (CMC), digital body language (DBL) has become indispensable for developing insight into user sentiment at mass scale, and benchmarking it DBL improves the digital experience: renewed interest in studying it in the light of new technological immediacy

On one hand it resulted into sustainable research programs and at the same time it also attracted the media people resulting in regular columns looking at the body language of different famous people. And, at the same time the professional settings were also influenced by this enriched understanding. And, that is why we find that gradually it

NLP: Positive and Negative Body behaviors

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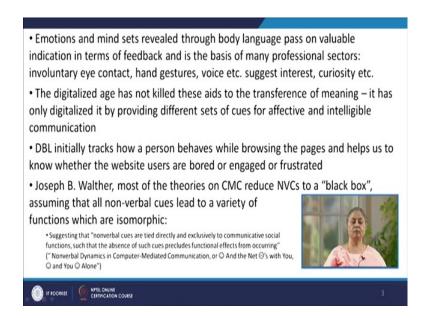
became a compulsory part of different evaluation processes in professional settings. The conventional understanding of body language used to provide us a personalization.

We could look at a person and on the basis of different kinesics use etcetera, we could form a particular opinion. However, once the technology started to develop and with the presence of artificial intelligence, when we are looking at an unprecedented development in related fields this conventional personalization has become not only obsolete, but also in many ways redundant.

And, now we find that in all aspects of Computer Mediated Communication that is CMC and understanding of Digital Body Language that is DBL has become an indispensable part for developing an insight into the user sentiments, particularly at a massive scale and also to help us in benchmarking these tastes and preferences. Our understanding of digital body language improves the digital experience as a user and also as a person who has to develop further strategies on the basis of DBL.

Our understanding of Digital Body Language has generated a renewed interest in studying this aspect of nonverbal communication in the light of new technological immediacy. This aspect of DBL has further been enriched by certain other researches, particularly in the area of NLP or Neuro Linguistic Programming which suggest that we can shift from a negative body behaviour to a positive one and we can learn it as a new skill. We will look at the conventional aspects of body language be it the kinesics or our expressions through our face, the voice quotes etcetera.

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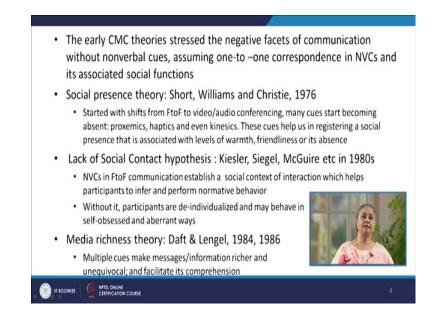
It is generally believed that they reflect our emotions and are an indication of our mindsets. And these indications used to complete our understanding of any communication process and they also helped us in generating a proper feedback. In terms of feedback and in terms of understanding the message completely, these used to provide valuable indications and cues.

Now, we find that in the digitalised age, these aids are not any more accessible to us. Sometimes, people feel that the digital age has killed these aids to the immediate transference of meaning. However, I would say that instead of killing these aids that digitalised age has only digitalised these aids and it has provided us a different set of cues for effective and intelligible communication. No study of any aspect of communication can be absolutely isolated from the context in which it is taking place. And today's context is moulded by our technological understanding. We cannot imagine any communication today, without any direct association with technology and it is only natural that our understanding of body language is also given an additional dimension.

The digital body language initially is started to track a person's behaviour, how does a person behave while browsing the pages and it helped us to know whether the website users are bored with the content or they are frustrated or they are engaged etcetera.

I would like to quote from an article by Joseph Walther, who has suggested that most of the theories on computer mediated communication tend to reduce nonverbal communication to a 'black box'. Assuming that our nonverbal cues lead to a variety of functions, which are compulsorily isomorphic and I quote suggesting that "nonverbal cues are tied directly and exclusively to communicative social functions, such that the absence of such cues precludes functional effects from occurring".

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At an early stage of their development, the communication theories which tend to address CMC by and large looked at the negative aspects of a communication event, which is occurring without traditional nonverbal cues. And, they assumed a one to one correspondence between NVC's and its associated social functions, even though there are many theoretical approaches to address this situation. I would prefer to refer to these three theories, which is started different responses in their wake.

The first is a social presence theory, the second is lack of social contact hypothesis and the third is the media richness theory. The first theory social presence theory was put forward by Short, Williams and Christy in 1976. The theoretical approaches which come under this theory is started when there was a remarkable shift from a face to face communication to audio or video conferencing.

When we shifted to audio or video conferencing, we found that many cues of nonverbal communication started to become absent. For example, in video conferencing haptics was absent, proxemics was also absent. In audio conferences, we find that even kinesics lost it is significance. The theoretical approach felt that these conventional cues helped

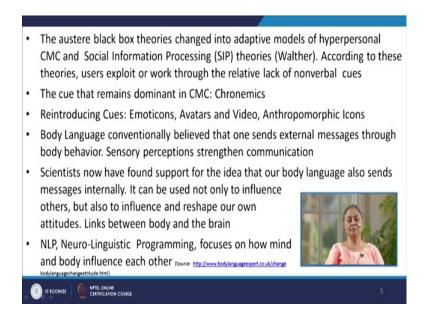
us in registering a social presence that is associated with certain levels of association. For example, they can indicate whether there is any sense of friendliness in the attitude of the interactant or not. The second theoretical approach is in a way not very different from the first one. The lack of social contact hypothesis was suggested in early 1980s by Kiesler, Siegel and McGuire etcetera.

They suggest that in face to face communication, nonverbal aspects of communication establish is social context of interaction within which different people interact and the social context helps the participants to infer what should be the normative behaviour and perform accordingly.

In the absence of this social context, participants are de-individualized and they tend to behave in ways which are rather self obsessed because they do not have the opportunity to look at the behaviour of others and receiving the cues and at the same time it can be aberrant. In comparison to these two theories, we find that the third theoretical approach is slightly different. The media richness theory was proposed by Daft and Lengel in a paper in 1984 and then they further extended it in 1986.

They suggest that the non verbal aspects of communication as we traditionally understand them, provide us to form as well as to interpret our messages with the help of multiple cues and these multiple cues provide a certain richness to the message which is unequivocal. And therefore, the comprehension of the message becomes easier. Whereas the first two theoretical approaches, the social presence theory and the lack of social contact hypothesis, focus on the absence of social interaction, the media richness theory is more related with a comprehension at an individual level.

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These theoretical approaches which have been termed as the 'black box' theory, very soon changed into adaptive models of hyper personal CMC and social information processing or SIP theories. As the technology changed our perception about it is use in different professional settings, our attitudes towards it and our relationships with it also changed. And these changing perspectives are reflected in the changing SIP theories.

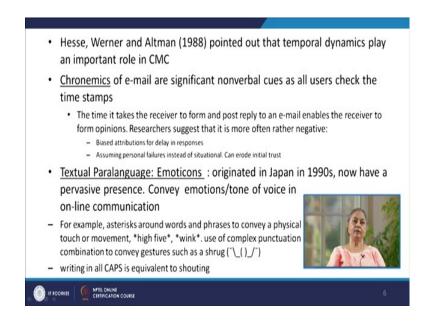
According to these theoretical approaches, users exploit or rather they work through the relative lack of nonverbal cues and then they can also develop a different set of cues. According to these theories the cue that is still remains dominant in CMC is Chronemics. We have looked at chronemics as a part of our newly emerging understanding of nonverbal aspects of communication, but still it was based on cultural perception.

These theoretical approaches in the context of CMC have suggested that chronemics is available even in computer mediated communication. At the same time, we find that with a help of technology, we can re-introduce certain cues or generate a different set of cues, which can be understood by people and can replace the conventional set of cues. For example: the emoticons, the avatars, the videos as well as the anthropomorphic icons.

Body language conventionally believed that one sends external messages through body behaviour and it was thought that sensory perception strength and communication. And the understanding of body language was linked as how our modes and attitudes, feelings etcetera, can be grasped by the other person and vice versa. However, scientific researchers have now claimed that our body language also sends internal messages. And, it can be used not only to influence other people, but it can also be used to influence and reshape our own attitudes.

For example, if we maintain a positive body language, then gradually our emotions would have a positive shift. This scientific research has strengthened, the conventional understanding which always believed that there is a very close association between the body and the brain. At this point, we can also refer to NLP or the Neuro Linguistic Programming again, which focuses on how mind and body influence each other.

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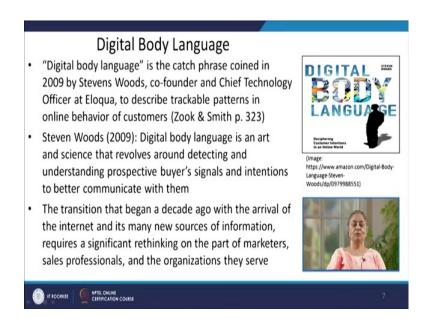


In the context of computer mediated communication, the temporal dynamics remain important. This has been pointed out by various researchers, I would refer to a particular research which was published in 1988 by Hesse, Werner and Altman. They have suggested that chronemics of e-mail are significant nonverbal cues as all users check the time stamps. They look at the time, when the response was received as well as if there is any delay in receiving the reply. So, the time it takes the receiver to form a reply and to post this reply to an e-mail enables the receiver to form opinions. And this research has also suggested that these opinions often tend to be on the negative side. For example, they would be biased attributions for delay in responses. We can assume personal failures as reasons instead of situational difficulties. And these biases and the human tendency to look at the negative side, first, can erode the initial trust in any professional

situation and therefore, these researchers tell us that chronemics in e-mail or in any social media is important. Another aspect, which has been termed as the textual paralanguage is the use of emoticons.

Emoticons originated in Japan in 1990s and have become very popular now. They now have a pervasive presence, they convey emotions and tone of voice in online communication and are easily understandable. For example, we understand, what is the meaning of asterisk around words and phrases or for that matter writing in all caps is equivalent to shouting.

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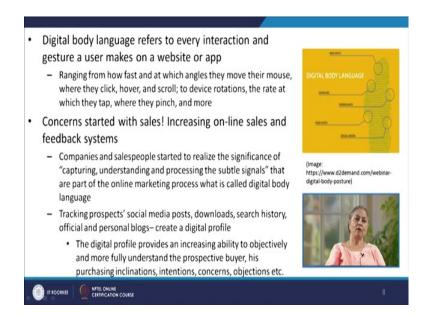


Digital Body anguage is a catch phrase in the same manner in which body language is. The phrase was first all introduced by Stevens Woods in 2009. In his book Digital Body Language, Steven Woods is the co-founder and Chief Technology officer at Eloqua. And he used this phrase to describe track able patterns in online behaviour of customers. Steven Woods suggested that digital body language is an art as well as a science which revolves around detecting and understanding prospective buyers signals and intentions to better communicate with them.

And he also suggests that the transition that had started about a decade ago with the arrival of the internet and the introduction of various new ways of accessing information and passing it onto others, required a significant rethinking on the people of marketers,

sales professionals and the organisations they serve. Digital body language according to him has become a need in today's society.

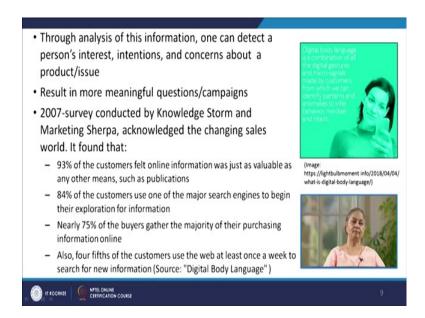
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So, what exactly the phrase digital body language refers to? It refers to every interaction and gesture a user makes on a website or on an app. Ranging from how fast and at which angles they move their mouse, where they click, where they hover around in a scroll, how do they device rotations, the rate at which they tap, where they pinch and similar other things. These concerns basically is started with the sales people, people who wanted to tap the online availability of resources for marketing.

So, gradually we find that increasingly online sales and feedback systems for getting data and related information about the customer behaviour were generated. The people, who manage company policies, started to realise the significance of and I quote "capturing, understanding and processing the subtle signals" that are part of the online processes and they came to be known as digital body language. The creation of the digital profile was primarily done by the sales people, but with the help of the connotations we find that very soon it started to be used in almost every other dimension of our life.

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With the help of our digital profile, one can analyse information about our interest, intentions and concerns not only about a product, but also about any other issue about which we might have shown an online curiosity. So, digital body language and its understanding results in meaningful campaigns and questions also.

A 2007 survey, which was conducted by Knowledge Storm and Marketing Sherpa, acknowledged the changing sales world and it found that 93 percent of the customers felt that online information was almost as valuable as information which they receive from any other source. For example, the publications or handbooks or other printed publicity material. 84 percent of the customers used one of the major search engines to begin their exploration for information. Nearly 75 percent of the buyers gather the maturity of their purchasing information online and four-fifths of the customers use the web at least once a week to search for new information. These findings are from a 2007 survey and since that we find that the presence of technology has only been enhanced. So, we can imagine the contemporary impact of technology in our understanding of interpersonal behaviour.

And therefore, Digital Body Language has started to become a focus in contemporary research. Whereas, all the researches are unanimous in suggesting that the digital world is important and so is our understanding of digital body language.

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There are certain reservations about its applicability particularly in those organisations, which are focused on learning and related with development of human beings. Technology enabled communications and earning transactions bring about various changes in our behaviours. And we find that not only the professions, but services also are shifting to digital modalities. It is convenient of course, it is quick also it saves time and it is cost effective also.

Normally it is within reach of common man. However, concerns have been raised particularly about the classroom situations, where it was felt that the traditional ways of receiving of feedback about the behaviour of the students through eye contact, proxemics, voice differences etcetera; if absent may be detrimental to their development. Digitization may result in lesser real time engagements, which may affect the opportunity on the part of a teacher to adapt to the body language in a classroom and suggest intervention if it is required.

At the same time we have to admit that our lack of comfort or our lack of competence in the use of digital methods may also result in certain reservations. Digital body language has been succinctly explained in this interesting video. (Refer Slide Time: 21:47)



So, we all know what human body language is; often times up to 80 percent of face to face communication is really through body language. But in today's world, when we are often in global virtual teams most of the time up to 80 percent of the time we are not in the room with one another anymore.

It is right.

We have to understand, what are the new cues and signals of being able to read people, to understand what do they really mean, when they wrote that e-mail when they sent.

Yeah.

At a certain time and digital body language are the new hidden cues in signals in our digital conversations. They help us to understand, why did someone said that timing of the e-mail at that point.

Yes.

Or, if a CEO writes in ok with a period does that period mean something, everything from the trace of the medium we use to the punctuation we used to the timing of our response to who we CC and BCC in our conversations are signals at digital body language today. Often times, we think we know exactly what another person is saying.

Right.

But what we have actually seen in the data, is that there is an immense amount of misunderstanding, anxiety and confusion on what did that person really mean?

Because we do not have the context of the stare, the eye, the nod, the shake that we use to in human body language. So, I have a few best practices to help people actually make sure that they are learning a little more about their own digital styles but also using digital body language intelligently.

Can you give me one example?

Of course, the first one is that brevity can cause confusion. Often times, we go for the shortest team.

Right.

I will be ok or send me this, but many stories one of my favourite examples was the CML, who was sent a big document from her team about a big project and write some one liner that has just a random thought she had on her head, that she would say in a meeting, but people would not take serious you know they would take as just an idea. Although, sudden after that one liner email, because they had not really seen her context, they created a work stream within a week and spend hours working on something that she did not even really need.

I see.

And so, sometimes we have to be really conscious of how are we communicating and are we really being clear.

Right.

In today's world and that there are new signals that, we have to be conscious of. The second is that timing is everything. Often times what we see is, that we can respond 24 7 all the time, some people expect that some people would never expect that.

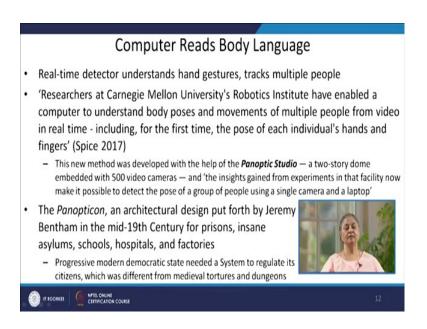
Right.

And we really have to think differently about expectations around timing. One of the greatest things, I found in my research is that if you send a thank you e-mail within a few

minutes or an hour of the meeting versus a few days or week later there is a significant difference in how people feel connected to that thank you. And it is simply, because it is almost like a signal of the virtual handshake which is something that, we cannot do in a same way in our virtual round. So, I had encouraged everyone to think about, what type of digital body language am I projecting. And how can I make sure I am being clear and avoiding being misunderstood in today's digital.

Digital Body Language is about how with the help of computers, we can understand body language. And now we feel that computers are coming, which can read our body language.

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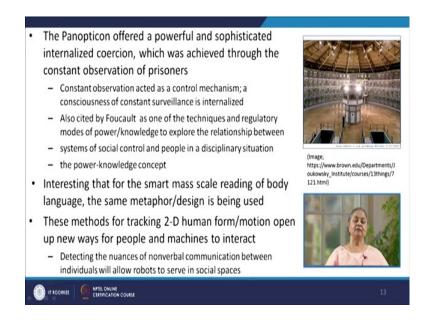
Real time detectors can understand hand gestures and track multiple people and make detections on the basis of the hand movements only. Researchers at Carnegie Mellon University's Robotics Institute have enabled a computer, which can understand the body poses and movements of multiple people from video in real time. Including for the first time the pose of each individuals hands and fingers also.

The technological capability to track and individuals movements had been there for a very long time now, but this idea that computers can look at the individual people gestures in a crowd and can make detections on it is basis is a revolutionary concept.

This new method was developed with the help of the panoptic studio, which is a two-story dome embedded with 500 video cameras. And, the insights gained from experiments in that facility have made it possible to detect the individual pose of a group of people using a single camera and a laptop. It is interesting that the word panoptic has been retained to level this recent technological development.

The Panopticon is initially an architectural design which was put forth by Jeremy Bentham in the middle of the 19th century. As a revolutionary concept for the design of prisons, insane asylum, schools, hospitals and factories and the idea behind it, that the modern democratic state needed a system to regulate it citizens which was different from medieval torture rooms and dungeons.

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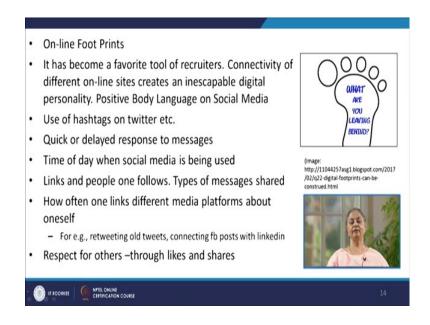


The Panopticon offered a powerful and sophisticated internalized coercion, which was achieved through the constant observation of prisoners by a single sentry. The constant observation according to Bentham acted as a control mechanism; a consciousness of constant surveillance was internalized, which enabled the people, the prisoners or the school children for that matter to understand the propriety of behaviour. This particular design was also cited by Foucault as one of the techniques and regulatory modes of power and knowledge dyad to explore the relationship between them.

So, Foucault used to understand the systems of social control and people in a disciplinary situation. It is interesting that this smart mass scale reading of body language uses the

same metaphor design; uses the same metaphor the same design, which had been used in the 19th century. These methods for tracking 2D human form or motion open up new ways for people and machines to interact. And very soon it is hoped that it would allow a robots to serve in social spaces. In a way, we can say that the understanding of body language would allow the scientist to program the behaviour of robotics in a manner in which they can interact with human society without any conflict. In today's world, we continuously leave what is known as on-line footprints.

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Our digital body language as well as our on-line presence has become a favourite tool for recruiters. Particularly, when there is a strong connectivity of different on-line sites, which creates an inescapable digital personality. And therefore, it is important for us to understand that our body language not only on social media, but in the use of any technological resources should be positive.

For example, the way we use hash tags on our Twitter account, the response which we send to different messages is delete or is it immediate, what is the time of the day during which we are using the social media and what is the time of the day in which we are using the media for our work related issues. What are the links and people whom we follow? What are the types of messages we share? How often we link different media platforms in our own suggestions, for example, are we habitual of re-tweeting the old tweets, do we connect our Facebook post with our linkedin post also. Does our media

presence show a respect for other people for the diversities of opinions through likes and shares also or is it a negative one.

So, we can conclude by saying that in today's technological world, the understanding of Digital Body Language is important. And equally important is our capability to maintain our digital personality in a positive manner. It brings us to another aspect of body language and that is the precautions which we should take while facing an interview on Skype. This is one particular aspect of body language, which perhaps can be taken later on in live sessions.

Thank you.