

Public Speaking
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Lecture – 25
Haptics

Good morning, friends and welcome back to NPTEL online certification course on Public Speaking. My dear friends, by this time, you might have realized that in public speaking, communication takes place not only verbally but also non-verbally. Public speaking is perfected, not only through reasons but also through emotions. If reasons are reflected through words, emotions can be represented in several forms.

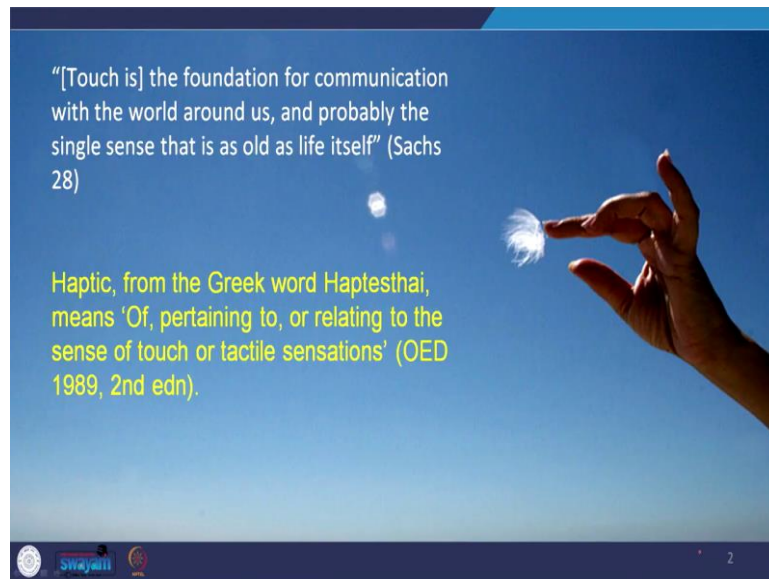
As we are discussing non-verbal communication, you might have all realized that our body plays a very vital role in communication. We have already talked about body. We have also talked about space in the lecture on Proxemics and we also talked about chronemics that is the language of time. If space matters in communication, time matters in communication, then we also have to understand that our feelings play a vital role in communication.

So, we also have to understand, how our feelings have an imprint in a communication situation both from the point of view of speakers as well as from the point of view of receivers or listeners. This feeling or emotion is not only conveyed through words but by our movements which we have already discussed in the lecture on kinesics. In this regard, today, we are going to discuss the importance of touch in various public speaking situations.

And how can this touch be felt? How can this touch be disseminated? So, the study that deals with the language of touch or the study that actually emphasizes upon touch in communication is called haptics and that is why today's lecture is titled Haptics. Who can deny the popular expression-- seeing is believing but feeling is the truth. And in order to feel there are several agencies in our body.

And in this regard, touch plays a very important role. Now, we will try to understand today how touch has an important role to play in communication and for that matter in public speaking.

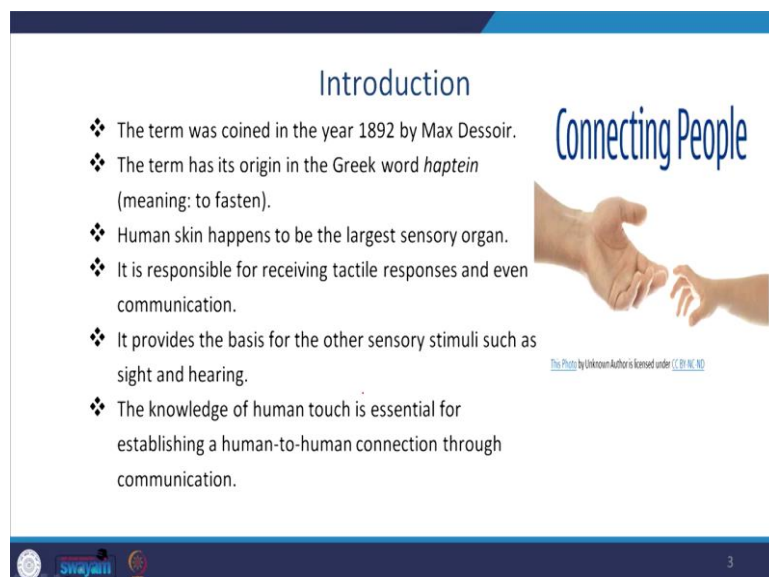
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Let us, begin this talk today with the one of the observations by Sachs who says—“Touch is the foundation for communication with the world around us and probably the single sense that is as old as life itself.” So, touch plays a very important role and this touch can be studied in haptics. Now, initially, you might be very much surprised to know that haptics has a role to play. But let us try to understand, what is haptics?

Haptic actually comes from the Greek word, haptesthai. According to Oxford English dictionary, haptic comes from the Greek word, haptesthai that actually means off or pertaining or relating to the sense of touch or tactile sensations, tactile is the other name that includes touch. Now, one might be curious, to know how this language of touch came into being and what actually is the historical origin of it?

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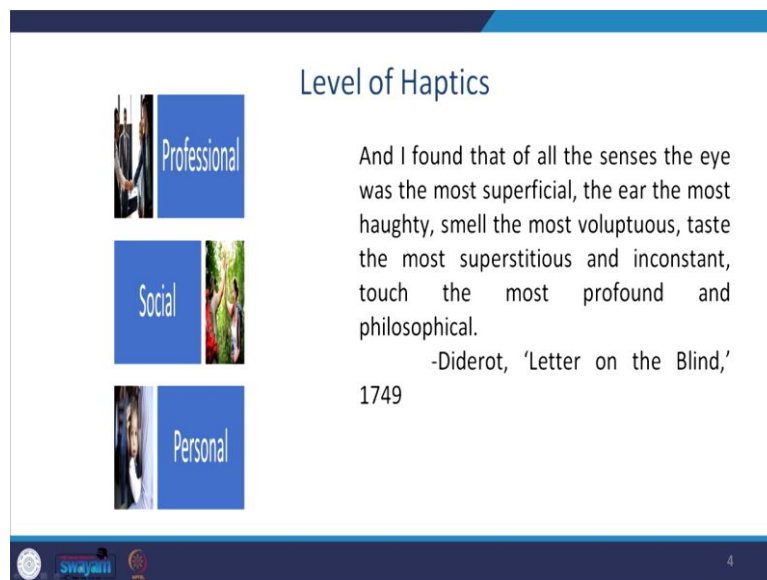


This term haptics was coined in the year 1892 by Max Dessoir Maximilian Dessoir. The term, as we have said, according to the dictionary as well, it comes from the Greek word *haptein* that actually means to fasten, fasten to reflect to touch. Human skin happens to be the largest sensory organ. We can always say that entire corpus of communication has a major role to play when we discuss touch.

So, touch is responsible for receiving responses and even communication. It also provides the basis for other sensory stimuli, such as sight and hearing. We always say, as we said earlier, seeing is believing but feeling is the truth. So, the knowledge of human touch is essential for establishing human to human communication or connection. That is through touch. Now, you might also be eager to know, what could be the levels of haptics?

And how and in which form this haptic can be used in communication and in public speaking?

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The slide is titled "Level of Haptics" and features three vertical panels on the left, each with a blue background and a white text label. The top panel is labeled "Professional" and shows a person in a suit. The middle panel is labeled "Social" and shows a group of people. The bottom panel is labeled "Personal" and shows a person in a white shirt. To the right of these panels is a quote by Diderot: "And I found that of all the senses the eye was the most superficial, the ear the most haughty, smell the most voluptuous, taste the most superstitious and inconstant, touch the most profound and philosophical." Below the quote is the attribution "-Diderot, 'Letter on the Blind,' 1749". At the bottom of the slide, there are logos for "swayam" and "swayam" and a small number "4".


Now, here let us take a quote by the French philosopher Diderot, who, in one of the Letters on the Blind” writes---“And I found that of all the senses the eye was the most superficial’ We have already talked about the eyes when we were discussing kinesics. So, here Diderot says, “I found that of all the senses the eye was the most superficial, the ear the most haughty, smell the most voluptuous, taste the most superstitious and inconstant, touch the most profound and philosophical.”

We make use of this touch and we say-- please stay in touch. Sometimes, we also say I hope you are not touched. Sometimes you say--- I was really touched. Now, when we use such expressions, what exactly do we mean? We actually mean that by this sensory feeling, actually something generated within us. So, the levels of haptics can be professional, social and personal.


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Touch in Professional Life

- ❖ In a professional scenario, the aspect of touch has to be dealt with both confidence and caution.
- ❖ A gesture of encouragement can lead to tremendous motivation for one individual but might trigger proxemic boundary violation for another.
- ❖ Unlike words and actions, with touch one directly contacts the other person.
- ❖ The contact zone may likely offer a better space for mutual confidence and trust.
- ❖ It depends upon the person sending a signal to appropriately convey his values through means of touch.
- ❖ Handshakes play a key role in the professional side of haptics.



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So, is touch also important and does it also play a role in professional communication in professional life? In a professional scenario, the aspect of touch to be dealt with confidence and caution. Because you never know who can be touched by what? By what sort of language? By what sort of word? By what sort of action? So, a gesture of encouragement can sometimes lead to tremendous motivation for one individual.

But at the same time, it may actually generate or trigger some proxemic boundary violation for another. You might well remember that while we were discussing the space zones, there we have already mentioned that there are space zones for people even in our closed circles, people who are our distant relatives. So, there are certain regulations. So, unlike words and actions with touch one directly contacts the other person.

I mean how close? Or how distant you are? That you can understand by the way one person touches the other person. And in this regard, contact zone plays a very vital role for a better space for mutual confidence and trust. Even in a professional life you might have seen. Sometimes you are touched by your superiors, sometimes the inferiors or the people walking sometimes at the same level. They are also touched and all these have got certain meanings.

Sometimes you are encouraged. Sometimes your confidence is to be boosted. So, it actually depends upon the person sending a signal to appropriately convey his emotion or his feeling through this means of touch. And this touch has a very important professional role to be played and it can be played in a different way, fine. And especially, when you are exposed to a different sort of culture then you might even realize with a single incidence of handshakes.

You can understand the emotions and the feelings of the other person. So now, here let us try to spend some time on the types of handshakes which are quite common when you are exposed to public speaking situations.

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Types of Handshakes

Body language experts Allan & Barbara Pease in their book *The Definitive Book of Body Language* illustrate different types of handshakes and their function:

- The Stiff-Arm Thrust: Stretched out hands. **Distanced Handshake.**
- The Socket-Wrencher: Strong grip. **Closer Handshake.**
- The Pump Handle: Over-enthusiastic. **Rigorous shaking.**
- The Bone-Crusher: **Overstepping and Dominant.**
- The Wet Fish: Sweaty hands. Nervous. **Lacks Confidence.**

The slide includes an illustration of two hands shaking, with the words 'help out', 'cooperate', 'assist', 'communicate', and 'unite' written on the hands.

In this regard, there has been a very seminal book by Allan Pease and Barbara Pease. And the book is titled *The Definitive Book of Body Language*, where they illustrate different types of handshakes and their functions. My dear friends, you might quite be surprised to know that even the way a person handshakes, it actually denotes their culture. The way your handshakes are received and the way you offer your handshake. That has actually a lot to play.

That has actually a lot to mean. So, the very first is the stiff-arm thrust. This actually symbolizes a distant sort of handshake. In this, you stretch out your hands but maybe the other person sometimes would like to come closer or sometimes they may like to pull. They may like to go back. Why does this happen? This is only because of the role of the culture, may be a person who comes from a culture where they only believe in lesser space or they have been oriented in a lesser space.

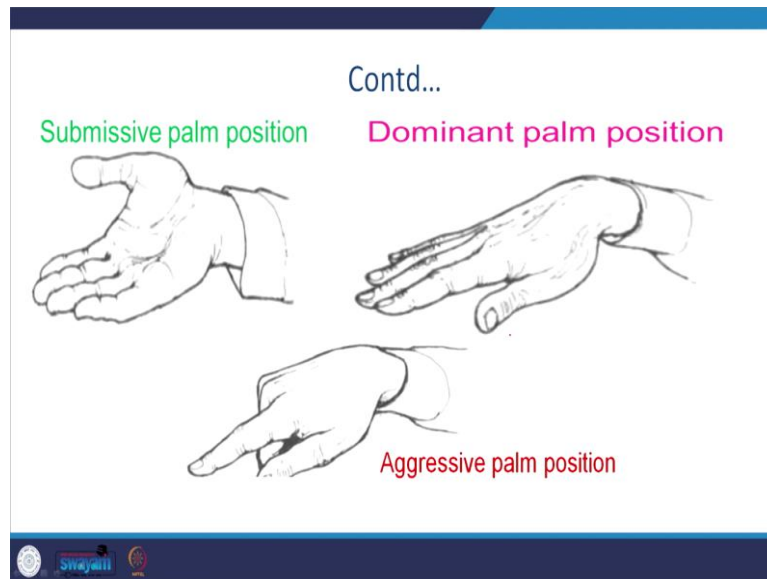
Naturally, they will try to go back. There is another type of handshake, which is socket wrencher. It actually has a strong grip. When two people shake hands, you will find the one person puts a strong grip. This may actually be understood as a sort of closure handshake. Then there can be a pump handle handshake, sometimes you are very enthusiastic, very eager.

And you start having a handshake where you are pumping time and again. It actually becomes very rigorous. May be people who are not exposed to certain sorts of situation may feel quite odd. They may feel it otherwise, so, you have to be very particular about how you are trying to convey a message. Then, there is bone crusher which is actually overstepping and dominant.

I will also tell you how what sort of handshake can be dominant? What sort of handshake can be submissive? What sort of handshake can be very aggressive? All these have got a lot to play, my dear friend. And then there is a wet fish handshake where, by which we mean that there is less amount of confidence and that is why, while hand shaking you will find that there is a feeling like wet fish.

In another words, we can say dead fish handshake. Usually this dead fish handshake is also termed as a politician's handshake, fine. Sometimes or the other, we may find that the people are not interested in you, fine. Then naturally, you receive a dead fish handshake. Of course, a politician's handshake is a glove handshake. I mean trying to show more warmth in it, maybe in reality that may not be the case. So, when it is a dead fish handshake, it actually shows less amount of confidence.

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Now, here you can find there are three sorts of handshakes. Now, the very first, look at the very first one. What happens here? It is a submissive palm position. Now, you might be thinking that I am discussing touch and then we are talking about handshakes. Yes, when you have such a sort of handshake when your palm position is in this way, you actually become very submissive. So, you are more open, rather is not it.

But if the palm position is turned up, as in the second picture you can see, it is actually a case of dominant palm position. And this dominant palm position----- through this the person who shows this dominant palm position actually wants to dominate sometimes or the other. You may also come across the third category and that is called aggressive palm position. In this, what happens? Suddenly your palm, I mean, all the other fingers are brought together and then one finger appears in the way as if you are pointing as if you are instructing. You appear to be very aggressive are all these not having meaning in communication that when you are speaking as a speaker, if you consciously or unconsciously make such gestures, my dear friend.


They are going either to the mar the show, make the show or create a different sort of your image? Hence, one has to be very particular. Now, this touch is not only formal, the touch can also be informal. And it can also have a lot to pay when we talk about it as social significance. How touch is important in social life?

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Touch in Social Life

- Touch is an integral part of establishing social well-being for an individual.
- Gentsch et al (2015) in their research suggested the importance of active interpersonal touch which ultimately led way to overall health benefits in adulthood and development.
- It is practised amongst different social circles such as family, friends, etc.
- The dimensions of social touch may vary depending upon the socio-cultural context in which communication occurs.

Touch has a memory. O say, love, say,
What can I do to kill it and be free
In my old liberty? (John Keats)



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As it is an integral part of establishing a sort of contact. It is very important. And in this regard one observation which actually needs to be mentioned is by Gentsch and others who say that ‘the importance of active interpersonal touch which ultimately led way to overall health benefits in adulthood and development.’ Now, this is very important. This is practised amongst different social circles such as family, friends etcetera.

You can already find when we talk about zones. Now in intimate zone, naturally, you allow other people to come near you. I mean you do not feel that the space is being violated or the space is being restricted. But then as your relationship because interpersonal relationship depends upon are the zones, fine. It varies from one zone to another. And so, when you find that it is a social zone, aturally, the distance also will increase and touch also will distance.

So, the dimensions of social touch may vary depending upon the socio-cultural context, in which communication occurs. Now, here on the one side, you can find the picture of John Keats and I am very much tempted enough to quote John Keats who about touch, what he says is very important. Let us read----“ Touch has a memory, O say, love, say, what can I do to kill it? And be free in my old liberty.”

Now, poets are touched most often, of course. While Keats is mentioning all these, he is actually talking about an old laugh in which he was obsessed. And then that is why he says -- Touch has a memory. It actually unfolds a sea of memories O say, love, say what can I do to kill it? And be free in my old liberty.” I am not able to be free from this touch.

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Touch in Personal Relationships

- ❖ “Contact comfort” is a primary need for higher-order mammals. (Burgoon 146)
- ❖ At the level of intimate relationships, the touch is usually equipped to express affection and provide comfort.
- ❖ Studies reveal the important role of interpersonal touch in conveying emotions such as love, gratitude and sympathy.
- ❖ Slight hesitation may also convey significant negative feelings such as fear, anxiety etc.

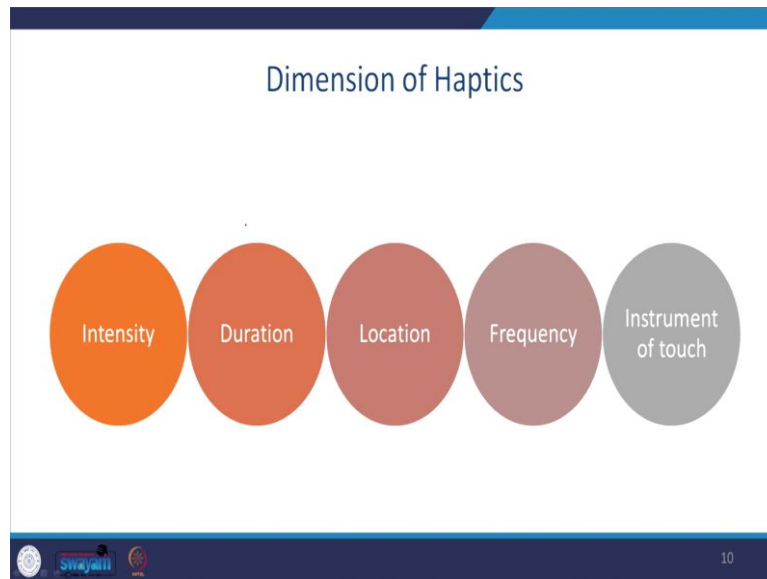


Now, touch also matters in personal relationships. An American professor of communication calls it contact comfort. It is a primary need for higher-order mammals though. But at the level of intimate relationships, touch is usually equipped to express affection and provide comfort. You might have found that when a mother touches the child, there is a sort of reassurance. The mother's touch to the child, it actually conveys warmth, it conveys a sort of relationship.

And it also gives the child a sort of reassurance, a sort of comfort. Studies reveal the important role of interpersonal touch in conveying emotions such as love, gratitude and sympathy. We will also come to one observation where one scholar goes to the extent of saying that it can have twelve meanings of touch. Slight hesitation may also convey significant negative feelings, such as fear and anxiety.

You might have all realized that if by some way or the other, you are touched suddenly by a stranger, you are frightened, is not it you are rather frightened. But the touch of a closer one of an intimate one actually provides a more assurance. Now, what can be the dimensions of touch? And how can a communicator or how can a public speaker realize? What is the intensity? What sort of emotions are conveyed or can be conveyed through it?

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So, it has several factors and these factors are intensity, duration, location, frequency and instrument of touch. You cannot touch anyone and everyone. There are certain regulations also and these regulations are culturally bound. Now, we have already talked about how, while making handshakes also, we see the intensity and we also see the location. We also see the where a person is touched.

For example, while you are making a handshake, you can find, that the thumb, thumb suddenly goes to the wrist or sometimes, you allow your palm to go to the shoulder of a person I mean once again here it is oriented on the basis of one's relationship. So, when we talk about intensity, we can say about the pressure which is exerted by the person's touch on another person.

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- ❑ **Intensity:** It refers to the pressure exerted by one person's touch on another person. *Hard/ Soft.* Example: A pat on the cheek can be taken as a slap if done harder.
 - ❑ **Duration:** The time taken to establish a communicative contact. Example: A handshake might turn awkward if done for long as in the "pump handle" style.
 - ❑ **Location:** Part of the body touched. Example: Touching the feet of elders is a sign of respect in Indian families.
- ❑ **Frequency:** Number of touches. Example: A pat on the shoulder might get attention whereas multiple pats might imply encouragement.
 - ❑ **Instrument of touch:** Object or Organ through which a touch is established. Example: Stretching out the baton in the relay is more essential than directly touching the teammate.

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Say, for example, if somebody is ticked on the cheek, sometimes it can also be taken as a slap fine. Maybe if it is done by stranger, it can appear as a slap, fine. Now, comes duration--- the time taken to establish a communicative contact, for example, a handshake which might turn awkward if done for long as we have discussed the pump handle style here. I am reminded of telling you that there can be a handshake where you start breaking the knuckles of the other person.

I mean your fingers suddenly go to the other person's finger and then you press it. So, it appears as if the knuckles are being broken so that can that can appear at times very odd then comes location--- the part of the body which is touched in certain cultures. You know reverence is shown by touching the feet of the elders, mostly in India. You can find you can come across such a situation, fine.

And then comes frequency, the number of touches, even while shaking hands, how many, sometimes, you will actually be astonished to find people shaking hands for a longer time. Sometimes a pat on the shoulder might get attention, whereas multiple pats may appear odd, fine. Sometimes it may also reflect a sort of encouragement. There also it depends very much on the age on the relationship and on the context.


And then the instrument of touch object or organ through which a touch is established as I said, the fingers touched is not it are--- the wrist touched, the shoulder touched. Sometimes, are you actually at touch somebody and you will find that by going up the shoulder, you actually convey a more intimate feeling. Hence, one has to be very particular about making the use of touch.

Of course, in public speaking situations, especially when you are giving a talk or a presentation, you may not come to such a pass because there is a distance but sometimes in some other situations, you may also come across, such a sort of circumstance. Now, what actually could be the meanings of touch? And how can we imply the meaning?


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Meanings of Touch


Jones and Yarbrough categorize seven main meanings generated out of haptic communication.




Positive affect




Playful




Control




Ritualistic






Hybrid



Task-related



Accidental




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Of course, it is very difficult, very challenging rather but in one of the papers by Jones and Yarbrough. They categorize seven main meanings which can be generated out of this haptic communication. You can find the pictures here how among children when they are clubbed together and they touch each other, there can be a positive fine. So, there is a sort of effect and the effect is a positive.

Then sometimes it may be simply when your fist touches the others, and that you are doing just to celebrate or just to convey some emotion that is playful. Sometimes you control. Sometimes it becomes a ritual as well. Sometimes it can be very hybrid. It differs from one culture to another, from one country to another. And then sometimes you are going to remind somebody of a task and then also you touch, fine.

Sometimes, not only sometimes but on many occasions, touches are very accidental fine but then care has to be taken that you do not touch others, while you are communicating. Now, touch varies from one culture to another, as I said and there are several factors environment. So, when I say environment I can also say the venue where this public speaking or this event takes place. So that is very important.


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Differences in Touch

Many factors become important when establishing the nature of contact zone:

- ✓ Environment
- ✓ Age
- ✓ Gender
- ✓ Status
- ✓ Relationship

The culmination of the above factors helps in deciding if a given culture is high-contact culture or low-contact culture.



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And then the age, gender, status, relationship, all these have a very major role to play and all these factors actually help in deciding or establishing to, what culture a person belongs to. It can also tell a lot about a person's background where it can also tell you whether the person comes from a sort of high culture or a sort of low culture. We have already talked in some of the lectures about high contact culture and low contact culture.

Especially, people in high contact culture, they actually send messages very implicitly meaning thereby through their touches also, you can get to know something. I mean, they provide you meaning nonverbally.

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High contact & Low contact culture

High contact culture:

- Implicit communication: non-verbal.
- People form groups close to each other while engaging in a conversation.
- Establishment of direct eye contact.

Low contact culture:

- Stand farther and spread out.
- Less eye contact.
- Avoid unnecessary touch.
- Louder and more verbal.



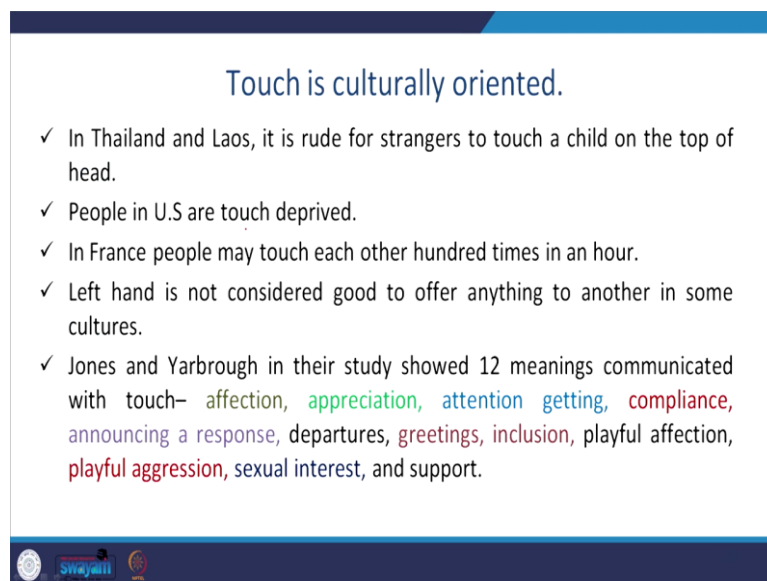
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So, people of high contact cultures like the people of Japan, people of China, people of Mexico and other places actually form groups close to each other. While they are engaged in

a conversation or in a public speaking situation the eye contact becomes very direct, whereas low contact culture they can be considered. That they do not attach more importance to nonverbal rather, they stick to a verbal language.

They always try to stand farther and they are mostly spread out. There are less chances of eye- contact, they always try to avoid unnecessary touch. And in this case, especially in low contact culture louder and more verbal people of such culture believe everything to be said, everything to be written, whereas people of high contact culture to repeat they believe in certain meanings to be extracted through nonverbal cues.

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The slide features a white background with a blue header and footer. The title 'Touch is culturally oriented.' is centered in blue. Below it is a bulleted list of five points. The footer contains three small circular icons and the text 'swajani'.

Touch is culturally oriented.

- ✓ In Thailand and Laos, it is rude for strangers to touch a child on the top of head.
- ✓ People in U.S are touch deprived.
- ✓ In France people may touch each other hundred times in an hour.
- ✓ Left hand is not considered good to offer anything to another in some cultures.
- ✓ Jones and Yarbrough in their study showed 12 meanings communicated with touch– affection, appreciation, attention getting, compliance, announcing a response, departures, greetings, inclusion, playful affection, playful aggression, sexual interest, and support.

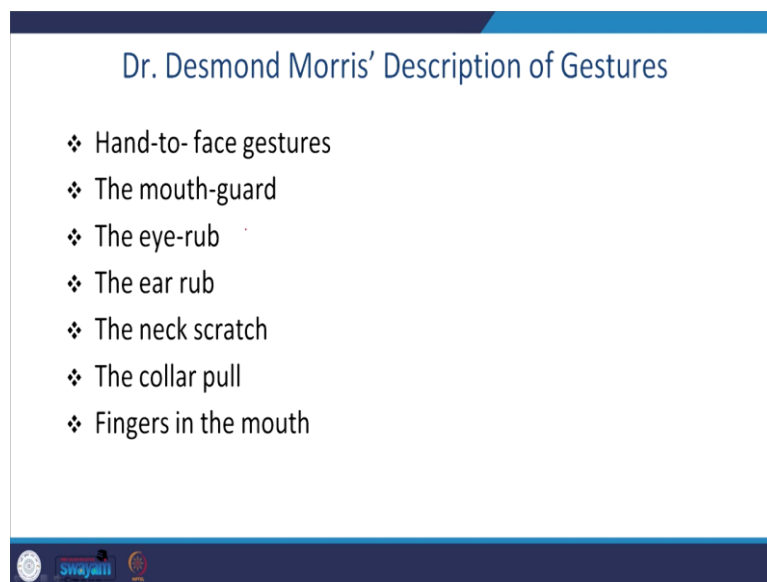
As I have been saying, touch is culturally oriented in many countries. Let me give you some examples. In many countries such as Thailand and Laos, you cannot touch a child on the top of their head. Because they believe that it is a very sacred place and they say that the soul resides there. That is why, for strangers, it is actually rude to touch a child on the top of the head. You will also find that people in the U.S they are mostly touch deprived.

They actually require more space in France in most of the restaurants, you can find that people can be touched or one can touch each other hundred times even in an hour, fine. In a Parisian Cafe, you can come across in such a situation. In many cultures, left hand is not considered good and that is why nothing is offered through left hand or to another in some cultures.

We have already mentioned about the observation of Jones Yarbrough, who, in this study have showed 12 meanings which can be communicated haptically or through touch. What are they? Affection, appreciation, attention getting, compliance, announcing a response, departures, greetings, inclusion, playful affection, playful aggression, sexual interest and support. As a public speaker, you might also find that while you are speaking suddenly you raise your hand.

Suddenly, you try to say something very emphatically and in these situations you rather make use of hands. There are certain gestures that we have already talked about. We can also talk about some more where you know as a listener or as a learner. You can try to find out whether the speaker is trying to deceive you. How? Because you know unconscious language that is already imprinted on our faces.

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So, Dr. Desmond Morris, in his description of the gestures, provides certain gestures where the learners can find whether the speaker or the other person is lying. Say, for example, hand-to-face gesture. Suddenly, we bring our hands-to-face gesture no, it can also be considered and another can be mouth-guard. May be sometimes you want to say something and you are trying to hide something no.

And you suddenly feel as a speaker that perhaps you are not sure. So, suddenly then you practice this mouth guard eye gesture. Then eye-rub when you are in a state of confusion or you try to make something out very clearly. Sometimes there is a touch between the ear, fine

between the ear and the finger. Sometimes you scratch your neck. Sometimes you know out of frustration when you want some air stream to come.

Suddenly, the listeners can all realize it. So, suddenly, what you do is? You pull your collar fine. So that the airstream may come out and the listeners are become very much assured that perhaps now, he is feeling a sort of boredom or envy, nowadays, since we are living in an advanced world where technology matters the most.

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Haptic Technology

- With the advent of technology, it is now even possible to transfer tactile stimulation i.e. experience of touch through means of enhanced machines and robots.
- Apart from its widespread demand in the field of gaming, virtual reality (VR) systems are created at present with the extension of the haptic interface.



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So, there has been a haptic technology as well. And with the advent of technology, now it is also possible to transfer tactile stimulation tactile. So, through tactile stimulation that is experience of touch through means of enhanced machines and robots you can find here. Apart from widespread demand in the field of gaming, virtual reality, systems are created at present with the extension of haptic interface.

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Haptics and Disability

- Haptic technology plays a key role in supporting people with disability.
- The enhanced haptic modality helps in navigation for those who are visually impaired.
- Even people with hearing disability are assisted to engage in music and dance activities through means of haptic assistance.



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Now, haptics also plays a very dominant role when it comes to disability and disability studies. Haptic technology plays a key role in supporting people with disability. The enhanced modality helps in navigation. You might have found those people having problems in seeing and all. So, they have a sort of stick which actually, can tell them. So, it is with the help of the haptic technology so, those who are visually impaired.




Even people who are having hearing disability are also assisted to engage in music and dance activities through means of haptic assistance.

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“Touch comes before sight, before speech.
It is the first language and the last, and it
always tells the truth.”

- Margaret Atwood

Thank You

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Now, we have already discussed that touch plays a very significant role in communication. So, as a communicator you might have from time-to-time felt that the way you make unconscious use of touch. You are perhaps trying to communicate something. Of course,

trained speakers, trained actors know it well but all of us are not trained. So, before we come to end this talk.

Let me make a mention of the quote by the famous novelist Margaret Atwood. You all might have heard the name of the novelist, who is a Booker prize winner for and one of our famous books is the *Handmaid's Tale*. So, Margaret Atwood says---“ Touch comes before sight. Even before one can see, ‘touch comes before sight before speech. It is the first language and the last and it always tells the truth.”

And I also try to tell the truth through my experiences of how touch can create positive vibes in your life as a public speaker. So, my dear friends, I hope you are touched but intellectually fine. So, this lecture on haptics must touch you intellectually. So that when next time you deliver a talk or a presentation, you take care of all these things. See that people are touched and they are not touch deprived when it comes to wisdom. when it comes to knowledge when it comes to intellectuality.

So, with these words, let me come to the end of this talk. Thank you very much. I wish you all a good day.