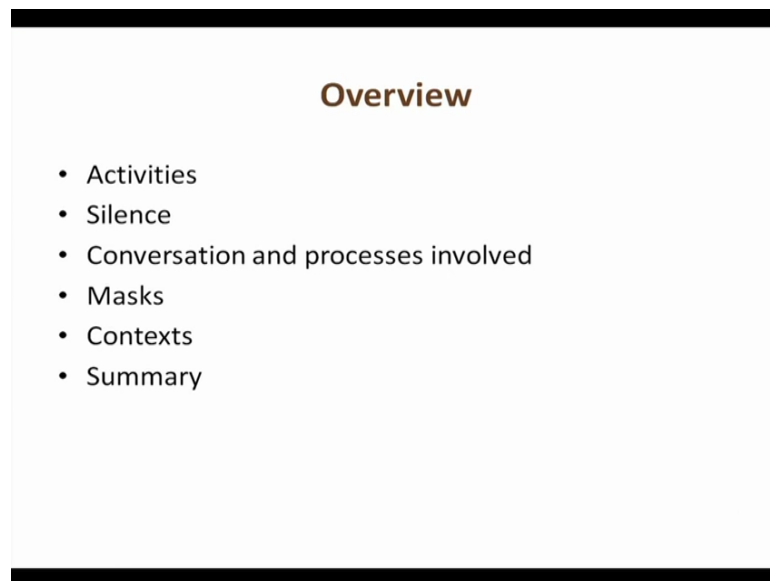


**Soft Skills Development**  
**Prof. P. Patnaik**  
**Department of Humanities and Social Sciences**  
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**Lecture – 05**  
**Starting and Sustaining a Conversation**

Hello friends, in this session we are going to talk about "Conversation". In the last topic that we have taken up was on speaking skills and conversation obviously, is a more holistic context within which speaking is a subset and listening is another subset. And the entire interaction process is something which we are taking place into an account when we are talking about conversation. We are also taking into an account the ambiance; we are also taking into account nonverbal communication, and a number of other things.

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So, what I would like to do is start of by outlining the various things that we are going together. So, will be talking about the series activities, at least 3 different Activities that I will design in some way which I can share with you we will talk little about Silence. Silence is a relevant in the context of let us a conversations that take place. In fact, when I talk about silence I will show you interesting graph which long time back one of my student shared with me and that also probably will give us insights into the way we converse. We will talk about the details of the Processes involved in Conversation, we

will talk about the different kinds Masks that we wear when we interact with people Contexts and then will some of the entire thing.

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### Activity 1

- Two persons stand back to back and talk: emphasis on non-verbal communication
- Then they repeat the same looking at one another.
- Ask them for feedback about the difference
- Assign them some contexts first



So, let us imagine the first Activity you see that we are in a situation where I would not be actually given activity with you. I can definitely identify links and I will definitely share them on the discussion forum where you can go to those places and see how people converse when we take into consideration activity like this. When two people are standing back to back the focus is pretty awkward let me share with you, when you realize that you can just turn around and have a look at one another the tendency to turn and look behind you is very strong I have found that with my students. But the idea is that when you are doing that you suddenly, realize that you use your hands, you are using your facial expressions and the other person is actually not able to see that. So, what it basically means is that you turn around and you look at your friend and you start conversing. You say the same thing all over again and you find that a lot more information is available.

So, we suddenly realize that conversation is not just about the text you are communicating or the words that you are using because, yes we have already talked about speaking skills, we are talked about voice and we know that they are relevant, but you suddenly realize that when you turn around and you speak there is a lot more

information through other channels like facial expressions and the body and its gestures and when that happens may be the entire way of communicating also has to changed.

So, here is a interesting issue that we have in mind and issue about which we need to develop sensitivity which is that imagine that you are talking to somebody over the phone, over the mobile, imagine you are talking somebody who is not present over there. Probably you will have to do a lot more with your what you are saying that is in a text that you are using as well has your voice, because a lot of information is missing whether your smiling that other person is not able to know, whether you are actually attentive to the other person because eye context is not possible. Whether you are interested or not now the this are the things which are impossible to know over the phone unless these are communicated either through your words or through the kind of intonation, the kind of speech pattern, the kind of voice, that you are using, you are bringing enthusiasm to your voice, excitement into your voice, sadness into your voice; now this emotions which generally get very easily reflected through the other 2 non-verbal modes facial expressions, gestures and postures combined is something which is missing.

So, this is something which you can try out I would definitely recommend that you do it with one of your friend and just get to know how experience, what kind of experience you have. This is the first activity I would suggest to you.

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### **Activity 2: active listening**

- Ask two persons to converse – one speaks and the other acts as if he is not interested in listening
- Then repeat the same indicating that the other is interested in listening – what's the difference?
- What strategies of active or uninterested listening have been used? – ask the audience and ask them to identify some more.



Second one is listening, now in conversation as I told you speaking and listening are combined and you ask two people to converse - one speaks and the other acts as if he is not listening or not interested in listening. Now we talked about it in the earlier classes and the earlier sessions, but this is a first an experience how it feels. If you are play acting this you will suddenly realize that when the other person is just not listening to your, acting as if he is listening in a half parted way then how bad it feels. So, one of the things I said with you earlier is something which you can actually explains over here.


Now, the next time you do it you see what you ask the person to act as if he is listening. Now this second activity is going to help us in 2 different ways: one is that actually genuine fill the difference, but more important than that you stop noticing that what are the tools that is using in order to communicate that he is interested or she is interested. And when you are role playing as if you are interested to listen. Try to make an assessment of what are the tools that you are using to communicate that you are interested. Now, these will give you an insight into how exactly you are using the totality of your body eye contact, voice, body language, smile facial expressions, and how this significantly manage to communicate the level of latency.

So, you remember in the earlier classes we talked about maintaining eye contact establishing (Refer Time: 06:52) be attentive, but how exactly are you being attentive may be inside deep down you being attentive, but is the other person is able to know that you are attentive; now that is very very important. These activities would be able to make you realize this. So the strategies side of it.

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**Activity 3: Paraphrasing**

- Ask two people to communicate a complex message. The first person speaks. The second person paraphrases. How much was communicated and how effectively?
- Try this back to back: this will lead to phone conversation. What special listening skills (ask for feedback, etc) are required. What speaking skills are required.



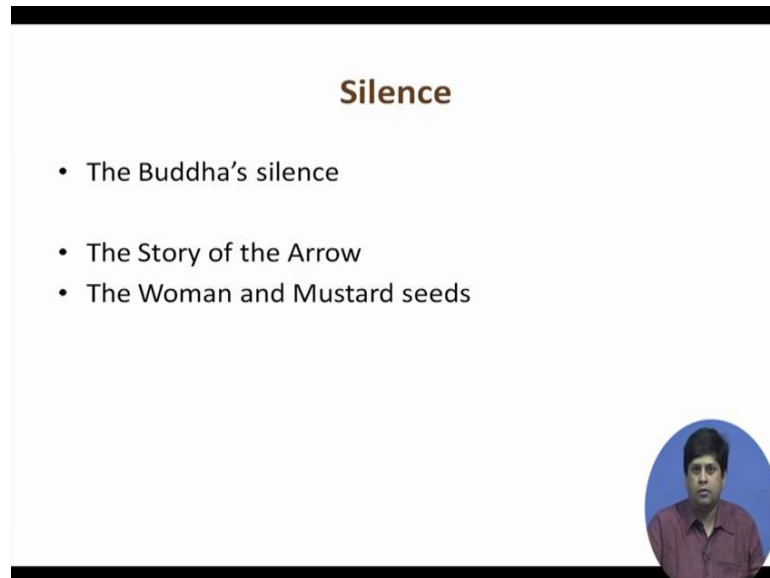
The third one is where the listening part is actively engaged we have done it in the third session when we talked about listening. So, ask 2 people to communicate a complex message; the first person speaks the second person pair of resources, how much of it has been transmitted, because you see that when the content load of message increases then the ability to remember it decreases; there is forgetting. How much of it are we able to remember and which components are be able to remember, because our life is full of conversations and we do not go around with the recorder or we do not go taking notes all the time. So, how is it that we strategically we use our minds to filter out the important information.

Now, here is the practice and the fourth activity; the second activity is here that is to do it back to back so that gives an idea of for telephonic conversation where the other clues are missing and you still to return the information. Please remember that remembering is always more intense, memory is strengthened when multiple channels are used to provide the same information. So, when the same information has multiple channels you are speaking, you are standing in a particular place there is a particular smell or sound around you all these things trigger memory.

So, the memory become richer and remembering is easier, when you conversing with somebody over the phone that does not happen. So, you will have to probably develop new strategies and when we discuss that we will find out the strategies you are using that

will be fun that will be exciting when you try to find out how you are trying to negotiate this problems.

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Now, silence is something which forms a very significant part of our lives. To begin with without silence the things would jell together, things would combine together, and we would not be able to make of sense of them. So, silence in that sense is important. Silence is also symbolic of space, silence is also sometimes symbolic of understanding and you see that although I will not elaborate on these stories, the many Buddhist stories which are about the Buddha's silence and yet in the certain way that is communicate.

So, for instance the story of the Arrow is where we are told that when the Buddha was asked about questions like what is the meaning of life, where do we go after death, is there heaven up there, is there hell down there and questions like that he use to keep silence. We have a story put in his mouth as to why he is to keep silence and the Lord would say that if somebody puts an arrow into your body what are you going to do? Are you going to take out the arrow or are you going to ask from which direction did the arrow come? Does the arrow have 3 figures or 5 figures? Does it have a metal head? Is it straight or is it arched? You are not going to ask these questions.

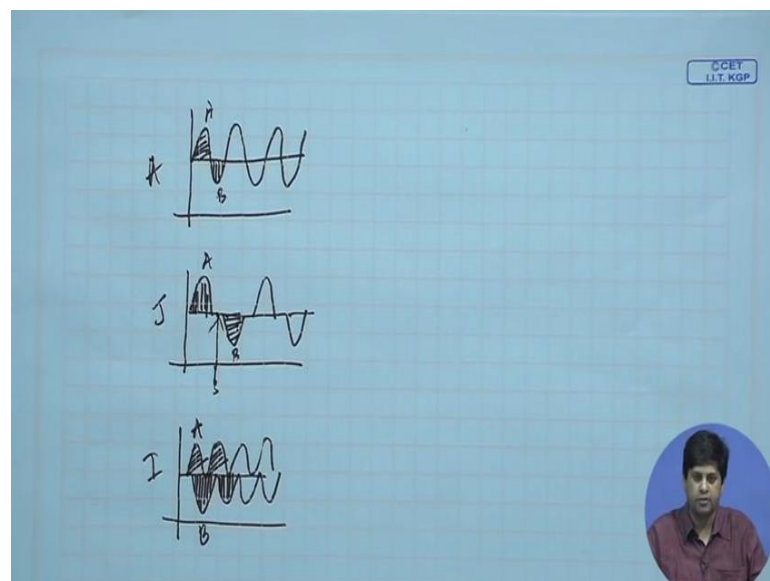
So, life as it is full of suffering we have a lot of difficulties and our primary purpose is to how to extract our self from difficulties and from the suffering rather than asking whether, after death there is another life, what kind of rewards we might possibly have

because this life this suffering is what we have immediately concern with. So, it was in this circumstance we have cases of silence. So, the reason I brought in silence here in this particular context is to make you realize that silence plays a very important in conversation, silence does manage to communicate, silence creates a certain degree of significance or importance about a particular thing; and you can make use of silence in many strategic ways- one of them was the wave the Buddha used silence for a certain period of time in order to (Refer Time: 11:36) at the people and then to give a parabolas response after a break, after the silence in order to make a case much more meaningfully, much more powerfully.

So, that is one of the things I am sharing with you I do not know how you are going to use silence, but that can always used by you a very very meaningful ways in your conversation. Of course, silence is very often were you of saying that you are angry with some body, but well that is not the only way. Silence, is the way of understanding as we are realized in the context of listening skills, but think of other imaginative ways that silence can be used and share it with us when you discuss over the forum.

Now, the other thing I would like to make is a by way of an illustration as to this possibility of silence or lack of silence when we actually converse. So, as I told you little earlier one of my student's long time back. Showed me 3 graphs and I would like to share these 3 graphs with you.

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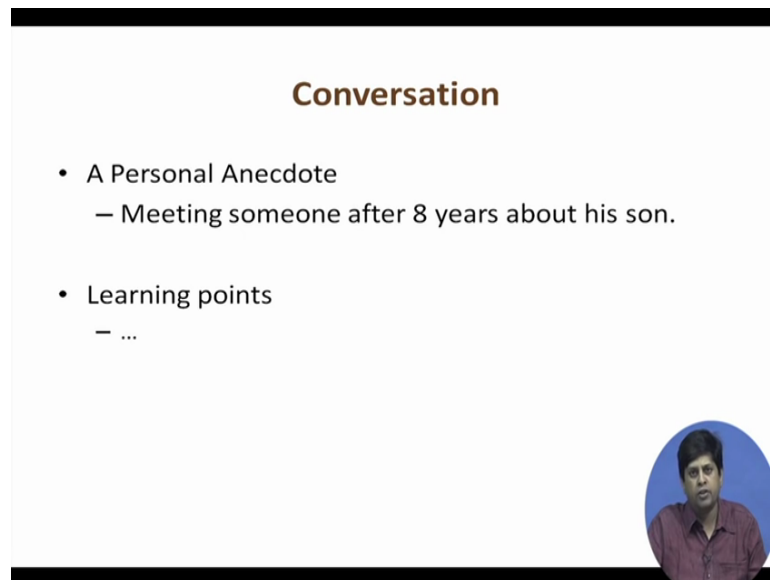
I believe initially they would look fairly dense and complicated, but at some point of time probably you would make sense of it, as I was able to make sense of it when I saw it being drawn by one of my students.

Now, what he told me that these 3 graphs kind of represent 3 different cultures and the way that silence is used in this culture. The first one says an American culture, where this part shows one person speaking and this part shows the other person speaking. So, this is A and this is B this is a conversation going on there is no silence in between, but there is just small break the moment come somebody stops communicating the other person start communicating. The second one is example of the Japanese way of communicating where you see that the first person speaks this is followed by the second person speaking after the pause and here is a silence part of it. So, silence plays a very significant role over here and so the conversation continues. And this is Indian way of speaking where you find that both the people are speaking at the same time. So, the conversation is not really conversation it is kind of a noise, because everybody is trying to speak at a same point of time.

So, there is no scope for even pauses forget about silence. So, this a humorous way of looking at the way that the conversation also take place in different cultures even within the Indian culture there are different communities which converse in different ways. This is just makes you aware of cultural differences, and the role that silence possess or the lack of possess play in this different cultures. Because, when we are taking about conversation we one of the important things is the culture within which the conversation is taken place.




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**Conversation**

- A Personal Anecdote
  - Meeting someone after 8 years about his son.
- Learning points
  - ...

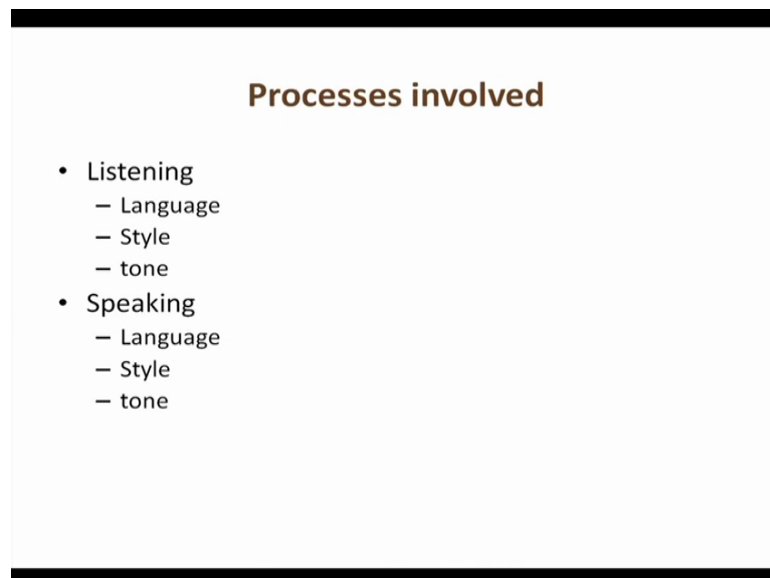


Now, you see that, what is Conversation? Probably, this is such a simple silly question that we may not be interested to find the answer to this question, but we are talking about either 2 people or more than 2 people who was speaking with one another and trying to may be communicate that is the conversation. When we are talking about conversation I can go back to one of the small anecdotes or episodes of my meeting senior friend with whom I work with long time back after a period of 8 years.

Now, this was a conversation which probably to assign next side and one sided conversation in a certain way because he was talking about his frustrations, what your son what he is doing, what he was not doing, and a wide range of things. But you find that probably went on speaking for 20 minutes and I had to wait and at various point of time I was probably to a certain extent following the various things I already shared with you and may be in some cases I was not. But mostly I was the listener over there and at the end of it you see that he turned around and got down to thinking about what I have to share with him. I have to share with him something related to this sponsorship of an event for some of my students and I did not raise it directly, but towards the end of the conversation, we had a conversation and he was curious to know if I had come for specific reason other than the fact that we knew one another. And then when I put it casually it kind of clicked and he had absolutely no hesitation about it.

One of the lessons that I learnt was that this patience and the relegating of an important thing to a non important quarter, in the context of sharing personal things because their privacy was given to the fact that we were talking at the personal level and we were talking about something which was very serious or of deep concern to him probably made him realize that what I had to share which I did not directly share until - he final ask when I was leaving was also of some value, and so he gave it a significant amount of value. So, this is a kind of lesson I learnt from there; that sometimes patients, little bit of circumspection little bit of care and understanding can go a long way in a having a significant meaningful interpersonal communication as in the context of conversation.

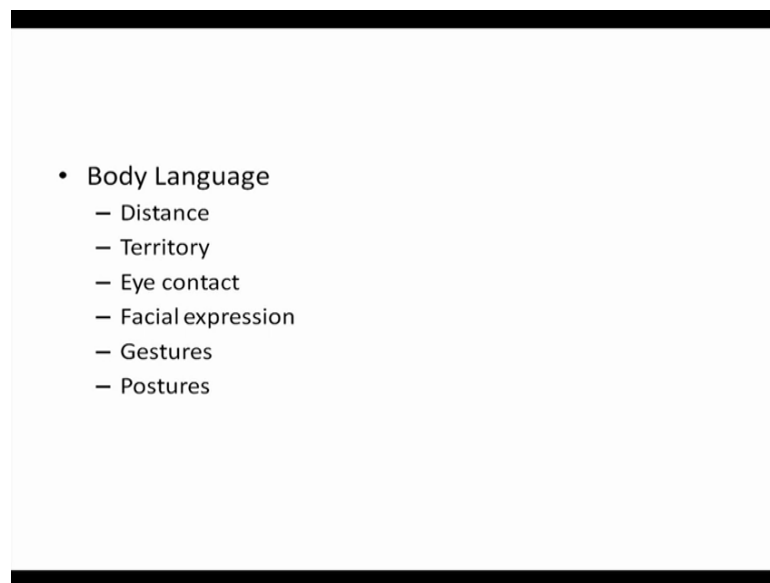
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Now Processes involved, I told you about the various processes involved little earlier now we will talk about them in detail. Listening, we already elaborated on that, we are listening obviously, for the text the language that somebody speaking, we are listening for that style, listening for the tone that we are already highlighted to a significant extent in the earlier session that we had together. Now we are talking about speaking. In the context of speaking again in the earlier lecture as well as here I have told you that the language that you speak in his very significant buy language I do not mean the etiquette that you exactly follow, but what I mean to communicate is the language should communicate certain things like politeness, concern, understanding, desire to share, interest and if you have such things. So, the things that you say should obviously make new senses communicate these to the other person.

Style again when we talked about voice, we talked about style in a certain way. And style is a very very distinctive individual component, but it is to be considered. Some people have what can be considered bad styles, lack of poor intonation, lack of possess, speaking very fast, speaking in a monotone. Now, these are some of the things which can be barriers to effective communication and conversation and need to take care off. Tone of voices something which we have already highlighted earlier so I will not going to it.

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But there are few other processes involved and this is the one which I will touch upon this slightly elaborate way, we talked about the earlier things in much degree of detail. And when we are talking about body language in the context of conversation probably it is important to highlight some of these issues.

Now, what I going to do is I will be sharing some slides with you and you please check them up when we are looking at the discussion forum and with the material that I will be sharing with you look up the links; which deal with it is concept of distance territory eye contact, facial expression, gestures and postures. Now we will start from the bottom because they wants at the bottom are easier to understand.

Postures you take up can be of various kinds you can take up an arrogant posture, you can take up a (Refer Time: 20:26) posture, you can do all these things. Gestures you can point to somebody or you can fold your hands behind you and you can rub your chin or you can scratch your head and do all kind of things. So, gestures again placing in control

in what you are doing or you immediately cross fold your hands in front of you like this; all these things to manage to communicate the sense of intimacy or distance. We will be dealing with these in detail first of all when I show these pictures to you would download this picture have a look and look at these pictures and try to interpret what they mean. That can be of course be in the survey probably we will do it in the form of a survey, so that we can get a general responses how Indians I general feel about those postures, what do they communicate?

Same is a case with facial expressions, about which we will; it is very obvious that facial expression do communicate significantly we will just to find out how well you understand facial expressions, when we detail out and do facial expressions in the separate class. But gestures and conversation in the conversation context will be doing it probably in this particular session. So, you go to the link and click the quiz and do every sort quiz which is about gestures.

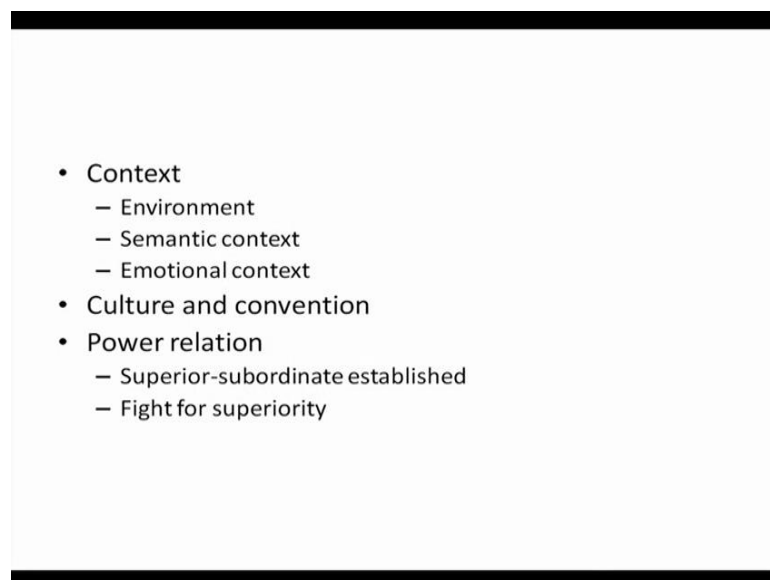
Eye contact is something which has been highlighted earlier, but the other two areas need to be highlighted; territory and distance. Friends, you feel that animals talk about have territories, but human beings are also equally sensitive about the concept about the territory. And we are very sensitive the concept of territory throughout our lives, and these concepts are relative and keep on changing. For instance, if I have pen inside in my pocket and somebody who does not know me let us say tries to pick up this pen; now this is very very often say a kind of situation, because the pocket in my territory and would show only intimate field and that can access this territory and not anybody else or may be a family member may be my daughter, but nobody else should be touching that; it is an offensive gestures. When we are conversing we need certain number of space also, so distance territory these are linked with one another.

In a very interesting small study I did informally with my students, I found that when 2 strangers are conversing and if happen to be men, then what happens is that the distance between them are roughly 2 feet. If, 2 women are conversing let say and they do not know one another, then their distance is kind of reduce to the women or fairly comfortable with the slightly lesser distance between them something like may be 18 inches to 16 to 18 inches. On the other hand, in the Indian cultural context, when a men or women who do not know one another are generally conversing and we find that the

distance is the greatest, it is roughly two and half feet or roughly 30 inches at which they are more or less comfortable talking to one another.

So, in the context of conversation non-verbal accepts body language place a very important role, the sense of distance plays a very important role, even when you are conversing with somebody over a coffee table or you are conversing that places a very significant role. So, you need to be aware of these, I am just touching upon them here, taking a survey with you guys, but later on we are going to elaborate on these, we are going to talk about deceit and few other things are also related to non-verbal communication. And you will be able to link it to conversation and non-verbal communication when you are going to the details of that.

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- 
- Context
    - Environment
    - Semantic context
    - Emotional context
  - Culture and convention
  - Power relation
    - Superior-subordinate established
    - Fight for superiority

Context also includes environment where you are talking. The context smile every different and depending on where you are talking let us see you are talking in a lift you kind of squeezed together, you are talking in a big room may be you are placed at great distance from one another. Semantic context language that you are using, the emotional context; all these things determine the way that a conversation proceeds. And you find that the same people conversing and if you take these 3 parameters in to consideration the conversations will be different, the use of body language will be different, the use of face and territory will be different, and in each case the transaction will be very very different.

The reason I am talking about this to make you aware of the fact that the context is very very significant and if you develop a sensitivity towards the context then you kind of remember this is going to work for me in this particular context, and in which context what to say, what not to say, how to converse or not to converse these are things you will become aware of.

Culture and convention I talked about men and women in India cultural context. I am probably in the Western context this may not hold true. So, culture plays a very significant role convention is something which is embedded within a culture something which has been happening within a culture for a period of time so everybody follows that.

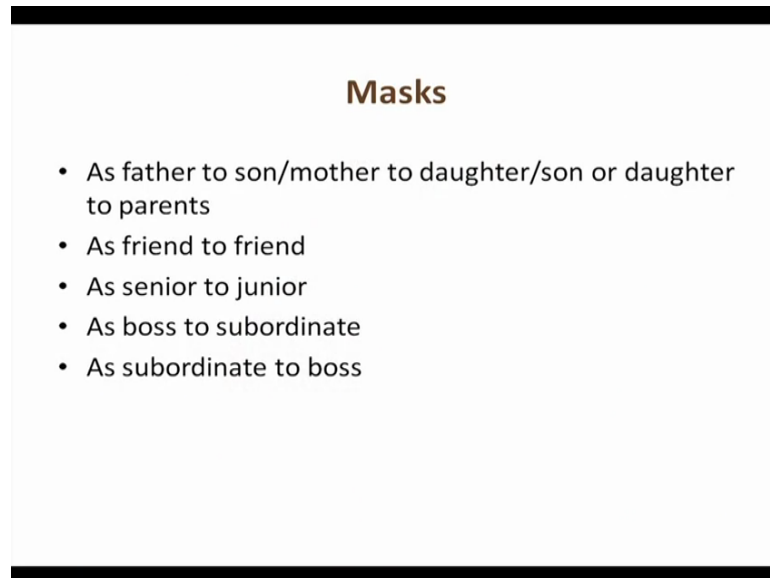
Now, these things play a significant role you and I might be good friends, but may be you are in a high post somewhere and I visiting you I have to follow the protocol and I might have to wait outside, I should feel offended about it you have to follow certain protocols. So, in various context even intimate friends have to react behave in different ways may be in a meeting, back home they are patting one another's back, but inside the meeting inside the hall when they are having the meeting they are talking very very formally, they are speaking formally, they are addressing one another very formally. So, these things have to be taken in to consideration and we need to be aware of them.

And power relationship also gets related to that because, you might be friends outside but within a particular context one is formally superior to the other. But also power relationship is something which plays a very significant role in the context of conversations, because in the conversations how we are speaking with somebody, how you are going to converse depends on the power relationship. But everything certain done the points I made when I would talk to you about the listening and speaking still hold good which is be honest be yourself, be sincere, do not be afraid of speaking about whatever is on your mind, but be polite, (Refer Time: 27:11) at it if you do not agree to something you present it in indirect way so that there is always a scope for let say possible agreement between the two.

Now, these are issues which start up with conversation which probably get linked to other areas like negotiation, persuasion, agree conflict management and these are some of

the things which Professor V. N. Giri and Professor (Refer Time: 27:35) will taking up at relative point of time, but I am just making aware of them in this particular context.

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Masks, is something I will quickly touch up on. The moment we start talking in different situations in different, we start playing different roles; for instance, I am the same person but the way I would talk with my wife, the way I talk with my daughter, the way I talk with my friend very old friend may be, may be childhood friend, the way I would talk with my boss, now this would be very, very different.

So obviously you might say that one of the way analogy you use obviously it is not a mask really, but it is just an analogy to say that or you can say role playing or whatever you call it, in different kinds of circumstances with different kind of people we converse in different ways. And this awareness is very very important because, the sensitivity to understanding that conversation would be very different our ways of speaking would be very different to different kind of people is very very relevant for I mean the situation where soft skills are very very important.

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**Do we speak the same way ?**

- Role play
  - Senior to Junior
  - Student to teacher
  - Friend to friend

Assessment and learning points


So, here are some examples you can try them out yourself and you find that each time you are taking up in different role you are behaving in a very very different way; you will find that it is automatically happening. And you realize that we which switch these roles very easily very quickly, and if you are not doing that then probably we need to do that as well. We need to hold down to our beliefs and all that, but our behavior patterns for would be either formal or unformal our languages, the way we use language will be different; our body language would be different.

Now, these things are very very important and we need to develop certain degree of sensitivity to these elements.



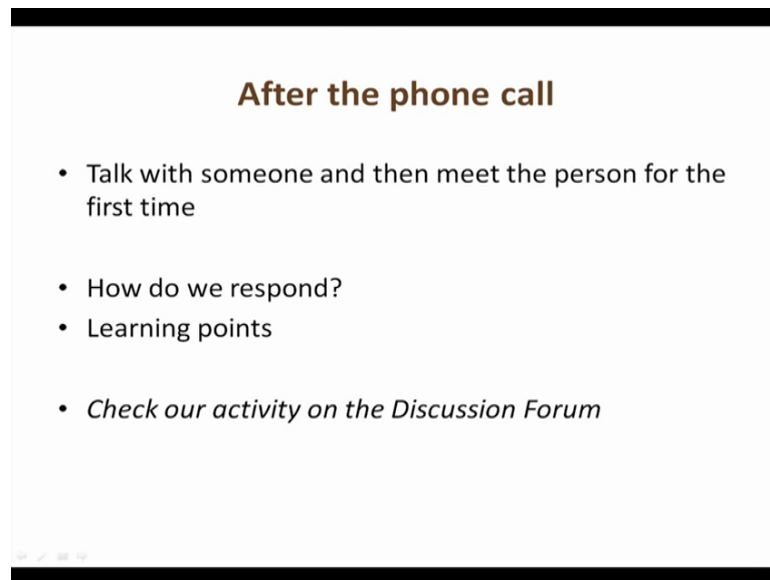
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- Telephone
  - Voice, tone, grain against the medium (phone) and silence
  - Warmth and feeling conveyed against style
  - Intent and meaning against emotion, feelings and style



Telephone is something which is already highlighted. And here what I am trying to say is that a you need to keep these things in my mind because, as I told you earlier sharing a number of things using non-verbal communication are not possible and I am just trying to emphasize the fact that this is one very very important dimension of communication speaking over phones. And if you try out something which I have just indicated little earlier role playing as a different persons in real life or face to face and over phone you will find that strategies have to begin significantly different. And if you try this out probably it is gone to be a good idea because, it will help you to develop sensitivity to the way that you converse when you are communicating.

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**After the phone call**

- Talk with someone and then meet the person for the first time
- How do we respond?
- Learning points
- *Check our activity on the Discussion Forum*

So, here is the other part of the assignment. And I will be asking you some questions when I will be discussing these things with you on the discussing forum.

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**The human side**

- We get hurt easily
- We get offended easily
- We feel neglected easily
- Human communication is not easy
- How much time do we spend in communicating, and how much on taking care of the above points, especially in the first few meetings?



At the end of this please remember that the human side that whatever you will say or do we get hurt easily, we get offended easily, we feel neglected and human communication is not easy you need to be carefully, you need to be sensitive, you need to have these things in mind at all points of time in order to be a better communicator.

Thank you very much.