

Soft Skills
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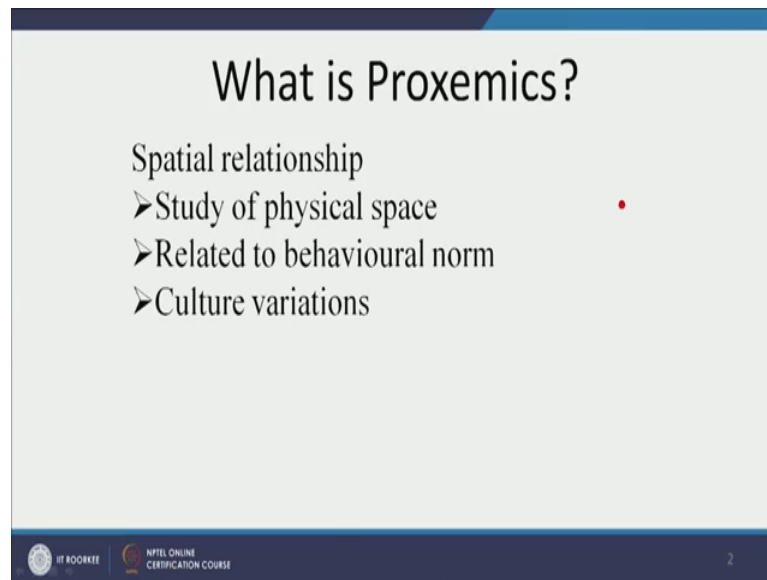
Lecture - 11
Proxemics

Good morning. You are listening to a series of lectures on Soft Skills by Binod Mishra and in this series, presently we are discussing communicating without words or nonverbal communication. We have already discussed and underlined the importance of nonverbal communication or to be very clear nonverbal cues while communicating at work in our everyday life and in several situations in this context today we are going to talk about Proxemics.

You might have a curiosity as to what Proxemics is and how important role does it play when we are communicating; what are its various forms and why much consideration has to be given to Proxemics; most of you might often find that while you have to share a secret or you have to give some very crucial information without the knowledge of others; what you do is you go very close to a person.

On the other hand, you also might have found that while communicating in different ways and on several occasions; we maintain some space when we talk about Proxemics. We actually talk about spatial relationship meaning thereby the language of space have you ever thought about whether space has an importance in communication and if it has; how does it matter the study of physical space in communication is called Proxemics.

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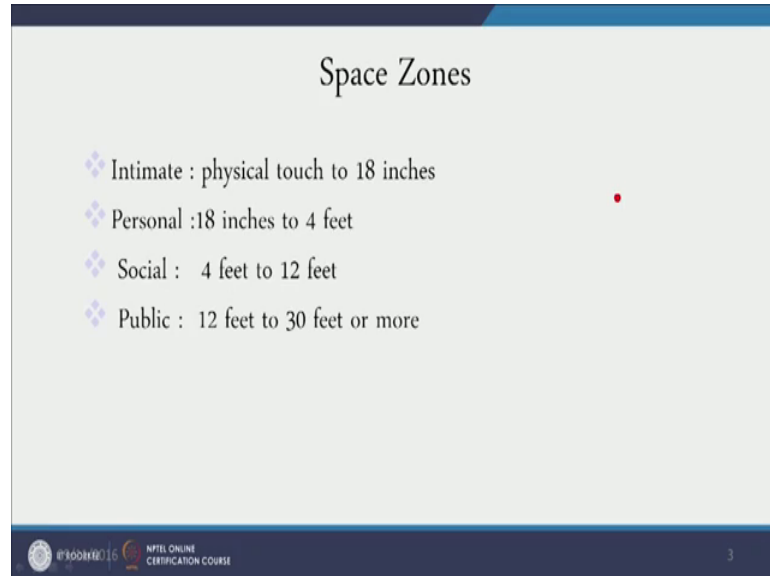
The word Proxemics comes from proximity which actually means nearness of space that is why, you most often find that Proxemics can be understood better in terms of behavioral norm which manifests in communication and that is why, we also call spatial relationship as relationship communication. So, Proxemics is related to our behavioral norm; if you look at animals, you will find some of them are gazed and they have a limited space; whether they walk or they make movements, their movements are restricted, but then once they are let free, they feel themselves relaxed.

Likewise human also; since animals have an air bubble; humans also have an air bubble, all of us actually required some space and space has a meaning. It varies from one culture to another; you have found that while the space between the mother and the child is very less; we find the communication between the mother and the child; whether there is an exchange of words or not, but they understand each others cues and that also in terms of intimacy in terms of cuddling in terms of anger in terms of affection.

Hence the study of physical space while communicating on several occasions be it for the sake of personal relationships, our physicals or official communication space matters a lot, but then sometimes or the other you also must know that space varies from one culture to another while Proxemics reflects warmth, it also reflects other feelings such as the amount of freedom you require the sort of friendliness that you are going to wish for and the sort of peace that sometimes or the other; we pray for that is why there are space

zones and we can always divide the zones into 4 categories; every individual has a sense of place sense of territory sense of space.

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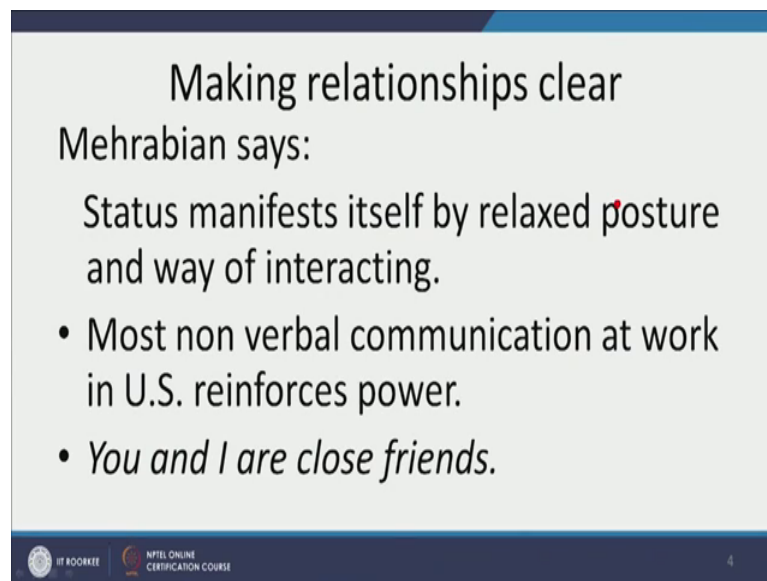
Hence depending upon our relationship, the zones defer, the zones vary, the first in this category is an intimate zone.

Now, when we are going to talk about zones, we should also ensure the amount of nearness or remoteness. The first zone is an intimate zone where. So, talking about space distancing; let us talk about the various space zones. As said earlier; every human being even like animals; they require space. Who does not want a breathing space; you might have come across several situations where you feel that your space is being interrupted.

Sometimes it is violated, even that is why from one culture to another space differs, but then there are certain ways, we can study space and that is why these space zones can be divided into 4. The first among them is the intimate space and this intimate space denotes that physical touch up to 18 inches is allowed. Now the question is how should we know whether we are in intimate zone or in some other zone; you will find that this intimate zone as the term itself refers to; talks about intimacy hence people who are in intimate bonds with each other; are people of closed circle family people; people who are kins, relatives or are very close to us. They only have this freedom to enter our intimate zones likewise, there are other zones as personal zone as our relationship; whether it is a distant relation or it is a near relationship you will find there is a variance in space zones.

So, in personal zone; the physical touch is allowed or it actually increases from 18 inches to 4 feet and then we have social zone where the space distancing is between 4 feet to 12 feet and the last is the public zone which actually denotes the space distance of 12 feet to 30 feet or even more. Now talking about these zones, we have several examples and anthropologists have different observations to make as Mehrabian says status manifests itself by relaxed posture and ways of interacting.

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The slide is titled "Making relationships clear" and features the text "Mehrabian says: Status manifests itself by relaxed posture and way of interacting." Below this, there are two bullet points: "• Most non verbal communication at work in U.S. reinforces power." and "• *You and I are close friends.*" The slide footer includes the logos for "IT ROORKEE" and "NPTEL ONLINE CERTIFICATION COURSE" along with the number "4".

Now, you will find that by maintaining your space you are also maintaining your position, if you are an employee in an organization, you will come across several instances where different people have different spaces; even the furniture kept also tells a lot about the status of a person. In most of the organizations, you will find the boss will always have a spacious chamber or a spacious room; whereas, other employees depending upon their status in the organization, their space also varies, general employees have smaller cabins and that denotes their space in the organization as well as their importance.

Most nonverbal communication at work in us reinforces power hence space is also related to power the space that you occupy in your organization that also tells a lot about your control and your power as well as your dominance; that is why in many organization in us; the boss will have the corner space. So, that he can have a look at all other employees; even in your country, you will find people at lofty positions and a

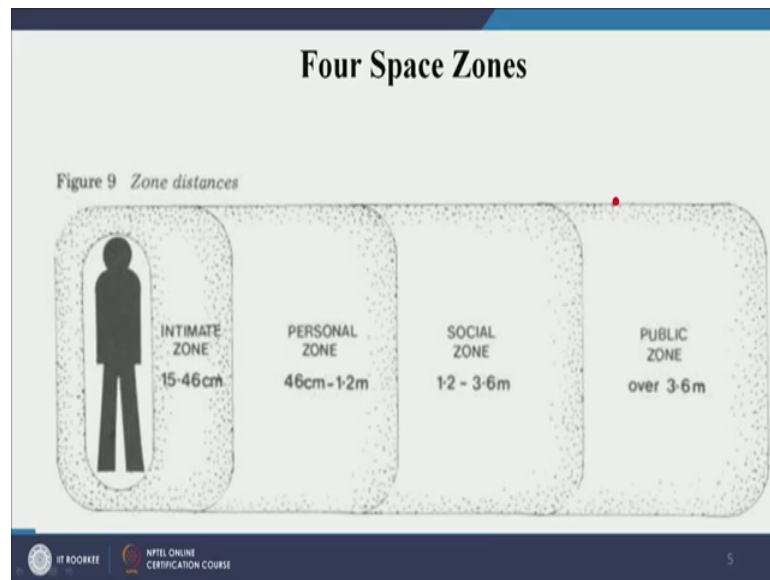
distinguished posts; they enjoy more power and that is reflected the way they enjoy more space whether it is in official terms or in terms of providing them accommodation or other things as well.

In this context you will find as I have said that space denotes power, it varies from culture to culture; what is allowed in one culture may be an appendage in another culture. Let me give you an example of how space means a lot. It has been observed by one American who was invited as a guest of honor by a Japanese organization or institute while a car was sent to him to bring him to the venue, it was found that 2 people were also sent to escort him.

While the guest of honor was made seated in the back seat; the 2 people were made to sit in the front seat beside the driver. The US guest of honor felt quite ill at ease and always felt embarrassed; the way he was sitting lonely throughout the journey he could not understand why he was left alone and even though a lot of space was available the 2 persons who had come to his court who were sitting in the front seat beside the driver, yet on another occasion when the same guest of honor was called this time; there are 3 people to escort him and the guest of honor felt that since the number is 3 somebody will have to sit by his side, but it did not happen. This time again all the 3 people sat in the front seat beside the driver; the US person once again felt ill at ease and thought something was wrong with him; something perhaps was wrong with his body order or smell, but this was not the question and then he realized it late.

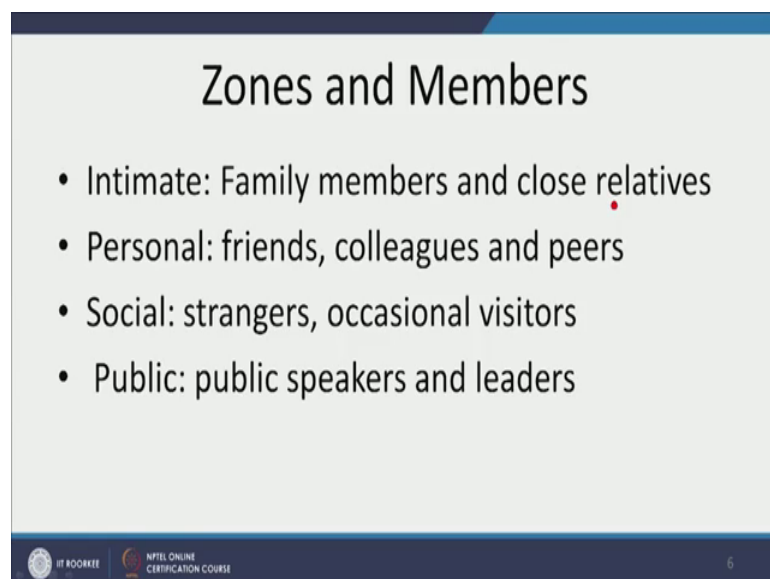
When he was in a party with some of his English students; British students and they also sat at the far end of the cluster; while this person was sitting or was occupying space quite alone and as he tried to know; one of them replied you and I are close friends. The meaning is that the Japanese; they allow more room to their guests and that is how they treat; hence a space distancing may be interpreted differently by different people.

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Now, let us try to understand how these 4 space zones vary. You will find that many Europeans; they maintain a space zone of 15 to 25 centimeters while maintaining their intimate zones and as I have said earlier, these distance zones vary depending upon the relationship. Now if we are going to talk about the members who can because you know space denotes dominance and power that is why; when we talk about intimate zone, it is only reserved and earmarked for family members and close relatives.

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If a stranger or for that matter; a person of a different zone interferes with our intimate zone; we feel threatened that is why you will find that if you are an employee at a workplace, there is a particular placement for you; even when you are dealing with your boss.

If you go very close to the boss; he or she feels threatened. Now coming to personal zone, we find that only friends colleagues and peers; they can enter our personal zones the people who are actually meant for personal zones cannot interfere with or cannot enter into our intimate zones unless and until the relationship becomes. So, close or unless and until; the way we communicate with each other or see a secrets with each other that we become intimate hence person allowed one zone cannot interfere with the other zone.

Next is the social zones were strangers, occasional visitors such as plumbers, electricians, milkman and those others; they only can be a part of social zones. They do not have a right and you will often find whether at home or office. These people are allowed only up to a certain space, they cannot be allowed to go very close that is why when somebody wants to meet the chief of an organization, he actually has to wait for some time in a place meant for him or her unless and until the boss is informed and it is up to the discretion of the boss as to when and at which place; he will meet the other person.

Next is the public zone which actually is for large distance and in this zone, public speakers and leaders; you will often find when you are going to a conference you will find that the main speaker is at a particular place and the other people and the difference between them is wide apart.

Now while we are communicating, it is very difficult to understand the feedback when we are in a public zone or when we are delivering a talk to general people. Now since space is also culturally regulated different cultures have different space meanings, this way the world can be divided into 2 context cultures.

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Culture contexts & Space meanings

- Low context cultures: North America, Germany, England, French, Italy, Scandinavia
- High Context cultures: Japan, China, Arab, Greece, Mexico, Spain

- Arabs of the same sex stand much closer than North Americans.
- People in U.S require more room.

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The first is the low context culture in which countries like North America, Germany, England, French, Italy and Scandinavia come; whereas, people of the high context cultures include Japan, China, Arab, Greece, Mexico and Spain.

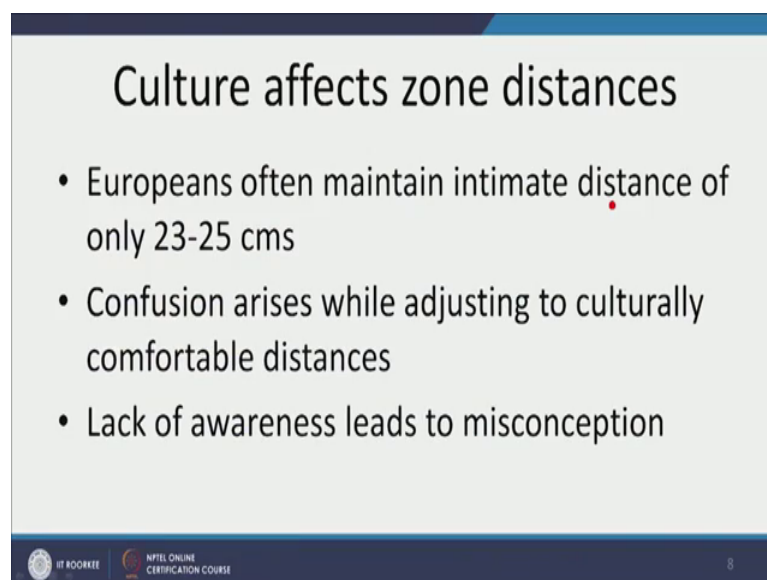
Now, what is actually the difference and how space matters between 2 culture zones people of low culture contexts they believe everything in written ones; they do not attach much importance to nonverbal cues whereas, people of high context cultures; they give they also try to derive meaning from the nonverbal cues there are several examples in this regard where you will find people of us while they are communicating. They are actually going to write long emails; whereas, people from a high context culture like say Japan; they believe in writing smaller messages. Hence when there is a communication while the Americans may feel the French people as withholding information whereas, the French people may think Americans as excessively dominant and they actually believe that they try to speak more we have often found that Americans require more space that is why while there is a communication between an American and others you will find other people often are considered to violate the American's spaces.

And at the same time, they are also considered to embarrass the others by interfering with their spaces. Another example is that Arabs of the same sex; they stand much closer than North American; you will often find that Asians particularly Indians; they often stand very close and that may be embarrassing for people of other cultures. In this

context, there is one example while a Denmark couple joined an American club; they were unaware of the space maintenance of Americans and hence the Denmark couple were found to violate the American's space there have been many instances where space has been violated and sometimes it has also resulted in different ways. Say for example, in our own country; you might remember that while a prominent political leader in an election rally was addressing the crowd some of the people they violated the space and entered or went very close to the speaker and hence there was actually a sort of incident which even history can never forget.

Hence it is advisable that while we are communicating we ought to understand the limitations of our own space and also consider that others spaces are not interfered with most of the times confusion arises while we are adjusting to culturally comfortable distances. There are several observations made by several scholars and one of them is while an American and Japanese; they were interacting. Since the Japanese are very reserved people and the Japanese always wanted to go very close to the American and the American was always trying to withdraw and in order to adjust each others comfortable distances they ultimately appeared to the people as if they were dancing because they are looking for each others spaces.

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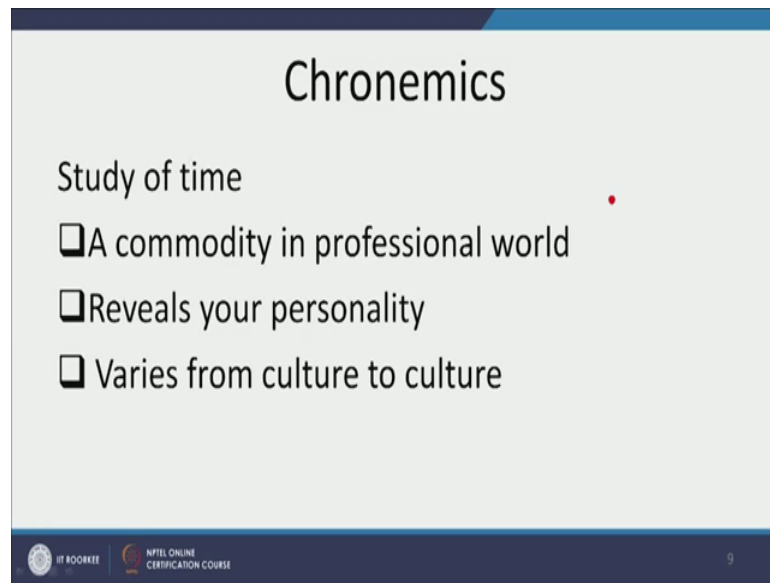
Culture affects zone distances

- Europeans often maintain intimate distance of only 23-25 cms
- Confusion arises while adjusting to culturally comfortable distances
- Lack of awareness leads to misconception

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Lack of awareness in terms of space leads to misconception and at times; it also leads to confusion and creates miscommunication.

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The slide is titled "Chronemics" and lists the following points:

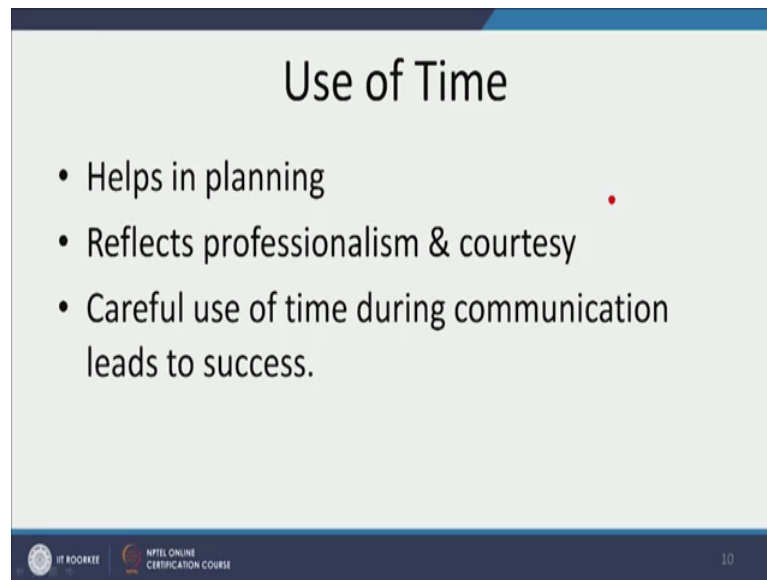
- Study of time
- A commodity in professional world
- Reveals your personality
- Varies from culture to culture

At the bottom of the slide, there are logos for IIT ROORKEE and NPTEL ONLINE CERTIFICATION COURSE, along with the number 9.

While space is very important even the knowledge or the study of time is equally important in terms of communication, you will find that while in several countries, people have very rigid or strict notions of time, but then in certain cultures, it has also been found that people take time not as seriously as others and this we study under Chronemics. Chronemics is the study of time and as most of you our professors or would be professionals, you ought to understand the importance of time in a professional world time is a commodity in a professional world time reveals a person's personality, it also reflects a person's attitude towards others.

At the same time, denoting a person's preference that is why many countries and many cultures expect people to be on time as I have said is a commodity and it pays rich dividends if you are in a professional world you will have to realize that if you have been given a project you have also been given a time limitation.

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Use of Time

- Helps in planning
- Reflects professionalism & courtesy
- Careful use of time during communication leads to success.

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If by some way or the other you fail to respond to the timeliness you are treated negatively or you are showing the negative traits of your personality you may at times be considered insincere because you are not maintaining the proper time line time varies from culture to culture. As I have said, you will find that time helps in planning if you are a professional you have to time your things properly. In several countries, say several Latin American countries; several Mexican countries, meetings never begin at time, people actually have a lot of fun; lot of gossip and then they begin the meeting, but especially in countries like UK you are being on time; actually brings you more respect especially; in our own country like India though we talk a lot about time, but most of the time, we are never in time and that is why the problem arises.

Careful use of time during communication can lead to success Robert E Hall; one of the famous psychologists an anthropology says that time talks and space speaks you will find if; you are going to deliver a talk you have to organize your talk according to the time. Say for example, if you are going to deliver a talk of 20 minutes; you know well how you are going to divide it on and in a way. So, that your talk ends on time an introduction; if it is long in a presentation of 20 minutes; it actually wastes your time.

Hence, careful speakers careful communicators, they know and decide the proper timing of the message as well as the way your presentation or talk should be timed if you allow more time to introduction you will have less time for the presentation, and because you

have to follow the norms of a successful presentation hence the beginning as well as the development and finally, the end of your presentation that matters a lot.

So, the way you manage time reveals your personality and also helps you in becoming a successful professional or a successful entrepreneur; though there are notions in several countries, but every individual also uses time according to his or her own preference you will find that if you want to meet an important person in an organization you either have to seek time or well in advance and then the other person namely the director of the chairman, they also decide how much time to be given to whom and the way they provide time the way they give time to others that denotes the importance they provide to the other person.

Hence they actually make certain preferences and they prioritize their time, but remember a timely a timely presentation a timely help a timely planning and a talk well timed in bears good result in most of the situation dear friends in a professional world of today not only Proxemics, but Chronemics are important, it is up to you; how you are going to divide your time; it is up to you. How you are going to maintain your space and finally, it is up to you how you have planned carefully and how you culminate both space and time because both space and time communicate.

So, space and time as nonverbal cues; they are very important and as a professional, you have to pay adequate attention to these 2 nonverbal things which can alone make you a successful planner, a successful manager and a successful professional. In the days to come, while you are communicating across cultures since you are not aware of their consideration for space and time, it is always better to have some knowledge and it is advisable to gather factual information about their consideration for space and time, so that you may not create any miscommunication which may lead to misconception.

And finally, result in a way which you might not have anticipated for I do hope that a lecture on space and time will help you a lot in transacting your business as well as in maintaining your relationship for that matter all sorts of relationships succeed or fail based on the relationship we make with our listeners or our audience.

Thank you very much.