

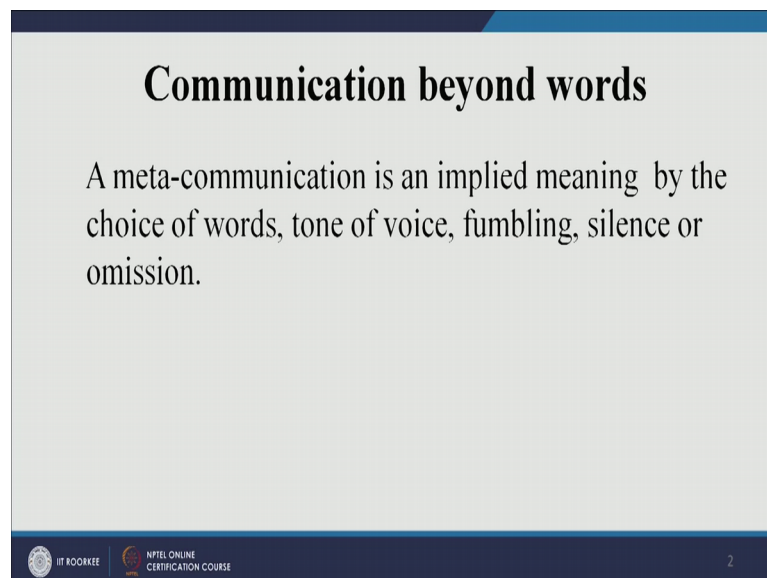
**Soft Skills**  
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**Lecture - 13**  
**Meta-communication**

Hello. Welcome back to the series of lectures on Soft Skills. As you all remember till now we have done various lessons on effective ways to acquire soft skills. And in the previous lectures we had been talking how communicating without words is also a skill. In that lecture we had referred to the various nonverbal cues which actually help in face to face communication. Especially when you are communicating orally or say verbally, but then as we said earlier we communicate not only with words we communicate with non words also. And in that context we have talked about kinesics, proxemics, chronemics, haptics para language and related cues.

Today we are going to talk about one more significant form of nonverbal communication which is called Meta-communication. Now one thing that might be making you worry is; what actually is Meta-communication. Meta-communication if we go by the words is made up of 2 words Meta and communication. Meta means beyond and communication is communication. So, something or a sort of communication that is beyond words can be called Meta-communication.

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**Communication beyond words**

A meta-communication is an implied meaning by the choice of words, tone of voice, fumbling, silence or omission.

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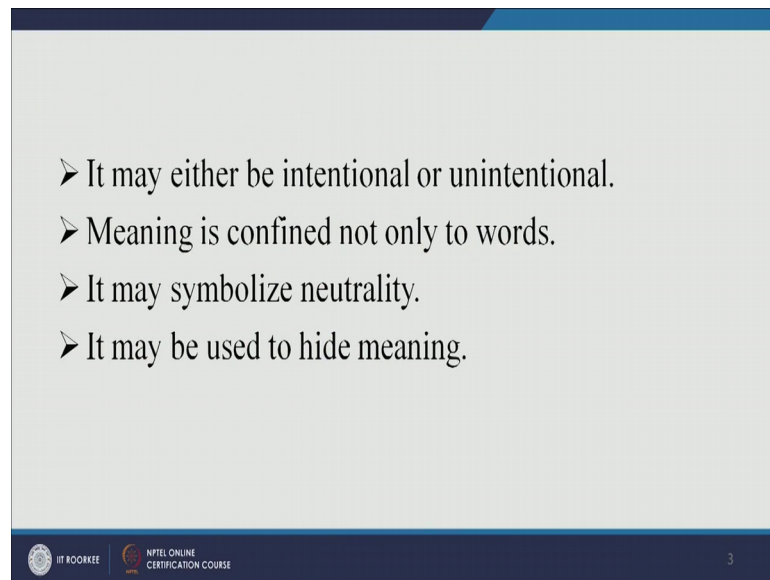
Now what are the different aspects of Meta-communication? When we are busy in a Meta-communication, we do not confine ourselves only to the words. Words as we discussed earlier have a specific meaning they actually change their meaning, depending upon the context depending upon the speaker depending upon the tone also depending upon the temper depending upon the meaning that the speaker has in a particular word that is why we can call Meta-communication.

And if a communication that has got an implied meaning and when we say implied meaning what we mean is how actually the speaker chooses the words why did he choose a particular word in a particular context, that a particular word can have a different meaning if the context changes. Of course, and moreover how important is the tone of voice that we provide to a particular word. Sometimes we find many people fumbling sometimes we find many people hesitating even though they are trying to speak something, but then they hesitate and on another occasions we also find people becoming silent or people stopping for some time and then speaking. So, all these come under the term Meta-communication.

Hence, Meta-communication is a communication where the speaker will have a choice of words will also decide the tone. Because whenever we speak every now and then we do not have one tone otherwise the entire communication process will become monotonous. So, whenever you speak you find depending upon the context depending upon the situation depending upon your own purpose, you actually start positioning the word and the way you position the word that actually lends a lot of communication to the entire context.

Now, if Meta-communication is a communication beyond words. So, it means that it will be intentional? No.

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It cannot be intentional all the time, a Meta of communication may at times be unintentional also. Because you never know the mind of the person you are talking to you actually sometimes ignore the mood of the person, but still you are speaking and sometimes when a speaker said something you take it lightly, but you do not look into the nuances which are involved in the way he or she said it. So, we can say that meaning is not confined only to the words.

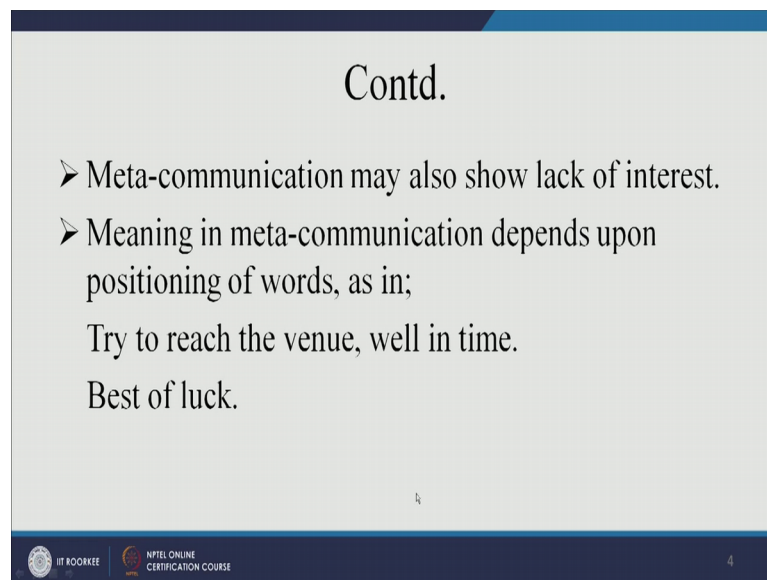
After you speak a word you sometimes maintain a sort of break sometimes you maintain a sort of silence and both these breaks and the silences are meaningful. We cannot say that a person which silent does not mean anything. We shall see later how the meaning of silence can be extracted differently in different contexts and also in different cultures.

sometimes this Meta-communication may symbolize neutrality. Imagine whenever you are passing by a street and you watch so many people. So, many activities, but then you do not speak anything, does that mean you are not a part of it does that mean you do not have any reaction, does that mean you are not affected. No. Actually sometimes maintaining silence is mandatory. It becomes obligatory at times. And sometimes when you do not speak or sometimes when you omit to speak you actually do it either to hide the meaning.

You will find on various occasions especially when you are at a workplace your all you are working in an organization or in a school or in a college you find that you do not

want to react. What does that mean? That actually means as you try to earmark your reactions, either you try to hide your feelings or your reactions or you simply want to say that you are totally impartial. So, through Meta-communication we not only express, but we also try to hide meaning.

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- Meta-communication may also show lack of interest.
- Meaning in meta-communication depends upon positioning of words, as in;  
Try to reach the venue, well in time.  
Best of luck.

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There are different ways that Meta-communication can also show your lack of interest. For example, 2 people talking to each other and you find this speaker is very excited to say something, but at the same time if as a listener you do not react to after some time you will find the speaker may feel ill at ease, but what about your silence or your omission? Perhaps either you did not want to appreciate or even if you wanted to react just for the sake of cordiality or the sake of this situation or the sake of even say your generosity, you did not speak anything. So, meaning in Meta-communication we can say depends upon the positioning of words. Say for example, one fine morning you start for the college or for the organization and you have taken every care to dress yourself very perfectly, and when you meet a friend of yours on the way and the reaction that he says he may say oh your looking very smart today.

now he has appreciated or he has depreciated actually depends upon his tone. And the tenor sometimes when he says that you are looking damn smart or you have dressed very well it also may mean that on earlier days you did not dress well or you dressed very

subtly. Now the question is to extract the meaning you have to look at the implication that the person expresses through his tone.

There can be other occasions also where you will find simply by the positioning of words or by the change of the position of a particular word you are going to change the meaning. Say for example, somebody says try to reach the venue well in time you know most of the time, you feel that either somebody tries to put in a sort of advice or the speaker who or see it maybe may try to so, his or her anxiety. Because on earlier occasions you might have missed your flight because you are not on time sometimes, people may wish you best of luck.

So, that actor aims the way he speaks may also have sometimes it may also have a sort of satiric meaning. Say for example, look at the sentence are the look here the sentence that us speak. Leave him not kill him. Now if you hear this sentence what meaning do you get and if I change this sentence, if I say leave him not kill him. So, you will find the words are the same, but simply because there has been just a sort of break or there has been justice or sort of difference in the way I have spoken the meaning has changed. So, please do remember that Meta-communication actually conveys a lot of meaning.

Sometimes it is with the help of words and after the word the way you have expressed your tone or temper or the pitch or what so ever sometimes you will find people even when they ask questions they ask questions in such a manner that it appears to be a sort of request would like or would you mind having a cup of coffee with me this is actually a question. But at the same time this is a sort of polite request, now what appears important here to understand the implication of the person or that is obvious simply by the way it is spoken. Now we can also say that at times when you suddenly become silent you know we are fond of speaking, but sometimes you are in a meeting or sometimes you are in a congregation sometimes you are among friends and suddenly something happens or somebody ask something you try to remain silence.

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- Silence is a form of meta-communication.
- Communication is the result of shared assumptions and unspoken arguments between the sender and the receiver.
- Silence speaks volumes.

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So, that silence is a form of Meta-communication, this silence this may be meaningful you know there is a study where it says that silence reveals, silence expresses a lot. And this silence the meaning of silence may vary from one culture to another.

Suppose, in an organization if you are not aware of the Meta-communication of language then perhaps you may come across problems. You go with an application to the boss or you go with a sort of prayer or with a sort of request to the boss and the boss does not speak anything that can have either a positive meaning or a negative meaning, but the question is how would you understand that the message that the boss wants to convey is positive or negative that totally depends upon your reading ability upon the way you can read the nonverbal cues and also the ability you can read the Meta-communication which is there, because communication as all of us have been repeating is the result of sailed assumptions. No, 2 people can be alike as note if 2 people are from the same culture can have the same meaning with either a particular way of responding to it with the help of Meta-communication. So, it at times becomes difficult. It is actually a successful communication is the result of shared assumptions and unspoken arguments.

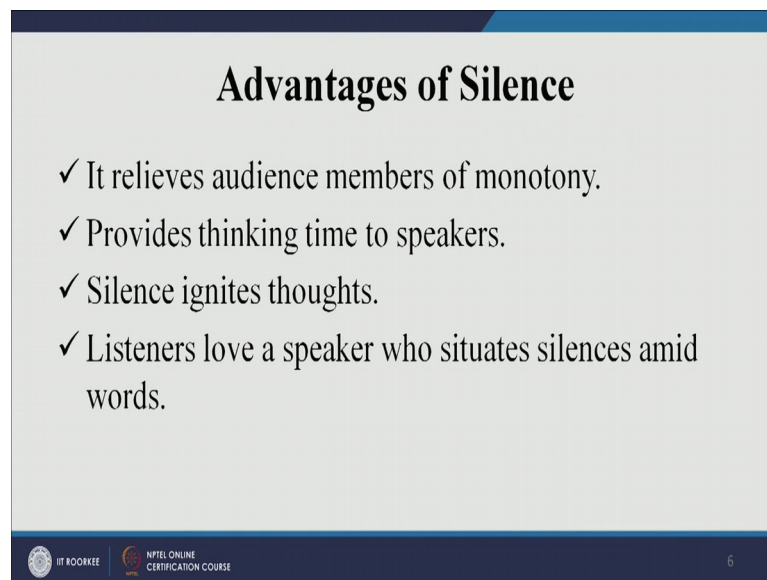
Now these unspoken arguments they appear in the form of silence. A meeting is going on and everyone each asked his or her opinion you will find that there are some people who simply remain silent. Does he have nothing to say yes he had something to say, but in order to be neutral he does not say anything or in order not to express his own view,

because he wants to hide his meaning or reaction he simply remains silent. Or sometimes by saying nothing or by remaining silent he can also express a sort of non participation or a sort of dissonance or a sort of disagreement. This actually has to be extracted and you can do it simply by watching at the body movements which we have talked about in our previous lecture.

Dear friends, you all will realize that silence sometimes speaks more than words. Silence is loud you know and silence sometimes may be very frightening. Silence sometimes may be very rewarding you will often find in organizations if a person speaks too much that does not mean that he is taken very seriously, but if a person knows how to utilize his silence, and how to utilize his words then he can climb the ladder of success because of the way he has made use of his Meta-communication.

Now, what actually are the advantages of silence? And here you should also know that there are different situations where you will feel that you require silence to have it is own use.

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**Advantages of Silence**

- ✓ It relieves audience members of monotony.
- ✓ Provides thinking time to speakers.
- ✓ Silence ignites thoughts.
- ✓ Listeners love a speaker who situates silences amid words.

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Suppose a speaker is speaking continuously. Suppose I am speaking and when you as a listener on the other side you sometimes may feel that why does not he stop for some time now. The question is if I stop for some time or if for that matter any speakers stops for some time that may actually be a sort of a relief to the audience or to the listener and

you know by maintaining a little amount of silence you will find the efficacy of his words becomes too much.

So, silence has several advantages and one of these advantages is that it can relieve the audience or other people or listener or participants of a monotony because a person is speaking and speaking. So, you want that there should be some space in an between his words and this space actually helps you a lot because you are getting some time either to revise or you get some time to digest what has been said what has been conveyed. Now this silence is rewarding from the point of both the speaker as well as the listener.

To a speaker suppose I am speaking continuously what will happen after some time I will be running sort of ideas I will be running sort of information, on the other hand my audience or listeners will also feel too much burden too much tense. That is why if I maintain a little bit of silence I will be buying some time, I will be buying some time to think what I have spoken till now and what I have to speak further. And this will also help the other members relate this will help the audience members coordinate this will help them establishing a sort of connection, a sort of coherence in what this speaker has said.

Now, silence you will also realize that silence ignites thoughts. How can silence ignite thoughts whenever a person ate silent you will find that he actually gets time to think of new ideas. Suppose you have planned the lecture and you want to deliver the lecture when you have delivered a lot and suddenly you become silent you are not only giving them a small break, but you are actually also buying time for yourself to bring some new thoughts. When we are delivering talks, sometimes we find that there are some speakers or listeners who are not in tune with what we are saying.

And that actually may create a sort of cacophony or a sort of disturbance. In order to bring that listener to the point of my discussion, if you suddenly become silent you will be able to concentrate on him and he will also feel that he is being watched. And more over you will also find all of us as listeners want our speakers not to speak too fast, but to speak at a pace as we have said in the previous lecture that there should be a proper rate of delivery.

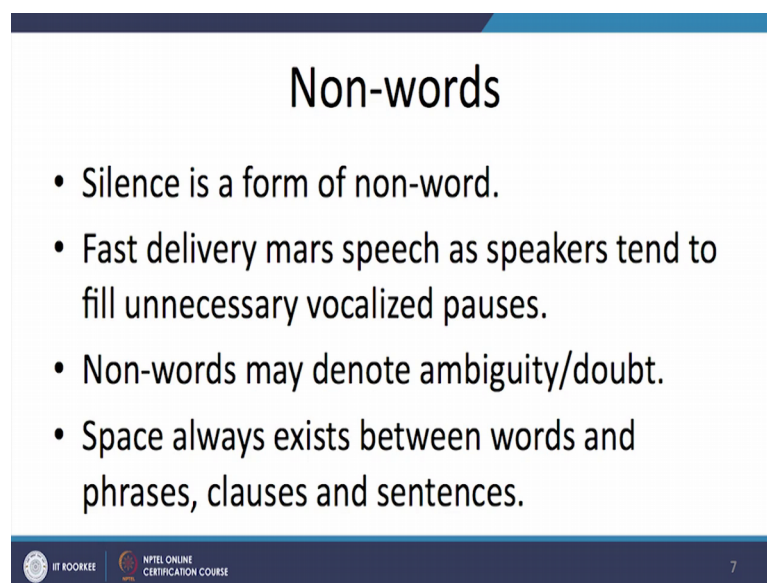
So, listeners would like to love or would go to love a speaker who actually is considerate because he by being a little bit silent he actually provides a sort of breather to his



audience a sort of say relief to his audience. So, that the audience members can connect listeners lab a speaker who situate silence amid words, but remember those who have not practiced this earth of silence being situated in their speech, they often feel because they want to say everything and they are not conscious of so, what happens they either sometimes forget the points or forget or the information that they have to provide. Moreover, this fast delivery may also help in mispronouncing certain words and at times when they feel that they are running sort of information, what will happen is they will start fumbling and by fumbling what they will do is they will actually. So, that they are not prepared.

Now when you are speaking or when you are delivering a talk as I said, there is another way that you will find apart from words you will also be making use of non words. Now non words as the world etymologically goes is no words at all.

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## Non-words

- Silence is a form of non-word.
- Fast delivery mars speech as speakers tend to fill unnecessary vocalized pauses.
- Non-words may denote ambiguity/doubt.
- Space always exists between words and phrases, clauses and sentences.

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So, when you do not have any words what will happen you will actually fumble for words. You will start thinking for words and silence also can be a form of non words. And these non words most often you will find faster speakers come across. And that is why what they will do is they will actually start making use of vocalized pauses and you will find they will start repeating and they will say I mean arms. So, all these vocalized pauses they actually mar the flow of the speech.

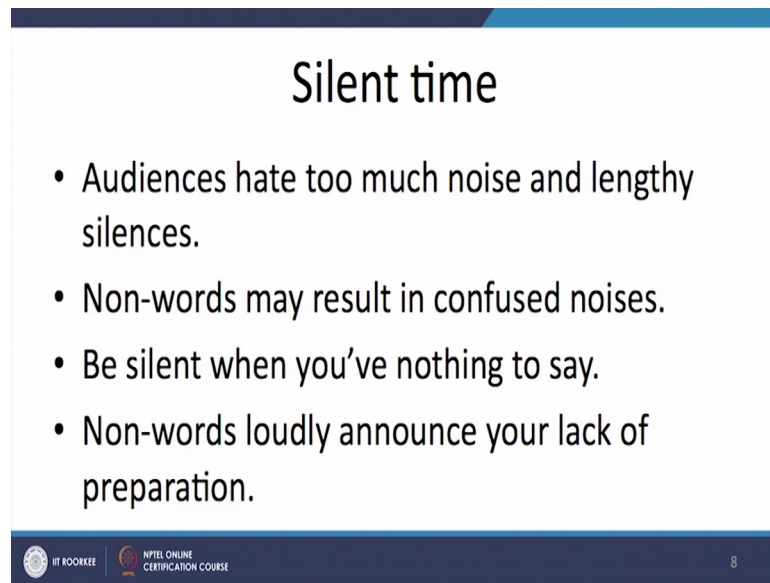
Moreover, the audience for the audience you do not have to say anything. They will start feeling that this speaker is not clear in his thoughts. That there is a lot of ambiguity there is a lot of doubt in what he says. So, these non words may denote or may convey ambiguity or doubt. And this this happens only when you are not aware of how for how much you should be silent for what a sort of silence to be utilized there.

Whenever you speak a word you will often find as I said in my previous lecture that the rate of delivery should be between 125 to 130 words per minute. Now in this case sometimes if the speaker becomes very fast. What will happen? He will not be able to provide the space between 2 units of thought. Say between 2 clauses say between 2 patterns between 2 words and that will actually result in a sort of meaninglessness and the audience members they will also feel themselves in a very precarious situation where they will start losing their respect for you as a speaker.

Hence, the need of the are is to provide space which adjust between 2 words between 2 fridges 2 clauses and 2 sentences. These non words are very important when and for that there are different situations not only in the form of a speech, but also when you are in the meeting and you want to say something, if you simply say it very fast nobody will be able to decipher what you have said rather they will also feel that you are not prepared for this meeting hence you should always try to make use of this silent time.

On every occasion in every event when you are going to speak or when you are going to listen, you will watch that there each are silent time especially the novice speakers, I mean the beginners who start their lectures who start their talks who start addressing groups of people they find it difficult to situate the silence amid the words, but then as it is a method of practice after some time if the take proper caution and if they remember carefully the significance that silence provides they will be able to make proper use of this silent time.

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## Silent time

- Audiences hate too much noise and lengthy silences.
- Non-words may result in confused noises.
- Be silent when you've nothing to say.
- Non-words loudly announce your lack of preparation.

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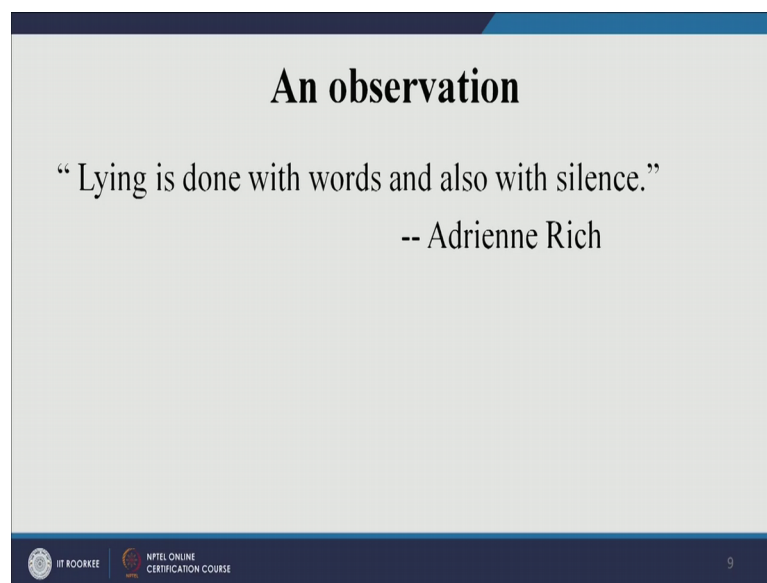
Audiences most often hate too much noise and lengthy silences. Remember if I say one has to be silent is, but to what extent if you feel that you are going to speak on a particular topic, and you wanted to ensure you wanted to provide the listeners the sort of breather in the form of silence, and this silence if it becomes lengthy one people would not like, because they are already waiting for your new thoughts that are lying with you. So, when you are going to provide silence or you are to stop for some time see to it that you do not stop for a long time it has to be regulated and when people resort when speakers resort to non words most of the time you will find that it leads to a sort of confused noises.

So, in order that this speech comes to take it is proper shape you need to provide silent silence, but you need not be silent. So, there is actually a difference between providing silence and between becoming silent. Because sometimes and this this usually happens with those people who have simply remembered, everything remember everything no doubt, but then you cannot remember everything since you do not know where to provide silence, where to stop for some time and you know in written when you write something in written communication these are being provided with the help of punctuation marks, you will find there is a comma there is a semicolon there just stop there is a dash, there is a hyphen, there are inverted commas, these actually help and so, when you are writing your own speech or your talk. So, because much of the performance that actually begins when you are writing.

So, when you are writing you are providing these, but when you are really enacting your speech you often tend to forget it. Hence it is very important that when you feel you know it is there is no use simply using your non words and giving rise to confused noises rather it is better, but if you feel that you do not have anything more to say it is always better to be silent rather than to resort to the vocalized pauses and mark the beauty of the presentation or the speech that you are going to deliver.

Moreover, these non words loudly announce as I said when you start fumbling, when you start looking for words, you are literally exposed I am sorry you literally exposed. So, please take the extra caution that you will not resort to these non words too much if you if you feel that you do not have anything else to say it is better to be silent than to speak and resort to the confused noises, you will often see that good speakers they actually.

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Practice the use of silence in their speeches.

So, as a speaker as a as a speaking quote says when we go to deliver a talk what we do is, first you assert your own being there. How by being there and by looking at? Because you know and when you look at them at that time also you are not speaking anything. Rather you are looking at them in such a way and this we call a sort of a sort of mutual agreement and this mutual agreement, is in the form of unspoken or say in the form of silence.

So, this silence is meaningful. And then again when you speak the very first word that you speak and after the first word suppose you address them and after addressing them. There is a sort of reaction on their faces and the same is being responded to by your audience members. So, at that time you feel that you are creating a sort of rapport and there also comes this Meta-communication.

Moreover, as you start and you elaborate your thoughts and as you go deeper and deeper you are also changing some of your tones. And while changing tones all because you cannot be loud all the moment you cannot maintain the same tone every now and then. Otherwise it will become a sort of monotony and it will help it will actually result in making your presentation a dull a morose a sort of non effective presentation. That is why the court says that while you are speaking you are also to be very careful of your Meta-communication, and an advice is that when you are looking at your speaker.

So, when you are looking at your speaker you are actually in a way confirming the sort of Meta-communication and through that you are also conveying a sort of message. Adrienne Rich rightly had said lying is done with words and also with silence. We lie when you make use of a particular word in a particular context, you are with the help of words also trying to hide or to express the meaning, but at the same time you can also do that and you most often do that with the help of silence. Remember when you are going to react to a situation that is painful. So, how do you acquire in or how do you. So, that you are also pained hurt grieved simply by becoming silent.

So, when you are silent or when you make use of silence, please see that this silence has a lot to say. And when you do that most often you cannot do that because the need of the hour is that at times you can also take pauses. Now what is the difference between silence and pauses are just the small breaks whereas if these breaks, become longer they actually become silent a speaker speaking a lot of words and suddenly you find that he wants to take a break. So, he pauses and with the help of the pause he also tried to convey. So, pause is also sort of non word, but then pause actually helps in dividing these speakers their thoughts and ideas.

The movement that you make in your entire pattern of thoughts that you do with the help of the pause a person who does not know how to pause and when to pause, because you know we have not been trained in all these things especially you will find people who are

either in dramatics or those who are in the field of acting they are made to learn all these nuances of making silences and making pauses. Because when you pause for a brief moment or for a small moment you are trying to ensure a proper rapport and a good will. And it is only a confident person it is only a well prepared person who knows how to exhibit his confidence through the help of pauses and this disposition also helps you gain a control. When you stop for some time as I said earlier you are also trying to seek the feedback or gain the feedback of your listeners.

So, pauses are very helpful they are actually a brief break from the flood of words from the dense use of words. Now with the help of pauses you also bring a sort of wrapper and establish a sort of relationship and with the help of pause the pause between the speaker because you know as audience we are most of the time silent, but when the speaker makes use of pause he also ensures that whatever he had said till now is well taken by his audience. It also provides listeners the time to think moreover the listeners are also allowed or given a chance to digest all that has been said they actually analyze because you know our minds often move faster than the words.

So, when a speaker said something what we as listeners do we are trying to relate and you will often find as speaker also you will find as listener you can also find, that if you feel that it is going in a very smooth manner a sort of triumphant laugh a sort of triumphant smile is there on the face both of the speaker and of the listener. And pauses also help to revise and reassure all that you have said it also lends to speakers the confidence to beautify speech.

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## Advantages of Pauses

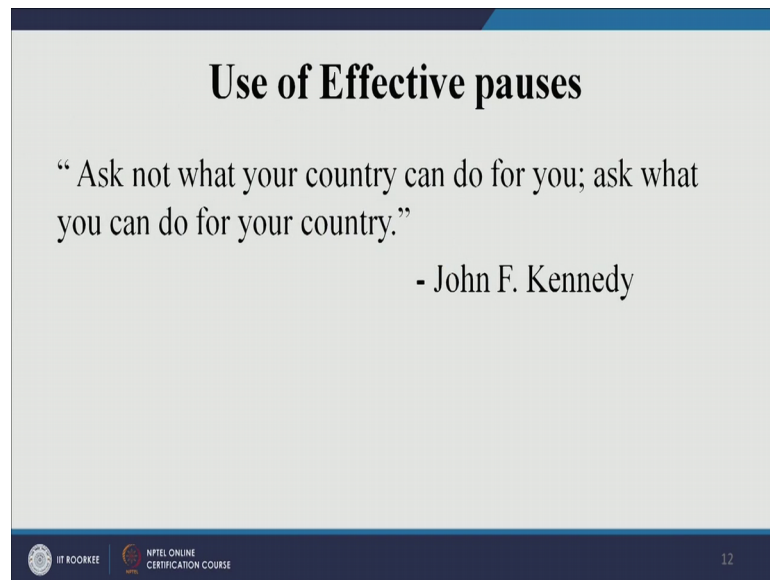
- ✓ Help in developing relationships and ensuring cordiality
- ✓ Allow speakers to gain feedback
- ✓ Provide listeners time to think and comprehend, revise and reassure
- ✓ Lend speakers confidence to beautify speech

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That is why you will find all trend speakers and all experienced ones they often see that they are neither in a hurry to finish is of with whatever they have said. They actually know well that they are there for the listeners and that is why they make a beautiful blend of silence and pauses in their speech.

So, that whatever he said is comprehended well. Otherwise because you know when people are invited from a different organizations, celebrities people who are experts we actually pay a lot for them and this cannot be utilized unless and until as a speaker we make proper balance between the pauses and the silences in order that whatever thoughts or pieces of information, we have brought they are made or they are comprehended well by the audience for which they are remember the one of one of the lines of the former presidents.

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**Use of Effective pauses**

“ Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country.”

- John F. Kennedy

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Of USA when he had said ask not what your country can do for you ask what you can do for your country it was beautiful and effective not because of the thought that is involved in it, but because of the beauty with which it has been utilized with the help of the pause.

So, let us let us look at this unless and practice ask not what your country can do for you ask what you can do for your country that always reminds the beauty of expression lies not only in the words, but in the non words also and these non words are the forms of Meta-communication, I do hope my dear friends that in the days to come and with relations being imparted to you will also be in the position to make proper use of and make a proper balance of silence and pauses. So, that your silence speaks. So, that your silence means. So, that your pauses mean so that your pauses beautify and so, that whatever you want to convey has been conveyed.

Well, I hope you will be in the position now when you are going to deliver a talk or a presentation, you will also take into consideration the importance of the silence pauses and non words equally well while patterning and organization organizing your speech or talk.

Thank you very much.