

## He, she and, the two birds

By Dr. Abdul Hamad, MCIInst.M  
Consultant Health and Rehabilitation Care

### A short story

In a beautiful garden in a beautiful area in the Eastern Asia, she was leaning on a tree. At the same time and on the other side there was a gentleman sitting alone on a wooden bench.

An exciting and attracting event occurred. One bird with a worm in his beak landed at a nest and fed another bird. The surprise was - the bird in the nest was sick and unable to fly due to its broken wing, which made it a warm and passionate moment.

The gentleman and the girl both saw what happened; they looked at each other and smiled. What made it fabulous was that the gentleman was a retired man from Europe, while the girl was around 10 years old and she was born in the Far East and knew only her mother language. Nevertheless, they understood what happened and communicated to each other successfully by a smile.

That story clearly says: Despite the cultural differences we may communicate successfully.

### Cultural differences

Cultural differences are a reality; therefore we need to be aware that the communication among different peoples is affected by cultural differences, which are numerous and not limited to these examples:

- ✚ Nodding the head (neck flexion): in some cultures it means "yes", while it means "no" to others.
- ✚ Constant eye contact: for certain people, it is misbehaviour, but for others it is requested for successful communication.
- ✚ Shaking hands between persons from different sexes is acceptable for some, but is not in others.

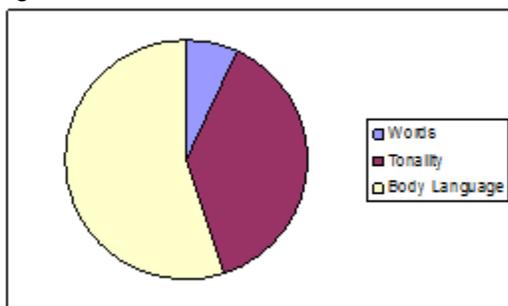
Beside these differences, there are many in-common elements of communication among persons worldwide. The most important and widely common one is a "smile". When you smile

everyone from all over the world understands you regardless the age, sex, or educational background.

### Mehrabian study

Many studies, were carried out in the 1960s and 1970s to understand the relative importance of the different parts of human communication, such as language, gestures, facial expressions, and so on. A classic and a very famous study was carried out by professor Albert Mehrabian. The study shows that in human communication only 7% of the meaning is carried by the words we use. He found that 38% was in the way we say the words (Figure 1). You may have probably heard the statement: "it is not what you say, it is the way you say it". The study emphasizes that the majority of our communication lies not in the actual words, but in everything else: how you say them, how you use your facial expression, your body and your voice to convey the message, which all together is called: the non-verbal aspects of communication.

Figure 1



### For better communication across different cultures

The awareness of the presence of these cultural differences leads to accept them and helps to improve the communication process. Furthermore, learning more about the non-verbal aspects results in better communication skills.

Following are recommendations for better and more effective communication:

#### **Dos:**

- ✚ When greeting someone, start with a friendly "eyebrow flash", i.e. brief and slight raising of the brows.
- ✚ Give a natural smile (it is very well welcomed).

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- ✚ Make eye contact.
- ✚ Lean forward, to show that you are open and interested.
- ✚ Repeat the receiver words in the way they were said.
- ✚ Be sure you have understood the intended meaning.
- ✚ Be sure the receiver has understood what you meant.
- ✚ Relax with every breath.

## **Don'ts**

- ✚ Do not gaze.
- ✚ Do not look at the floor or the ceiling.
- ✚ Do not cross arms (means defensive for some people).
- ✚ Do not hurry any movement.

## Conclusion

Communication is the essence of our being, and because you cannot “not communicate,” it is a vital necessity to continue improving communication skills as long as we live.

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