



## THE PURPOSE AND TOOLS OF COMMUNICATION

Kathlyn Q. Barrozo  
Class of 1991, University of Santo Tomas  
B.S. Medical Technology

A writer's purpose is to use words to influence the way people view many things in this world. A teacher employs effective communication skills to impart vital knowledge to students. An artist uses various media to transform the world as we know it, with images, depictions, physical interpretations, and what have you. The traffic aide uses hand signals and the shrill tones of a whistle to guide motorists and pedestrians alike. Simply put, we all use various ways of articulating our intentions and thoughts to everybody else.

Even a simple sigh can be an effective, though often ambiguous, way of articulating our thoughts. A sigh can mean anything from boredom (Is there nothing else but?), resignation (Alright, I give up. You win.), to a stern warning (Can't you see my flaring nostrils? Tread carefully!).

Raised eyebrows could mean: doubt (Oh, really?); disdain, especially when accompanied by a grimace or a smirk (And so?); clarification (Say that again?); disbelief, with a scrunching of the eyebrows (You've got to be kidding!). Feel free to mix them up as you please.

I have found that the more innovative ways of using non-verbal language to communicate on Skype, emails and social networking sites are kind of fun—and funny at the same time. There's an exploding emoticon for extreme anger, a gradually-turning-green and vomiting icon for disgust or sickness (perhaps?), and even a bright-red devil icon with the evil grin and the evil horns. Funny, I tell you!

My daughter once showed me various keyboard actions which can be used to create icons on a social networking site. Sending emails has become much more colorful, interesting and expressive with the provision of a selection of icons to suit one's needs. Perfect! Fewer key strokes, more emotion in the message.

In the world we live in today, virtually everything is taken as a symbol of something. Flowers have a special language all their own, with different colors and varieties to signify meaning as well as non-meaning. Where a red rose says "I love you", a white rose means honor and reverence and a pink one means plain admiration or just joyfulness. Unique as they are, black roses, bred in laboratories, are considered death and dark side varieties and are dreaded to be received.

It seems that verbal language alone is not enough to communicate our thoughts and feelings, so we have created thoroughly unique but at the same time ambiguous ways to attain our communication objectives. Still, we must never neglect what is essential to the tools we have at our disposal: they must effectively communicate, and if needed, be easily integrated into one another to allow the easy exchange of communication between us. Otherwise, they are just plain tools serving no real purpose.

Questions for Discussion:

1. Are there times when you feel like not saying anything at all? When are those times?
2. Aside from speaking, how else do you handle your communication needs? What makes each manner different from the other?
3. What do you do when someone refuses to listen to you? Do you think this has proven an effective strategy? Why or why not?
4. Is there a certain age when learning a language is no longer possible? Why do you think so?
5. If you were uncertain about a certain message you received but you didn't feel comfortable enough to ask about the other person's meaning, would you still try to clarify? When would you not clarify the meaning and why?