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Chapter 11 : Non-verbal communication

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CHAPTER 11: NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION

Quotable quote

“A picture is worth a thousand words” (Anon.)

A brief introduction to the field

While non-verbal signals are an important indicator of people's feelings, it is hard to substantiate claims such as “Seventy percent of what we say is conveyed non-verbally.” You need only to take a section of any discussion on television and play it with the sound turned off to discover that you have little idea of what is being said: certainly nothing like 70%. A more accurate view of the relationship between non-verbal and verbal communication is that they work together. If we look annoyed and say “I'm glad you came” the mixed message is difficult to interpret, but we tend to choose the non-verbal message because we reason that the person has less control over that aspect of communication. These days, however, accomplished communicators are fully aware of the messages sent non-verbally so they consciously attempt to control the kind of impression they are making. Such impressions are made not only through smiles, frowns, eye-contact and body movement but also through the furnishing and arrangement of offices, the house lived in, the clothes worn and the accent cultivated.

Sources of information

- Knapp, M. & Hall, J. A., (1992) *Nonverbal communication in human interaction* (3rd ed.). Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace & Jovanovich.
- Pease, A. (1981) *Body language: How to read others' thoughts by their actions*. North Sydney: Camel Publishing.
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Individual tasks

The way a doctor or a business person arranges office furniture tells you about the kind of interaction they expect and the kind of power they expect to have in their dealings with you.

If you were given a square room with a central window facing the door where would you place

1. your large desk
2. your chair
3. your visitor's chair
4. two easy chairs
5. a coffee table?

Draw a plan showing how you have arranged these items.

Writing tasks

Write a paragraph using the model on p. 69 explaining what you are communicating non-verbally by why you have arranged your office furniture the way you did above.