CHAPTER 3

Communication

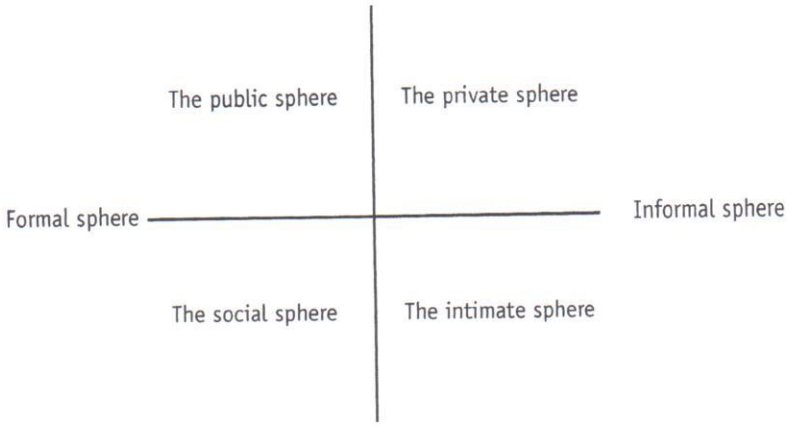
To communicate means to exchange opinions and experience. This chapter is about two fundamental communication models, the transmission model of communication and the pentagram model, general theories about communication and communicative situations as well as general theories about non-verbal communication.

Communication includes all the messages we send to each other, both verbal and non-verbal. We communicate on a daily basis on many levels. When we communicate, we use both our spoken language and our body language to create an understanding for what we wish to express. Communication includes all types of messages. It is about the words we use, our tone of voice, our appearance, the way we look at other people, and our facial expression. When we communicate, we constantly risk being misunderstood because what we convey is not unambiguous. There are many ways to express words, tone of voice, facial expression and body language, and we can never be quite sure that our utterances will be perceived by the receiver the way we had intended. The more we concern ourselves with communication, the more aware we become of the complexity of the communication process. We also become more aware of how best to tailor our communication to avoid misunderstandings.

There is always a purpose with what we are saying whether we communicate in a professional or in a private context, but there is a big difference in the way we communicate in the two situations. When we communicate professionally, we communicate in the public sphere. There are some formal and informal rules of communication which belong to this sphere.

On the basis of the German sociologist and philosopher Jürgen Habermas' ideas on modern society, you can draw up a model clarifying the different spheres in which people navigate on a daily basis and in which we communicate (Jørgensen, 1978). The model consists of four spheres: a *public sphere, a social sphere, a private sphere* and *an intimate sphere*.

Figure 3.1



Both formal and informal rules for communication belong to different spheres, and we communicate differently depending on which sphere we are in.

In the different spheres, there are also different rules for the distance between the people communicating. Generally, you can say that the more professional we are, the greater the physical distance between the communicating parties. When we choose a certain distance to a person, we indirectly show our feelings on the mutual relationship. It is important to be aware of informal boundaries as they mean a lot to the entire communication process. Misunderstandings can very easily arise in connection with these behavioural rules because they are not clearly formulated, but to a large extent are based on feelings. You also need to be aware that such informal rules are not the same in all cultures. There are some overall basic rules telling you how to behave, but you should always assess each individual situation carefully. This can be done by watching the behaviour of others. Look around and analyse the rules in the sphere you are in.

The public sphere

The public sphere is where we appear as professionals. Here, we primarily use professional language. As a rule, our task here is to communicate a professional subject as professionally as possible. In the public sphere, we aim to communicate on the basis of the case. Here, the case is the

starting point of the communication; it is more about facts than feelings. The public sphere is personally neutral, which means that as a private individual you play a minor role here. In the public sphere, your profession is central. It is the subject matter which is pivotal. It is important that your receiver sees you as professional, that your person interferes as little as possible. Therefore, it is also important that you are aware of the signals you send through your choice of clothes, hair, jewellery, glasses etc. so you appear serious and professional.

As a general rule, the physical distance between the two communicating parties is relatively great in the public sphere. The distance indicates that there is an official relationship between the parties.

The social sphere

In the social sphere, other rules apply. They are less rigid than the rules of the public sphere. The social sphere could for example be the canteen at the workplace where we talk to our co-workers about this and that. There is no fixed codex of communication; here, some general and informal cultural and social rules of communication apply. The rules are not directly formulated, but adjusted to the situation, and the physical distance between the parties is smaller than the distance in the public sphere.

The private sphere

In the private sphere, communication is even more relaxed. There are no formal rules of communication; but some general rules of consideration apply which have been agreed on by the family or group. They are probably not rules that we have openly agreed on; quite often, they are behavioural rules that apply to most people. In the private sphere, we meet with our friends and family in domestic surroundings and the communication is relaxed and informal.

In the private sphere, it is generally not necessary to mark physical distances, and the distance between the parties is small.

The intimate sphere

In the intimate sphere, we communicate without barriers. It is the sphere reserved only for our nearest and dearest, and here in a safe environ-

ment, we can show our feelings without censorship. In the intimate sphere, the people surrounding us are quite close. Here, there are no barriers to physical distance.

Distances in general

Sometimes we experience that the distance between us and strangers becomes very small. For example when standing in a line or being squeezed together in a small room with a lot of people. This situation is particularly uncomfortable to most people and therefore, you often compensate for the lack of physical distance by avoiding eye contact with the people you are squeezed up against. The reason is that possible eye contact would make the physical closeness even more intimate.

What can we use this example for? We can use it to make clear that we communicate differently depending on the sphere we are in, and that it is essential that we are aware of adjusting the communication to each individual situation if we wish to get through to our audience.

In our everyday lives, we are seldom aware of the communication process and its pitfalls. We just communicate. It is not until misunderstandings arise that we begin to consider what we said and what was said to us.

Communication models

You can find a lot of theories on communication structures. In this section, two models are presented with their own advantages in relation to preparing and performing a presentation.

The transmission model of communication

From school, you probably know the widely used transmission model (Lutzer, 2005):

Figure 3.2

SENDER	**MESSAGE**	**RECEIVER**

The model is useful for analysing existing texts. When a person communicates a message to another person, a message is given from a sender to a receiver, as shown in figure 3.2.

Sender

The sender is the person sending the message. The sender uses communication as an instrument to achieve a specific goal, to communicate a case. When you are the sender, it is important that you know who you are communicating to. That you have acquainted yourself with the way the receiver thinks and reacts and that you have examined the receiver's background for understanding your message.

Moreover, it is also essential for you to know how you affect the receiver. How does the receiver perceive you, what signals do you send (see section on body language) and in what situation are you communicating? Are you communicating to a peer or are you communicating as a professional? Good communication not only presupposes that the sender is conscious of the receiver's reaction, but just as much that the sender is aware of his own signals. Many mistakes in the communication process occur when the sender is not aware of the complexity of communicating with other people.

When giving a presentation, it is crucial that your audience perceives you as trustworthy. A trustworthy person comes across as serious, well-prepared, engaged and sincere, among other things, in the communication process.

To get a good outcome of the presentation, it is always very important that you have a good contact with the audience. There are many ways in which to make contact. Therefore, it is important that you establish the best way for you to reach out to your audience, how best to get through to your audience. Here, you can look back at tasks 1.1 and 1.4. These two tasks help you form a background for a good presentation. A good presentation always takes its starting point in a communicator who knows who he is, who knows his strengths and weaknesses, and who knows where and how to best get through to his audience.

Therefore it is difficult to copy a good presentation as it is always personal. The good communicator knows himself and his values, knows who he is, and what the goal is for what he is doing. Knowing yourself and what you stand for gives your presentation authority and assurance.

Message

The message is what you wish to communicate (in the following the concepts subject and message are used synonymously). It is paramount that you have carefully structured and organised the content of the subject before your presentation. If the subject is not clear to you and is not clearly organised, then it very easily appears blurred and confusing for your audience.

Communication between two people takes place on many levels:

- What you think you are saying.
- What you are saying.
- What the other is hearing.
- What the other thinks he heard.

Source: Gjøsund & Huseby, 2005

To avoid misunderstandings when communicating, it is important to constantly make sure that the receiver has understood your message in the way you wanted him to. How can you make sure that this is the case? You can do that by constantly having all your senses open and by being in dialogue with your receiver, making sure that the receiver has understood what you wanted to communicate. We have all tried to listen to presentations about a subject and not understood very much. We have also tried getting the question: "Have you understood what I just went over?", and most of us have also answered, "Yes", even if we did not understand much of what had been said. The reason for answering yes was that we felt embarrassed about not understanding the message. It is necessary to create a safe environment so the receiver dares ask questions to the subject.

If you are the presenter, it is your responsibility that the receiver understands what you are saying. Not only out of consideration to the receiver, but also out of consideration to yourself. Imagine having prepared for a presentation and then it appears afterwards that the receiver has not understood what you wanted to communicate. It is a lose-lose situation.

It is essential that you are constantly in contact with the people you are communicating with. Either through active dialogue or through eye contact where you make sure that the receiver is involved.

Feedback very much controls the development of communication. If you get no feedback on your message, communication stops and it is impossible to transfer a message to the receiver.

Receiver

The receiver is the person or persons you are communicating with, and they are the target of your presentation. It means a lot to your presentation that you know your target group, that you know who to direct your communication at, what backgrounds they have and what they wish to gain from your presentation.

The receiver always assesses your appearance. They assess your trustworthiness and what signals you send, both consciously and unconsciously. They assess if you seem serious or not serious, if you are focused, and if you are enthusiastic about your subject, but they also assess how you look, how you are dressed, and how your posture is. The receiver assesses the entire person, and therefore, it is important that you are conscious of your appearance when communicating with other people. No matter what sphere you communicate in.

The receiver's own feelings and thoughts are also important in order that he understands the message you communicate in the way you want him to.

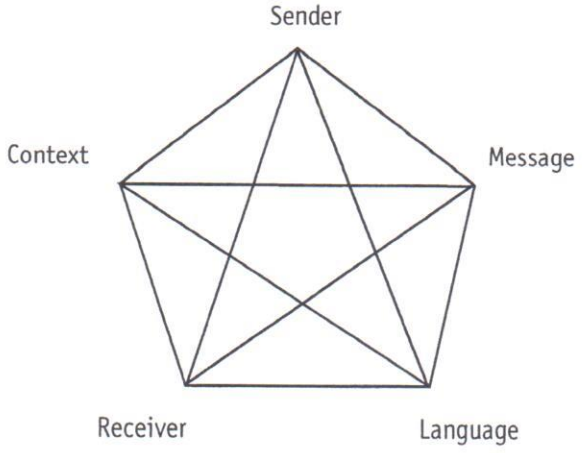
A skilled sender can sense if there is "noise" on the line during the presentation, various disruptions, and then change his manner of communication along the way in order to obtain the desired outcome.

The receiver controls much of the presentation and can contribute to good communication by nodding and smiling. It indicates that the receiver is involved in what is being communicated. It is called active listening.

The pentagram model

It is relevant to include the rhetorical pentagram model when working with presentation and communication. The rhetorical pentagram model was formulated by the Roman politician and lawyer Cicero 100 years BC. The pentagram contains five elements around which communication is structured as shown in figure 3.3.

Figure 3.3



Source: Hagen, 2005

As the pentagram figure shows, the five focus areas are: sender, message, receiver, context and language.

The two focus areas context and language are important points of attention for you when preparing for a presentation. Based on the pentagram model, you can plan the entire presentation in detail. Sender, message and receiver have already been introduced as the transmission model of communication. And the same statements apply for sender, message and receiver in the pentagram model as in the transmission model. In the following, we especially focus on the two areas language and context.

1. Sender: Who are you as the sender – in what capacity are you presenting?
2. Message: What subject are you going to talk about?
3. Receiver: Who is your audience?
4. Language: What language are you using?
5. Context: In what room are you presenting, and how long does the presentation take?

In the pentagram, you can draw lines between the individual areas which are interconnected and can be combined in innumerable ways. The more ways you have used to pass the five points, the better prepared you are for your presentation.

As described in the transmission model, it is important to know your audience. In this way, you can plan how you can build your presentation most appropriately so your receivers obtain the greatest possible benefit.

It is important to adjust your language to the audience in front of you, just as you need to adjust your language to the subject being presented. Moreover, as the sender you have a relationship with your subject, and you need to consider if you want this to show. Depending on your subject, you can appear in public either on a personal or professional basis (see Habermas's model, figure 3.1). If you are going to present a subject where you have been a player yourself – you may tell about the time when you won gold at your school's sports day – it is important that you make the subject as vivid and personal as possible as it is partly supported by your person. If, on the other hand, you are going to inform about share price fluctuations during a 10-year period, you should not necessarily talk about how much money you lost on your shares. You can use the pentagram model to make sure that during your preparation you are aware of as many aspects of communication as possible.

It is essential that you are aware that changes in one of the points of the pentagram automatically influence all other points in the pentagram.

The context

The context is the space or the environment in which the communication takes place. It is important to be conscious of where the communication takes place.

- Does the communication take place in a small intimate room or in a large room?
- Does the communication take place among people who know each other or among people who do not know each other?
- Do the sender and receiver feel comfortable or uncomfortable in the room? Do the surroundings seem pleasant or unpleasant, warm or cold?

It is important to be aware that both the physical, mental and social aspects of a communication situation influence how the communication is experienced.

Noise

Noise is all that disturbs a communication. It could be noise coming from the outside or some kind of commotion. But it could also be psychological noise if, for example, the receiver feels resistance against the subject being presented.

Outside noise can usually be minimised, either by removing the noise or by moving the presentation to a quieter room.

Psychological noise is more complex to work with. Psychological noise is conscious and unconscious barriers to the individual receiver. The receiver may have a personal problem with the subject being communicated. If the subject is shares, someone in the audience may have suffered big losses on shares and feels misled by the counselling received before the share purchase. Such frustration often results in aggression causing a deadlock in the communication process. Some cultural filters could also be disturbing elements in the communication and cause the receiver to have difficulty decoding the communication.

Both kinds of noise can be destructive for the understanding of the communication. Therefore, it is essential for you as a communicator that you know your audience as thoroughly as possible and that you have examined if there could be disturbing filters which may complicate the communication (see the section on preparing a communication).

Language

The language you use to express yourself is a significant part of communication. The language needs to be adjusted to yourself as a sender, to the receiver, to the subject and to the situation.

Language is a complex part of a presentation. You may consider it as a tool of communication which ensures that the message gets through. If the language is not clear and tailored to the target group, misunderstandings very often occur. Imprecise language may ruin a good subject full of good points. Language must be characterised by surgical precision. It must create transparency, and it must match the subject.

If you talk about capital losses to a group of shareholders, your choice of words should not be too light and cheerful. For most shareholders, it is a serious matter. You should not speak in a gloomy tone either, but choose to speak in a serious manner which is appropriate for both the subject and the gravity of the situation.

It is also essential that you consider what kind of language your audience normally uses to express itself. When speaking to a group of

shareholders, you use the specific vocabulary expected by this group of people who are acquainted with the subject. If, on the other hand, you speak to a group of farmers about investing in shares, it is necessary that you speak less knowledgeably about the subject as you cannot expect this group to have the same knowledge about the share market as the group of shareholders. Here, you need to rephrase the technical terms into common language which everybody understands.

Be careful about making jokes and other kinds of fun. If the subject is shares, it is difficult to figure out what the group finds funny. If you have a suitable joke about shares or money, you can use it if it suits the context, and if you are good at telling jokes. If you spice up your presentation with funny punch-lines, be sure to prepare them beforehand and only use them if you believe it will give your presentation a positive boost. It is crucial that you have analysed the situation and your audience before you embark on using this kind of entertaining element.

You must make sure that through your language you are not pretending to be somebody else. You must use your own language. The audience can easily see through the pretence if you are trying to communicate in a language that is not your own. You will appear awkward, your voice will have an unnatural pitch, and your body language will reveal insecurity. Therefore, always be yourself.

It is essential to keep working on your language. Ask yourself questions such as "how do I sound, too loud, too soft, too fast, too slow, too much technical language, too many er's, too subjective, too dull?" It is a long list! Here, you can use video recordings to check yourself. Become familiar with yourself and your own appearance. You may ask others how you affect them, but others cannot tell you how to perform. You need to set the agenda for how you would like to appear. But therefore it is important to be aware that all development occurs when in dialogue with others. The more targeted and relevant your questions are concerning your personal appearance and the more you reflect on it, the more control you will get.

Briefly, you can say that language must be:

- Simple
- Precise
- Correct
- Engaging.

Source: Fabricius & Roksvold, 2008

Summary of the communication models

The transmission model and the pentagram model can hopefully help you to analyse and improve your presentations. The models should assist you when considering what is important when presenting a subject and what is less important. According to the pentagram model, there are five points which you should pay special attention to in connection with preparing and performing your presentation:

1. **Yourself as the sender of a message:** You need to be aware of yourself as the sender of a specific message. Consider how you perform and appear.
2. **Your message:** You should plan and prepare you presentation so carefully that the message is clear, both to yourself and your receiver.
3. **Your language:** Your presentation must focus on your language. It should match your subject and your audience. It is essential that your language reflects who you are. You can adjust your language according to target group, but do not compromise your values. If you communicate from another platform than your own, you appear unreliable to the target group. Your audience can easily read you and judge whether you are yourself or whether your performance is false pretence.
4. **Your receiver:** It is important that you know your audience. What is the background of the audience and do they know the subject beforehand? Why have they chosen to listen to your presentation?
5. **Your context and the surroundings of the presentation:** What does the room look like? Is it large or small? Do you have access to audio-visual aids? Do the facilities influence your presentation?

The way we communicate

There are many ways to communicate. When communicating at different levels it is essential that you know more types of communication so you are capable of choosing the type that best matches a given situation. This section focuses on one-way communication, two-way communica-

tion, double communication, meta-communication, and rhetorical and discourse communication.

People communicate constantly, also when they do not speak. Even if we believe that we are silent, we send communicating signals which the people around us interpret in one way or the other. All our signals are significant, whether they are verbal or non-verbal.

Our conscious or unconscious signals depend on our state of mind, our background, our education, our culture and our social affiliation.

Communication thus includes all types of messages which we send to each other. For example:

- Words
- Tone of voice
- The way you link words
- Dialect
- Gaze
- Facial expression
- Posture.

There are many ways to link words, tone of voice and facial expressions. When presenting a subject, you need to be aware of your signals, both when communicating consciously and unconsciously.

When communicating, we always risk being misunderstood. On the one hand, because we are often not aware of our signals, and on the other hand, because we seldom know how the receiver experiences our communication. We cannot eliminate misunderstandings by focusing on communication, but we can be better at avoiding them and dealing with them when they arise.

When we fully understand how complex and multi-faceted the communication process is, we can be better at communicating in a more tailored way.

We can practice paying attention to the roles we play when communicating. It is important to note that there are different communicative situations dependent on which role we are playing.

When we become conscious of possible sources of error and causes of misunderstanding, we can improve the communicative situation and attempt to express ourselves clearly to reduce the number of misunderstandings.

One-way communication

It goes without saying that one-way communication is communication in only one direction. The sender sends communication to the receiver without the receiver being able to communicate back to the sender. When watching television, listening to the radio or listening to a lecture, we experience one-way communication. This type of communication has both advantages and disadvantages. For example we cannot enter into dialogue or ask the sender about something if we wish to do so.

But one-way communication may be an advantage if for example you are going to give a presentation to a large group because it may easily ruin the overall presentation if everybody asks questions when they want to. At presentations with many people present, it is desirable that questions are asked at the end.

One-way communication can be used negatively if you wish to control other people. Some people wish to appear as an authority and control the communication without disturbances. This is often perceived negatively because it prevents that people engage in dialogue and communicate in a democratic way.

Two-way communication

In two-way communication, the sender and receiver constantly switch roles. This is what happens in constructive conversations. To be able to have equal two-way communication, it is a prerequisite that both parties respect each other and each other's viewpoints and right to interrupt. Often such communication takes place *circularly*. This means that communication takes place in a series of actions and re-actions which as such have neither beginning nor end. When speaking to an acquaintance, conversation switches back and forth. Some sentences are finished, others are not. Communication takes place without having an actual introduction and conclusion.

Double communication

To have double communication means to send two different signals or messages at the same time. We may say something positive and at the same time turn our noses up. Such communication is confusing, and it makes the receiver uncertain about what the message really is. However, it is likely that body language makes a stronger impression on the receiver than the actual words. Double communication is undesirable

because the receiver has to interpret the message and this may result in a misinterpretation.

Meta-communication

Meta-communication is conversation about the conversation. Meta-communication means that you analyse your own communication. That you rise above what you have communicated or are communicating and assess the appropriateness of your communication. In your efforts to become an effective communicator, it is of great importance for your development that you are able to reflect on yourself and what you are communicating.

Rhetorical and discourse communication

Rhetorical and discourse communication constitute two main types within verbal communication which are placed far from each other. Rhetorical communication is about persuading your receiver whereas discourse communication takes its starting point in democratic principles and attempts to reach a common understanding through dialogue. Pure rhetorical communication is seldom seen, but by setting up stylised types, the differences are clarified and it is easier to focus on possible focus areas in our own communication.

Rhetorical communication

Rhetorical communication is a type of communication which basically aims at beating the person you are communicating with. Rhetorical communication takes place in a battle ground where the communicating parties are viewed as opponents. Rhetorical communication is characterised by power arguments. The objective is to win your case by using power and persuasion. Rhetorical communication is not founded on democratic principles, but on the use of force. Arguments are structured on the basis of persuasion strategies, value-laden and manipulative words. Often expert statements or undocumented statements are used to win the case. "As you all know fluoride is harmful to milk teeth" is a statement without any documentation, but in a context where the audience has no knowledge of fluoride's effect on milk teeth, the argument is often accepted because only few people feel like going against the introductory sentence: "As you all know".

An excessive use of technical terms shows that a sender distances himself unnecessarily from the receiver, and it is often used as an at-

tempt to impress. A widely used argumentative trick is to say "the majority believes" without documenting who the majority is.

The rhetorical type of communication is typically used by people who are insecure of own values. If you are insecure of yourself, your own values and positions, you very easily appear overwhelming and inflexible. Insecure people very often exaggerate their personal appearance to make up for insecurity. Therefore rhetorical communication is often part of a defence mechanism. Communication is a battle about winning and losing.

Discourse communication

Discourse communication is based on the idea that the two discussing parties are equal. The purpose of the conversation is to clarify a subject and to discuss in order to reach a common position on the subject. The discussion takes place in a democratic manner by analysing and testing all arguments. The goal is to find the best solution to the existing problem. The parties are not prejudiced and wish to reach the best solution in unison by making use of the available knowledge.

Discourse communication requires that the participants respect themselves and each other.

What we communicate is unchangeable

Whatever you say and have said is unchangeable. It cannot be erased or deleted. You can apologise for saying it, but the words will always be there. We cannot take them back. We all say too much once in a while, for example when we reveal a secret which we have been told in confidence. When a message has been sent, it cannot be withdrawn. Therefore, it is important when we have to present a subject in work situations that we are well prepared so we know what to convey. The more well prepared you are, the easier you convey the message in a precise way. And the risk of making unexpected errors is much smaller.

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Tasks

Task 3.1:

Consider what you can do to obtain optimal contact with your audience. Draw up some points and discuss them in groups. Your starting point is yourself and your personal impact.

Task 3.2:

Consider how you appear as a receiver, for example during a lesson. Are you an active listener? Do you actively commit yourself to what is being presented? Give reasons for why/why not!

Task 3.3:

Test yourself as a communicator. Consider your personal strengths as a presenter. What points will you focus on to strengthen your presentation skills? How do you best get through to your audience?

Task 3.4:

Give some examples of cultural noise.

Task 3.5:

Account for the types of communication: meta-reflection, discourse communication, rhetorical communication.

Task 3.6:

In groups, choose a topic to be presented. When you have chosen the topic, each of you is to prepare a presentation of the topic to the group. Each introduction should be of 2-3 minutes' duration.

When preparing, each of you must focus on making your language as simple, precise, correct and engaging as possible.

When you have prepared your presentation, the groups present their introductions to each other.

When everybody has finished their presentation, each of you spend 10 minutes on a meta-reflection of your own presentation. Consider the following: What was the goal of the presentation, how did you prepare, what could be better, what went well, and what will you work on improving for your next presentation?

When you have considered this, get together with the group again. Present your considerations to the other group members. Spend about 2 minutes per person.

When all of you have presented your personal considerations about the presentations, discuss your own presentation with the group. Again each group member gets 2 minutes to ask questions to the group members about how they experienced your presentation. Remember that the questions should be dialogical which means that you are to ask the questions so you start a dialogue with the person you ask. You cannot ask yes-no questions, but ask the group's opinion about a chosen topic, for example: I have worked a lot on adjusting my language, especially the clarity of the words. How did you perceive my way of communicating?