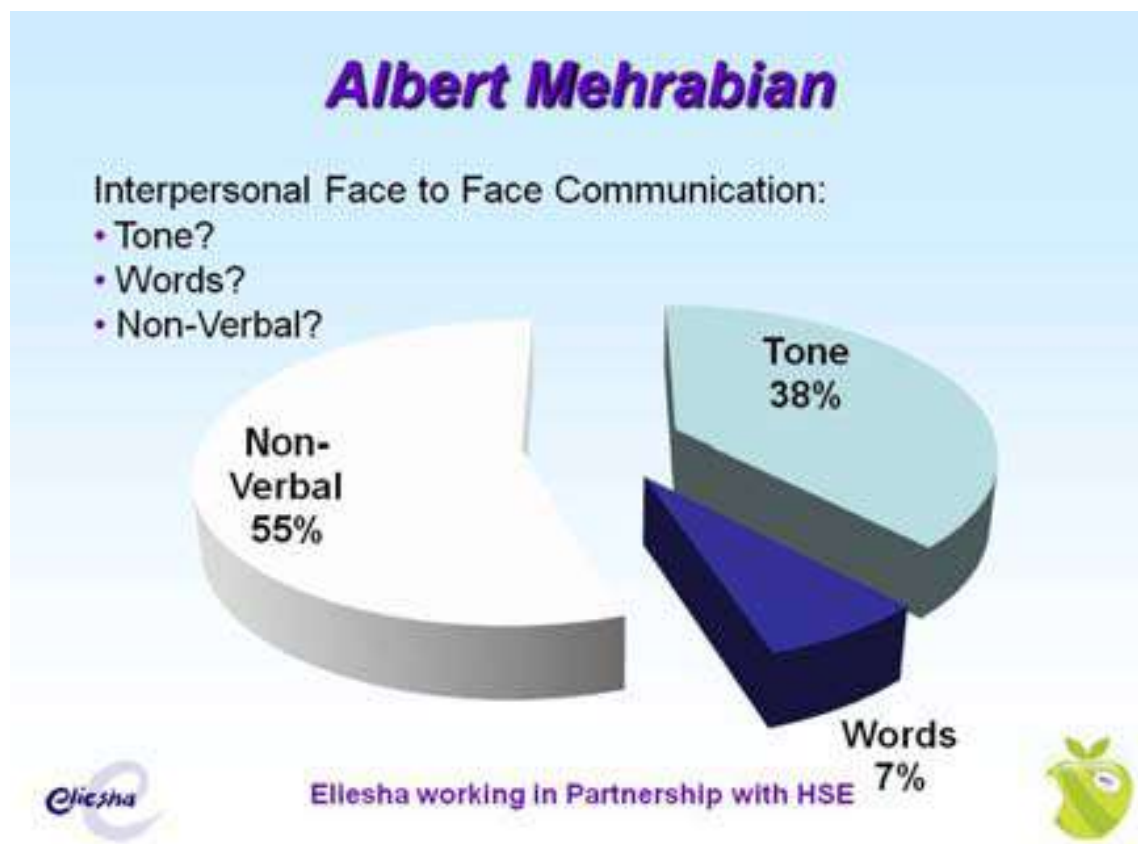


Mehrabian Study



Albert Merhabian's study is often highlighted in communications training, and very often mis-quoted by applying it to all communication.

Clearly a No Smoking sign is only words and is 100% clear without the requirement of tone or a person to deliver those words.

These figures *do* apply when referring to the discussion of feelings or emotions during face to face conversation, and a more precise (and necessarily detailed) representation of Merhabian's findings would be:

- 7% of message pertaining to feelings and attitudes is in the words that are spoken.
- 38% of message pertaining to feelings and attitudes is paralinguistic (the way that the words are said).
- 55% of message pertaining to feelings and attitudes is in facial expression.

For example: “Yes, I had a lovely holiday, it was great there and I can’t wait to go back” delivered in a dead-pan monotonic (John Major) way would not convince that it *was* a great holiday. 7% (words) are saying it was, but the other 93% screams that it wasn’t!

What impact does this have when we’re discussing language?

Is it saying words are not important?

It’s easy to draw that conclusion – and most of us have inserted fillers words like “thingy” and “doodah” and “whatsit” and still made ourselves understood. However the words we choose *are* important, and not only the words we use in conversation, but our internal talk too.

We will first look at this internal talk and then go on to look at the language we choose to use with others.

An artist, a lumberjack and a botanist taking a stroll through a wood will have very different experiences and notice very different things. If you go through life looking for excellence, you will find excellence. If you go through life looking for problems, you will find problems. Or, to coin an Arabic saying: “What a piece of bread looks like depends on whether you are hungry or not” Very narrow beliefs, interests and perceptions will make the world impoverished, predictable and dull. The very same world can be rich and exciting. The difference lies not in the world, but in the filters through which we perceive it.

(Introducing NLP, Joseph O’Conner and John Seymour (2002) Harper Element)

‘Must’ and ‘Should’

Move onto Must and Should, an simple example of our internal dialogue.

(Adapted from Get The Edge, Anthony Robbins)

This is simply about the things in life that we Must do and the things that we Should

Ask what a MUST might be? (Must go to work, must take the kids to school etc)

Ask what a SHOULD might sound like? (Prompt them to think of New Year resolutions: I should lose some weight/give up coffee/get a hobby/go to bed early etc)

Ask which of the two are more likely to happen?

Shoulds *might* happen. Resolutions usually at least start, but they can very quickly fade. Musts, on the other hand, will happen, or certainly are much more likely to.

Exercise: For yourself, think about what makes a 'MUST' a 'MUST' FOR YOU.

Write down examples of your MUSTS, and consider why you categorise them so.

Then think about a should. Why is **it** a 'should' and not a 'must' – try and identify what separates the two.

Then think about how you might convert a 'should' into a 'must'.