

The Sense Behind Sound Or Lack Thereof

How often have we heard our elders say to us, "It is not what you say but more importantly, it is how you say it."

Many of us walked around repeating the adage but were convinced that 'the how' did not change 'the what' at the end of the day. However, as we matured we developed a greater appreciation for this concept. It became more evident to us that we were able to more readily learn/remember information when it was repeated aloud. We also soon adopted the habit of coining a jingle to jazz things up a bit, and learn by association. We later understood the 'method to the madness' and why our teachers used to drill us using catchy tunes and phrases. As such mental arithmetic was best learnt when a tune was affixed to the exercise. But, coupled with the sound is the message or meaning that is intended by a speaker.

Again we can refer to our elders and what we can decipher by how they spoke to us. Certainly we learnt to differentiate between when our parents said, "Okay, that's enough." versus when they said, "Enough of it!!!" The relationship between sound and sense can be translated to the interpretation of drum beats. The rhythmic variations say to the dancer, the pace at which the steps ought to be executed, at what pace/how should his or her body should contort and relax.

When one considers the use of a **register**, one would be required to examine the skill involved in choosing and positioning of words to derive a particular sound, for effect. It involves how choosing particular language and altering a speaker's tone can reflect his or her mood. Essentially, the speaker or writer ultimately reflects his or her attitude towards the subject matter. It therefore becomes important for one to consider the audience to which information is being addressed and the intent or purpose of the message.

The following case in point might require an individual to consider how he or she would address an officer of the law versus a vendor selling in a public market. The case of the former would require the speaker to adopt a more formal approach during the interaction, using precise language. On the contrary, an interaction with the latter might involve a more relaxed posture by both parties, one that is far removed from formality.

By changing our **tone**, we can convey a different meaning although we may use the same words. Tone is derived in writing by the words that are used and how the words are used. As a result of the tone that is used to express a message, the receiver may experience a feeling or a **mood**. Another perspective reveals that one's tone informs another's mood, the mood being a longlasting feeling. Through

the description of scenes, there is a different feeling to them - or a different mood. One learns how to associate various hues with mental images that may translate into particular moods. For example, the colour white, more often than not, is associated with tranquility or peace or purity. As such, a white dove has become a universal symbol of peace.

Tone and mood can be created through:

1. The loudness or softness of the voice speaking the poem;
2. The rhythm that is created (**the series of stressed and unstressed syllables**);
3. The poet's choice of words;
4. The emphasis placed on particular words or phrases; and
5. The breaks and pauses that the poet places in the poem.

And, if there is no voice or sound, one will interpret and understand the facial expressions and body language of the sender of the message, the very same way a dancer interprets and understands the rhythmic variations of a drummer. Integral to all of this is the search for and/or expression of meaning.