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# Verbal and non-verbal communication in the process of becoming a Muslim woman

**Abstract** Inspired by the results from the qualitative study about Polish female converts to Islam, I decided to write this article. The material I collected during the empirical study encouraged me to question a number of assumptions from the symbolic interactionism, which was the theoretical framework for the project. In this article, I focused on the development of identity of Muslim women from the perspective of verbal and non-verbal communication.

**Keywords** verbal and non-verbal communication, Muslim identity, female Polish converts to Islam

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This paper presents results from an empirical research project about the role of religion in the process of forming the identity of women[1]. The research was carried out among a group of Polish Muslim converts and Tatar women in 2013. It is an extensive problem and many specific questions were used to address it. In this article, I would like to focus on the development of identity of Muslim women in the processes of verbal and non-verbal communication.

The theoretical basis of this article will be three terms: communication, identity, and conversion. I begin with the presentation of theoretical inspirations about verbal and non-verbal communication from Mead's theory and continuers of symbolic interactionism. Next, I will present the concept of identity as a project, which characterizes constructed and changed character. Following authors of this identity concept (Rome Harré 1983), the modern individual has an unlimited number of options with the creation of her identity. One of them can be religious conversion to the Islam, which I call, followed by Richard Travisano, "radical reorganization of identity".

The second main part of the article consists of empirical results of the project and begins with the description of the methodology approach. On the discussion of empirical results I start with language and then I go through elements of non-verbal communication: physical contact and body language, spatial behaviors, attire and appearance.

## Verbal and non-verbal communication

My choice to use the categories from the field of communication was inspired by George Mead's claim, stating that it is verbal communication that constitutes the perfect tool to express your true "self". Although Mead's ideas on identity and the role of communication are not particularly recent ones and have already been met with criticism of contemporary scholars, they are still valid and inspire positive and negative feedback as well. The same can be said of this research project, whose theoretical framework was defined by an identity-interaction model[2] that combines the postulates of Mead and other representatives of symbolic interactionism (Robbins 1973). This model primarily focuses on the study of interaction, understood as an "interpretative process" (Hałas 2006: 59), which involves "mutual interaction between individuals" (Bokszański 1989: 31).

One of the features of identity is the constructed character, which means that individuals construct their actions as they perform them, not as mechanical reactions to external stimuli. What is more, interaction has a symbolic character since it is manifested through symbols and gestures (Blumer 1984: 71–72). Gestures that constitute meaningful symbols are responsible for cognitive processes. They are generated by an individual that can make of them "the same kind of interaction (i.e., functionally identical) response that is called out in others to whom the gesture is directed" (Ritzer 2004: 268–269). And, these significant symbols are the only ones that make communication possible (Ritzer 2004: 268–269). Language, and the tone of voice, volume and the rhythm of speech that go with it, constitute an example of a significant symbol and of verbal communication as well. According to George Mead, language, being a type of a vocal gesture, is the most important symbol that is involved in an interaction. He wrote:

> The vocal gesture, then, has an importance which no other gesture has. We cannot see ourselves when our face assumes a certain expression. If we hear ourselves speak we are more apt to pay attention. One hears himself when he is irritated using a tone that is of an irritable quality, and so catches himself. But in the facial expression of irritation the stimulus is

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[2] Two other theoretical models of identity quoted by Richard H. Robbins are the identity-health model and the identity world-view model.

> not one that calls out an expression in the individual which it calls out in the other. One is more apt to catch himself and control himself in the vocal gesture than in the expression of the countenance. It is only the actor who uses bodily expressions as a means of looking as he wants others to feel. He gets a response which reveals to him how he looks by continually using a mirror (Mead 1975: 93–94).

The opposite of verbal communication is non-verbal communication, which comprises "all the different forms and ways with which people communicate with one another using means other than words (natural languages)" (Dull 1995: 48). Contemporary academics consider the non-verbal communication to include "all the messages and information that are located within the observer's scope of interest - regardless of the way/channel of communication - and that are not expressed *explicit* (Dull 1995 after Kendon 1981: 22). Non-verbal communication includes: physical contact, spatial behaviour, attire and appearance, or smell. Mead was aware of the fact that non-verbal communication exists, as the above-mentioned quote implies, but he underestimated the significance of its role in the process of interaction. He did mention the hand gestures that perform the role of vocal gestures, but limited their relevance to the context of communication between an actor and the audience or with hearing-impaired people. Mead's views on non-verbal communication has been met with criticism from contemporary scholars. One of them is Krzysztof T. Konecki, who writes:

> By consistently using the concept of a man as a rationally acting subject, Mead rejects the role of feelings and thus also the role of the body, as a carrier and the main creator of emotions in the process of making gestures conscious (Konecki 2005: 45).

According to Mead, non-verbal communication expressing feelings "is not a source and a considerable element of the emergence of self" (Konecki 2005: 45). Konecki is convinced that the rejection of the body and non-verbal communication in the analysis of the interaction process is a serious mistake. As we have witnessed the development of sociology and the emergence of its sub-disciplines, notably that of the sociology of emotions and sociology of the body, the criticism of Mead seems to be well-founded.

Yet another important postulate of the interactive model was that it is during the process of interaction that the identity of an individual is being formed. What is more, it has a processual and reflective character. Mead expressed it through the concept of self and its two constituent aspects: the subjective "I", which embodies the values and reflections that emphasize the separate and unique character of an individual, and the objective "Me", which allows individuals to function in social life by adjusting their actions to socially accepted norms. Such an interactive concept of "self"[3] implies that an individual is only partially socialized and is only partially conscious of themselves. What is more, the lack of consistent self-image makes an individual constantly evaluate the environment and themselves as well (Hałas 2006: 58). The search for identity does not have to end with a "final decision to sign up for a cultural order of some kind", but the individual can still remain "in a state of permanent lack of a clearly defined identity that would give them a sense of stability and safety" (Jawłowska 2001: 54). Thus the integrative model assumes that an individual is not a collection of permanent features and properties, but an "actor equipped with the definitions of self, inspired by the interactions" (Greil, Davidman 2007: 552) and their identity can evolve in the course of their whole life.

[3] I use the terms "identity" and "self" interchangeably. I refer to Mead when speaking of identity, though he is not the first to have used this term and I am aware of ambiguous points in his theory.

## Identity as a project

As a result of the transition from the "world of fate" to the "world of choice", nowadays identity is perceived as a project, with an individual being its main contractor. For an individual, the choice of their own identity can bring dramatically different results. On the one hand, the individual has a sense of freedom and independence when it comes to creating their own "self", on the other hand, this unlimited number of options can become a challenge or a problem. The presence of numerous options and lack of specific directions can make the newly-constructed identity fragile. Especially if the individual's view of their life choices differs considerably from the view of their life that other people have. According to Rom Harré, the author of the notion of identity project, an individual may then embark on a more original project that will dispel the doubts in others, or may start to perceive their own identity as threatened. Those individuals who live in the borderlands, or belong to ethnic, racial, and religious minorities, those who live on the margins of two cultures and two different societies are particularly susceptible to this type of behavior. First of all, the individuals strive to acquire the attributes characteristic of a given social identity, such as language, attire, manners. Secondly, constructing your own identity may involve a conscious attempt to create a biography or autobiography by referring to a "mythical" or a real type of social identity. In an attempt to make their identity (project) more credible, an individual may make significant changes, hiding some details of their life or changing their interests. Anselm Strauss refers to such change as a "phenomenon" of passage, and cites the change of name as an example. He writes, "you disguise who you were or are in order to appear as what you wish to be" (Strauss 2013: 20).

> The names that are adopted voluntarily reveal even more tellingly the indissoluble tie between name and self-image. The changing of names marks a rite of passage. It means such things as that the person wants to have the kind of name he thinks represents him as a person, does not want any longer to be the kind of person that the previous name signified (Strauss 2013: 20).

The works of contemporary scholars like Zygmunt Bauman or Anthony Giddens, they treat identity as a project, show that the challenges connected with constructing your own identity do not only apply to individuals who live "directly" on the margins of different cultures or those having multiple ethnic or cultural origins like Polish Tatars. The dilemmas related to constructing your own identity pertain to whole modern societies. In my opinion, as a result of some of the "projects" and changes that affect the identity, an individual starts to live in the borderlands. In other words, you do not have to be born

"in the borderlands" to live there. An individual can "send" themselves to the borderlands with a choice of a given identity.

## Conversion as "radical reorganization of identity"

The results of my research suggest that an individual can also "land" in the borderlands through a religious conversion, which can be defined, following the words of Richard Travisano, as a "radical reorganization of identity" (Travisano 1970: 660). He distinguished it from alteration, which was defined as a less radical and reversible transition that may happen within the individual's established universe of discourse (Travisano 1970: 598).

Travisano's view of conversion very much resembles the way interactionists treated the identity of an individual. He is convinced that identity is subject to constant negotiations and changes. Which is the reason why conversion is seen by him as a search for identity, involving the rejection of your old religion and the acceptance of a new one, which altogether results in choosing a new way of defining yourself and your reference group (Travisano 1970: 605). Conversion is a "rupture" that takes place when an individual adopts a new identity that is not compatible with their former identities. This severance, or "rupture", is often accompanied by a period of depression or confusion, but, in Travisano's opinion, it is not the reason for the conversion. Travisano's idea is notable for the way in which he perceived converts. His understanding is that they are active and central to the process of conversion, and for them the conversion involves "ubiquitous utilization" of a new identity and they strive to make it "central to almost all interactions" (Travisano 1970: 605). Travisano describes the phenomenon of conversion and the identity processes in a very interesting way, and I am convinced that his approach can be applied to studies on contemporary Polish Muslim women. But, his approach also has some drawbacks. Namely, it fails to provide the tools that could be used to find the reasons for the conversion itself. Which is the reason why it would be necessary to refer to other theories or approaches. It will not be necessary, however, for the purpose of this article, as its aim is not to study the reasons for conversion, but to analyze the period after the conversion and investigate the role of verbal and non-verbal communication in expressing the new identity.

At this point we need to specify who is to be considered a convert. According to various lexicons and dictionaries of the Polish language, in the religious sense, conversion is defined as a change of religious beliefs, and the adoption of new ones within Christian denomination groups (Petrozolin-Skowrońska 1998: 838), and it is mostly used to refer to conversion to Catholicism (Kopaliński 1988: 279; Herman, Herrmann 2002: 136). Maria Libiszowska-Żółtkowska writes in the section *Religion* of *PWN Encyclopaedia (Religia. Encyklopedia PWN)* that the term conversion can also be used to apply to "a turning point in the life of a believer who did not adopt a different religion" (Libiszowska-Żółtkowska 2002: 35). The way I am going to define the term convert combines these two approaches. For me the notion of religious conversion denotes a conscious and voluntary change of religious beliefs. When it comes to the individuals I studied, the term will be used to refer to the change of their former religion to Islam[4]. It is my understanding that religious conversion may also mean a turning point in the life a Muslim. Therefore, the people referred to as converts to Islam are going to include those who accepted Islam, as well as those who were originally Muslim, but their faith underwent such a great transformation that at this point we can speak of conversion.

## Methodology

The total number of women who took part in the research was 22, with 14 of them being Muslim converts (R1-14) and 8 Tatars (R15-22). The group was diverse in a number of ways. The respondents were of various age (from 21 to over 70), came from various places, were diverse in terms of education, marital status, family situation, as well as the time that has passed since the conversion (for converts) and the extent of their attachment to Tatar tradition (for Tatar women). What they all had in common was being of Polish descent and belonging to Sunni Islam[5]. In this article I am going to focus on the first group, that is on women who converted to Islam[6]. I contacted the participants in a number of ways. It was most difficult in the beginning, as I had not known any converts to Islam or people who would be able to tell me where to find them. Which is why I decided to start my search on the internet. I focused on websites devoted to Islam, blogs written by Muslims, social media sites, and internet fora (message boards). This way I managed to get in touch with several Polish women who converted to Islam. In order to collect some basic personal information, I asked them to fill in a short questionnaire (via email or using an online survey). Among other things, I asked about the time they had been Muslims, their place of residence, education and marital status. I later exchanged numerous emails with some of them, in which we discussed their experience of being a Muslim. It soon turned out that many of them at that time lived abroad, which is why I asked them to refer me to other converts who lived in Poland. In the meantime, I also met a convert in my hometown who managed to introduce me to other women. This group included women that I would not have been able to get in touch with via the internet, or it would have taken much longer to do so. This way, having used a "snowball sampling technique" (Babbie 2005: 205–206), I managed to reach fifty converts to Islam. I have chosen 14 women from among the group, with whom I have arranged interviews. The choice of candidates was prompted by my intention to form a diverse study group.

In my research I used a biographic method and the main tool used to collect the data was a narrative interview (Schütz 2012) and "unstructured interview" (Konecki 2000: 170). I decided that these types of interviews would allow the respondents to present their lives as they see it, and it would allow me, as a researcher, to get to know various aspects of their identity better. My aim was to discover and explain the phenomena that arises between religion and identity. I came to a decision that it would be crucial

[4] In the case of atheists, it will mean conversion to Islam.

[5] Sunni is the largest denomination of Islam and constitutes around 90% of the world's Muslim population. Two other denominations are Shia and Khawarij. (*Mapping the Global Muslim Population*).

[6] I intend to publish the results of research conducted on a group of Tatar women in a separate article, as numerous complex and very interesting processes (like religious conversion) that were observed in this group would require an in-depth analysis, which would exceed the required word limit.

to investigate the life events in the biographies of the subjects of my study. The interviews that I conducted took on different forms, though. I did not manage to conduct a *classic* narrative interview, consisting of five phases (Schütz 2012) in all the cases. I presume that the problems I encountered resulted, to some extent, from the character of the method used and the technique of narrative interview, which are very demanding and difficult. The results of the studies and the articles devoted to this method and research technique seem to corroborate my own assumptions (Wylegała 2013; Wysocki 2013). The problem stems from the fact that the researcher is perceived as a stranger (especially when they come from a different cultural background than the participants), a sensitive subject matter of the study, and a problem to categorize and analyze the collected material. And how did it look in the case of my interviews? Sometimes, despite having completed the first and second phase of a narrative interview successfully, having gained the subject's trust, having created a friendly atmosphere conducive to narration, and although the participant had been informed about the type of answers that are expected, I was confronted with silence, there was a moment of hesitation, which was followed by a request to ask "a more specific question". In cases like that I would present the aim of our meeting once again. Sometimes it helped. However, when my efforts were not enough to break a stalemate, and when, after the first phases of the interview, I had a feeling that the interview may bring some promising results to analyze, I did not give up. I would change the form of the interview into a more casual one and asked about specific periods and events in the life of the participant, encouraging them to speak.

The results of face-to-face interviews were complemented with the conclusions from participant observations and my journey to Muslim countries.

In the subsequent section I am going to present the result of the empirical study. The study will be divided into two parts. In the first part I am going to focus on language, that is on verbal communication. The following part investigates the elements of non-verbal communication, such as: physical contact and body language, spatial behavior, and attire and appearance.

## Verbal communication

The number one instrument in verbal communication is language, which, according to George Mead, is the number one instrument in social interaction in general. Mead saw it as a meaningful symbol which can get an individual to react the same way as others (Konecki 2005: 41). Mead put language first because it is what sets humans apart from animals. He was convinced that it is thanks to language that we can form communities, which is not possible in the animal world. Language is connected with tone of voice, volume, rhythm, and length of pauses. Analyzing these elements in the narration of the subjects of my research proved very interesting. In my opinion, however, for this paper it was more important to analyze the content of the narration. This is not to say that the tone of voice, volume, or rhythm are disregarded in the analysis of verbal communication here. I think that they simply do not significantly change as a result of conversion to Islam. This cannot be said of the content of the women's statements. This is why I focused on what the women said about the time after the conversion and tried to highlight the elements, which, in my opinion, are indicative of conversion to Islam and joining Ummah, in short, understood as a Muslim community based on the religious ideology – islam (Danecki 2007: 33).

If we treat language as a sort of "container for content" we might not see any differences at first. The participants of the study declared that both "before" and "after" they would use the Polish language, which is their tool of verbal communication. However, on closer inspection of what they say we can see some Arabic influences, some of which result from the contact with the religion of Islam and Muslims. They are single words, sometimes Polonized. A good example is the word *iftary*[7] frequently used by the research participants, like *we went to a couple of iftary*. The word comes from Arabic and its phonetic transcription looks like this "iftār". It means the first meal eaten after sunset during the month of Ramadan. The women Polonized the word by adding the Polish plural ending "y". This way they pluralized "iftar" to arrive at *iftary* meaning regular meetings during Ramadan. The word was frequently used during our meetings, as the time the interviews were conducted partly coincided with the month of fasting. Among other Arabic terms used by the women in the interviews were *halal* ("what is permitted", see: Danecki 2007: 471), *da' wa* ("working towards a common goal", see: Danecki 2007: 326).

Another observed Arabic influence was not merely a word but phrases, religious in character, which the women used when speaking as a sort of interjection.

> *She's so silly, I thought! I even came to be really scared of Islam. I thought it was a threat to my Europe, they will come and destroy everything. Really, alhamdulillah, I started to attack those people for what they said.* (R10)

> *But I'm a grown person and he accepts that, but Mom could not… they are, in sha Allah, a good married couple, but when [Dad] sees her emotional reaction, it's hard for him.* (R10)

> *Now I know there is one God, la ilahailla Allah.* (R8)

Most of the research subjects did not know Arabic. It did not stop them from using Arabic phrases. They learnt them by heart listening to other Muslims speak, as well as studying the Qur'an and following its phonetic transcription. A significant point is that all of the women used the phrases correctly, context-wise. The phrases *alhamdulillah* ("praise be to Allah"), *in sha Allah* ("if Allah wills"), *la ilahailla Allah* ("there is no god but Allah")[8], are a fixed element of nearly every sentence spoken by a Muslim. They are not surprising when said by someone who speaks Arabic every day. Spoken by Polish women in a conversation held in Polish, they catch the listener's attention. I believe the women use them to stress their faith in the Qur'an as Allah's words. Muslims believe the words in the Qur'an were written down in Arabic with divine inspiration and according to the rules of Islam they should not be translated into other languages, and this is why we can hear them said in Arabic by Polish converts. Lilliya Karimova, who conducted research among

[7] All citations of interviewees in italics.

[8] Translations come from a blog "muzułmanki.pl" (Iman 2008).

the Tatar women in Tatarstan, observed similar behavior. Karimova carried out interviews and took part in meetings of Tatar women, during which they spoke of their religious practices, such as five prayers or wearing headscarves. She dubbed their narrations "piety stories" and concluded that they are a communicative way of performing identities, negotiating group memberships, and reaffirming one's commitment to Muslim piety (Karimova 2014: 328). She also observed that sharing "piety stories" with other women does not only affect the narrator, whose sense of identity is hence reinforced as she can demonstrate her piety, but for the non-practicing participants of the meetings it can become a kind of "blueprint" showing how "to step onto the road to Muslim piety, thereby affecting personal and social transformation" (2014: 330). One of the elements that was meant to highlight the piety of the narrators was the use of quotes from the Qur'an and hadiths. Karimova observed that the women participating in the study concluded that only a religious Muslim woman would be able to recite the Qur'an, so she must be one to have done so (339-340).

Coming back to my research, the way the respondents spoke, or more appropriately – to use the term introduced by Arthur Greil and Lynn Davidman – the way they "constructed" their narration had some distinctive features (Greil, Davidman 2007: 555). It was especially visible when they talked about Islam and about how their lives have changed since the conversion. The time prior to conversion was depicted as sinful. Their memories and stories from that period were sad and referred to weaknesses (*alcohol addiction*, *depressive mood*). From the way the women shaped the narrative it seemed as if they were talking about someone else, a different person. They depicted someone *weak*, *lost*, a *non-believer* who was reborn thanks to their conversion. The time following conversion was described in a much different way. The narrative was full of positive emotions. Some sample phrases include: *Islam opened my heart and my mind*, *Allah loves me and will protect me from harm*, *the Qur'an cleanses my soul*, *Allah embraces everyone with love*. Sometimes those words sounded like stories of people in love or people deeply spiritual who have found the love of their life. The love here is God (see also Wohlrab-Sahr 1999; Jensen 2008).

Analyzing the content of what the women said, my attention was drawn to some common elements and phrases in Polish. One of those elements was reasons for leaving the Catholic church. Not only were there similarities between the arguments against the Catholic doctrine and the Church, but also in the way they were presented, for example, the sequence of the quoted arguments and the structure of the narration were alike. This is indicative of the influence the new group (*the brothers and sisters*) has over a given individual. The women who took part in the study would quote phrases and excerpts that came from the same written and oral sources. The first type of sources included the publications they received at the mosque or from Muslim organizations in Poland, as well as numerous papers available online, which the women used to refer to. The second type of sources included lectures addressed to the Muslims, which were held at mosques, prayer halls, or during the meetings of Muslims in Poland.

Another symbolic confirmation of a change in the women's identity, which is linked with the verbal communication, was assuming an Arab name. Among the converts there were women who decided to take the name Aisha, Madżida or Hanifa. This name change was part of the rite of passage. As Anselm L. Strauss wrote, such a change is a "clear" indication of a relationship between a name and the vision of self. A new name reflects who the person is and who they are not, which is what stayed in the old Polish name – usually biblical (Strauss 2013: 20). In the case of the participants of this study, the new Arab names did not fully replace the old Polish names. The women did not change their names in their identification documents. My observation is that the new names are used in their contacts with other Muslims, on social media portals and when setting up new e-mail addresses.

## Non-verbal communication

On the opposite end to verbal communication is non-verbal communication like spatial behavior, attire and appearance, smell, face color or intense looking at each other (Konecki 2005: 56). The analysis of collected empirical material narrowed my choice to four types of non-verbal communication which I wanted to investigate more closely. These are: physical contact, body language, spatial behavior, and attire and appearance. My selection was based on observations I made while with the studied group of women. Not all of those elements were observed in similar amounts. Sometimes the data that I managed to collect was too scarce to perform a rigorous analysis. This applies to physical contact and body language, as well as to spatial behavior. It is my conviction, however, that when these results are compared, they will complement the picture of non-verbal communication in the identity of the women who took part in the study.

The analysis of the elements of non-verbal communication were preceded with my observations conducted in countries with a Muslim majority[9]. Among them were Turkey, Syria, Jordan, and Lebanon. Despite the fact that the majority of the population in these countries is Muslim, these countries are different in many respects. Geographical, historical, political, cultural, or religious factors have contributed to this state of affairs. Which is why it is impossible to create one image of a Muslim woman, as being a Muslim in Turkey may not be one hundred per cent identical to being a Muslim in Syria and in other country. Therefore we need to be very careful when it comes to making generalizations and comparisons. It is my opinion, though, that some features or behaviors are universal and can serve as a point of reference in comparative studies of Muslim women in different countries, including the converts to Islam in Poland. I think that such points include relationships between men and women or the discussion devoted to covering the body.

My decision to use my observations from the stays in Muslim countries was motivated by the fact that the literature discussing particular elements of non-verbal communication in Muslim women is non-existent or very scarce. With one notable exception in the form of literature devoted to attire, and to the headscarf in particular. The are many books and papers devoted to it, and some of them will be quoted in the subsequent parts of this article.

[9] The journeys were of various lengths. Some of them were short, week-long trips, whereas others lasted several months.

## Physical contact and body language

Physical contact in Muslim culture is much different from what can be observed in other cultures. An example of this is haptic communication between siblings[10] which is no source of controversy in European culture, while in Iran, Yemen, and Saudi Arabia it is forbidden. Brothers and sisters should not even greet each other in public (Głażewska, Kusio 2012: 167). An exception to that is physical contact between same-sex siblings. I am not talking about sexual relations (which are a severely punishable offence), but physical contact used by men and women alike to express friendliness, brotherhood or good family relations. The contact between opposite sexes is treated as something completely different. Public displays of emotions between a man and a woman is not only forbidden but sometimes punishable. Such display includes holding hands, walking hand in hand, kissing, hugging, and many other behaviors. This applies also to married couples. We should bear in mind, however, that the above regulations are largely customary and their observance depends on and can differ from one Muslim country to another.

The character of my study conducted predominantly in the form of "face-to-face" individual interviews made it impossible to observe relations between the female participants and male. One of the opportunities to see those relations was a Muslim Congress in Puławy in 2013, in which I took part and conducted participant observations. I met some of the women there and two of them were with their husbands. One of the couples had only been married for a few months at that time, whereas the other one had been married for less than 20 year. If I had not been informed earlier that both of the couples are married, I would not have been able to say so, watching only their behavior. The physical contact between them was very limited, if not to say non-existent. One of the married women when asked about it said that you were not supposed to display affection in public places, because:

> *(...) it is unbecoming… hmm… especially of a Muslim woman, and the Congress, although it is a Muslim event and everyone knows each other, and they know that I am here with my husband, does not change anything here. Affections have to stay at home (laughs).* (R 9)

A few months before the Congress I conducted an interview with one of the respondents in her private apartment. It turned out to be a very interesting meeting because besides talking to her, I also had an opportunity to see her apartment. I saw in her windows something in the shape of net curtains made of a thin fabric that let the light in. In contrast to the curtains you can see in many Polish homes, these ones were hung horizontally and covered about three quarters of the window. As a result, they showed the upper part of the window, letting the daylight in, and covered the people who were inside the house, just in case any of the passers-by wanted to take a peek inside. The first time I had seen similar ones was in Syria. In hot regions, roller-blinds are used to provide shade and protect against high temperatures. They also have one extra function, namely, they protect from the inquisitive glances from the outside and guarantee some privacy to the woman. She can move freely around the house, wearing light clothes that do not conceal her body and does not have to wear the headscarf. This second function of roller-blinds, to protect her privacy, was more important for the interviewee.

During the interviews, I did not observe particular elements of body language that would be connected with conversion to Islam. This is why I refer here to my observations from the Congress, where I witnessed other behavior, which is a sign of being Muslim. It was during a prayer attended by both men and women. In Islam, praying engages a big portion of a person's body. In contrast to Catholicism, there is no kneeling down and people do not make the sign of the cross with their right hands. Instead, there is bowing connected with one's forehead, knees and hands touching the ground and other gestures that involve the hands and head. Prayers are preceded by ritual ablutions, that is, washing parts of the body (face, hands, and feet) with water and changing clothes in order to rid oneself of any impurities. The interviews with the participants of the study showed the prayers and the activities that preceded them were one of the most important changes that happened in their lives as a result of the conversion to Islam. The women claimed that the prayer "brought them closer to God", but it also helps them to plan their day as it should be performed five times a day after having completed the aforementioned conditions. What is more, for the respondents who lived in cities with a mosque or a prayer hall, the prayer also performs a social integration function and gives them a sense of belonging to the Ummah.

> *I met the Muslim women of Wrocław half a year before my Shahada. First, I met one, then another one, and then "Facebook" was this breakthrough that we cannot live without (laughs). A group "The Muslim women of Wrocław" was created. There are about thirty of us. We arrange meetings there, write who is going to be present on Friday* (Friday prayers at the mosque, M.R.'s note). (R6)

## Spatial behaviors

Sharing physical space with Muslims, I observed some other behaviors. This happens in a queue in a bazaar, on a zebra crossing, on public transport, and in many other places. I have observed that Muslims in such situations tend to reduce physical distance to a minimum. Even if the bus is full of free seats, a Muslim will typically sit next to another Muslim of the same sex, thus limiting their own and the co-passenger's personal space. This situation may be particularly inconvenient in physical terms, and maybe first of all mentally uncomfortable, especially for the people who come from different cultures and can interpret such behavior as a violation of their personal space (Konopacki, Ryszewska 2016). As Edward T. Hall noted, this stems from a different understanding of what public space is in different cultures. Muslims believe that "a public space is a public space" and anyone has the right to do whatever they want to (Hall 2003:197). Therefore, Hall's famous concept of interpersonal distance (intimate: 1 – 1.5 feet, personal: 1.5 – 4, social: 4 – 12, and public: 12 or more) must be reinterpreted for the study of Muslim culture. It is not only the difference in how we define public space that hinders the interpretation of spatial behavior as seen from the perspective of the Western world. Another key

[10] Haptics – a branch of knowledge studying the role of touch in communication (Głażewska, Kusio 2012: 165).

factor that should be taken into consideration here is the order of the sexes, which in Muslim societies is much different. It is, for example, strictly observed in mosques, where women pray in a separate room or sit behind the men. Dividing the space along the gender axis is something I have also observed among the group of Polish women who converted to Islam. The participants in the research did not avoid going to places where they could meet men. Even if they wanted to, it would be rather impossible as in Poland the public space is organized differently than in Muslim countries and there is nothing the women can do about it. When at work or school, the subjects followed the existing rules and stressed that it was not a problem for them. Free-time activities, however, were undertaken in female-only groups, although the women did not give up their hobbies from the time "before" Islam. They organize lectures for women, they cycle, they go to the mosque or visit other temples (*temple-crawling in Warsaw*), and go swimming together. One of the converts from Warsaw described their swimming meetings to me. I have learnt they book the entire swimming pool and wear *their swimming costumes* covering more flesh than a regular bikini or a one-piece swimsuit. I also observed the division of public space into male and female during the Muslim Congress in Puławy in 2013. The division extended from praying to eating, assigning sleeping rooms, and attending lectures.

In the passage devoted to physical contact and body language I mentioned that the house is treated by the participants of the study as a place where the married couple can show each other affection, and the things that are forbidden outside the house, are allowed inside it. For some participants of the study, however, it is still important to divide the household into the areas for men and for women. Entertaining guests can serve as an example of such situation:

> *When we sit at the table, women tend to sit together, because these men, simply speaking, just bother us. You need to look at it from various perspectives... if there is somebody, for example, an unmarried woman, she may have some problems accepting that…in a situation like this. She would feel uncomfortable sitting next to a man, who is not her husband.* (R13)

My experiences from Muslim countries indicate that it is a common practice that is observed in restaurants or Muslim houses and apartments,where we can find separate areas or tables for women and men.

Spatial behaviors, as well as physical contact and body language are customs depending on differences between the genders. These differences between genders are in turn related to Islam. An interesting example for fulfilling sensitivity needs of Muslims in this context comes from Australia. The Government of Australia together with the Islamic Council of Western Australia published in 2015 a short information sheet, which "aims to raise awareness and understanding of Islamic religious and cultural practices to assist service providers in the government and not-for-profit community sectors to improve service development and delivery" (*Culture and Religion Information Sheet - Islam* 2015: 2). The information sheet contains basic information about the pillars of Islam, habits like marriage, but also guidance for non-verbal communication. In the chapter "Seating" one can find some tips about seating arrangements for interview purposes or hosting official functions:

> Some Muslims may prefer to be seated next to people of the same gender and this should be considered as a courtesy.
>
> However, when considering seating arrangements it is best to check with the individual regarding any personal preferences.
>
> Muslim religious leaders should generally be seated next to people of the same gender (*Culture and Religion Information Sheet Islam* 2015: 6).

## Attire and appearance

Another element of non-verbal communication is attire and appearance. I intentionally analyze the two together as I believe they form a whole. Apart from its protective and esthetic functions, human attire is a means of communication through vision (Dull 1995: 58). It plays an important role in the process of interaction because it sends significant messages to the receiver. Attire, as a form of symbol, can be a reflection of our economic status, education and social status. It can also carry a message about a person's moral system, their beliefs, and opinions. How did it look in the case of Muslim women? There is no single "model" of female Muslim attire. It depends on the country, its culture, and the beliefs of the woman. We can, however, identify some common elements. One of these is a headscarf covering the hair, ears, neck, and cleavage, but leaving the face and shoulders uncovered. It must be noted that in some Muslim countries the headscarf[11] is accompanied by a niqab (covering hair, neck, shoulders, and face, however, eyes remain uncovered) or completely replaced by a burqa (full-body; covering the whole body and leaving a mesh screen to see through). Out of the female converts I met with, 11 wore headscarves. Some of them started wearing them even before declaring the Shahada, the Islamic confession of faith[12]. For some the conversion was the moment they put on a headscarf and some waited until long after the conversion to Islam. Their decisions to put on a headscarf were influenced by a number of factors. One of the women started to hide her hair before converting to Islam. It happened in Tunisia for the first time, where she had a summer job. Initially, she tied it back forming a small bun, called the Spanish wrap. This way the scarf covers the hair only and leaves the face, neck and cleavage uncovered. The woman liked it enough to continue upon her return to Poland. Another respondent adopted the scarf right after she spoke the Shahada declaration in the mosque. The beginnings were difficult:

> *Never in my life had I wanted to do it, to wear a scarf. (…) I used to meet non-Muslims and I'd take it off. I wouldn't do it now, but my attitude was different back then.* (R6)

[11] We can frequently hear or read, especially in the media and popularizing publications, that a headscarf and a *hijab* can be used interchangeably. Hijab originally means a curtain or a veil. It comes from the word *haja*, meaning modesty and it refers to a modest dress code observed by Muslim women and men alike. Using those two words synonymously is not fully justified, but is at this stage so common in our everyday speech that the word hijab is even used by the interviewed women.

[12] Shahada includes pillars of islam - belief in the oneness of God and the acceptance of Muhammad as God's prophet (Danecki 2007: 125).

Another respondent decided to start wearing the scarf around six months after the conversion. During the interview she wore a hijab. It was a result of looking for the best solution after trying different things including the Spanish wrap. She recalled:

> *…I was sure I would never wear a hijab, not in Poland, because of work, parents, and kids at school. Besides, the conditions that have to be met are met in Muslim countries, like for the headscarf. Apart from those conditions, if there is a threat to my well-being, I don't have to meet them. Exceptions are possible. But six months later… I did put it on. (…) Some people started to speak disrespectfully about me and Islam. They asked me if I had to wear that "hood". My parents couldn't cope with it. They think "I wrap myself up".* (R13)

The woman's words reveal two important reasons that had prevented her from wearing a headscarf. One of them was the reaction of the people around her (work, parents, kids). The other were the *conditions* that have to be met for a woman to be able to wear a headscarf. The *conditions* were mentioned by all of the women. They all stressed that the essential role of the scarf is to *protect* the woman from *high temperature, wind and sand*, but also from *men's prying eyes*. The scarf should make the woman feel safe and anonymous. However, in Poland it puts the woman *in the spotlight* and exposes her to unfavorable reactions from the public. Therefore, some of the women I researched decided not to wear *a headscarf in public* and only wear it when they meet fellow Muslims and for prayer in the mosque:

> *Generally speaking, the only thing I can't accept is the headscarf, which has different meanings in different schools. The majority is of the opinion that it is a compulsory item and I'm aware of that, but I hope that my other good deeds will outweigh this negative aspect of me not wearing a headscarf. I think that a headscarf in a non-Muslim country, not everywhere but here, doesn't have the same effect. The role of the scarf is to protect the woman, but here this task is distorted, because the scarf attracts attention and is met with negative reactions and leads to various forms of attack. You can live with that, but why should you? In one of the hadiths we read that Allah is as good as to make our lives easier and allows us to make our lives easier and not more difficult. So with the knowledge of the situation here, we should have a rational attitude toward it. In a number of Qur'anic verses and hadiths there is a call to use one's reason, because that's why we have it, not to follow something blindly. So taking everything into consideration I think that wearing a headscarf does not fulfil the function that the hijab is supposed to have for a Muslim woman. And I won't change my mind [laughs].* (R3)

The respondent agrees with the opinion of the *majority* that the scarf is a *compulsory* element of a Muslim woman's attire. At the same time, she thinks that it does not have to be worn in countries like Poland because it doesn't serve its protective purpose and what is more, it can be a threat to the woman. To support her words, the woman quoted a fragment from hadiths, referring to the human reason which Muslims, in this case Muslim women, should follow when making decisions.

Most of the women I met in this project did wear the headscarf and quoted different suwar and hadiths. Among the most popular was Surah An-Nun (the Light):

> And say to the believing women
> that they should lower their gaze
> and guard their modesty;
> that they should not display their beauty and ornaments
> except what appear thereof;
> that they should draw their veils over their bosoms
> and not display their beauty
> except to their husbands, their fathers,
> their husband's fathers,
> their sons, their husbands' sons,
> their brothers or their brothers' sons,
> or their sisters' sons,
> or their women,
> or the slaves whom their right hands possess,
> or male servants free of physical needs,
> or small children who have no sense of the shame of sex;
> and that they should not strike their feet
> in order to draw attention to their hidden ornaments.
> (Bielawski 1986: 422).

As we can see, the word "scarf" does not feature in the passage. Neither does the passage contain detailed instructions regarding how a Muslim woman should dress. However, for the interviewed converts the part about protecting the "ornaments" and "drawing a veil over their bosoms" was equivalent to women wearing headscarves, and one of the women thought it obliged women to wear a niqab.

Different statements about veiling are results of different influences and one of them is debated among scholars and prominent figures within Islamic circles. One can find many advocates (Sherif 1987; Dragadze 1994; Hessini 1994), as well as opponents (Mernissi 1987; 1991; Watson 1994; El-Guindi 2000) of veiling. The conflict between these two parties has intensified in recent years due to an increased number of opponents (Read, Bartkowski 2000). Both parties refer to the Qur'an and hadiths, but interpret them in different ways. The second party, who opposes veiling, especially Islamic feminists, point, that the true message of Qur'an has been manipulated to degrade women to men (Mernissi 1991: 42-48) and preserve patriarchal pre-Islamic traditions (Watson 1994: 144). Secondly, they emphasize a historical fact, that veiling is a cultural practice from outside of Islam and was practiced in the ancient Near East and Arabia long before Islam (Esposito 1995).

One of the women living in Warsaw that I came in contact with by means of a questionnaire interview I had sent to her before a face-to-face interview, in one of the closed-end questions said that wearing a headscarf is a sign of *self-confidence* and *courage*. I came back to that question during our "face-to-face" interview and I asked what she had meant. It turned out that courage to her had a manifold meaning:

> *To me courage means taking responsibility for myself as a representative of Islam. I know I'm not perfect. I do a lot of things I shouldn't do. I realize that for some people I might be the first and only Muslim they meet. It is through me they will judge Islam and all Muslims. This is a lot to take for me. (…) This courage is of course connected with the uncertainty of how people are going to react. We must answer the question to what extent will this (the headscarf) limit you, what will you have to give up, how strong are you to withstand it. It's not really that easy.* (R12)

The woman saw the headscarf as a sign of courage because to her such a woman is a "representative of Islam". She must be prepared for negative reactions from the public, and stay aware that she has an important representative function. She might be the only source of information about Islam to the people she has chance encounters with and who will form their vision of Islam and its followers on that very basis. This opinion was shared by another woman, who said she treated the headscarf as a *distinction* and an *obligation* at the same time. Thanks to the scarf the woman feels *better and safer*. She says it helps the weak people stay away from illegal stimulants, because "since you're wearing it on your head some things just don't become you" (R9). Therefore, the headscarf is used by the interviewees as a social tool to communicate their Muslim identity, but it is also used as a tool to educate non-Muslims and promote acceptance of the religion (Zuleyka 2007).

Wearing a headscarf is the element of being a Muslim woman which attracts attention in society. Sometimes it was a positive reaction. One student I interviewed said the headscarf was an advantage because she was "recognized by lecturers and other students" (R12), which makes it easier to communicate with people and get good results in college. However, most of them had negative experiences. They are results of negative attitudes against veiling in society. Veiling is interpreted as a symbol of oppression of Muslim women and backwardness (Reece 1996: 42) and after terrorist attacks in recent years also as Islamic fundamentalism (Bullock 2002: 123). Fear of the reaction of people around could lead to the convert not covering and wearing a headscarf and will not feel a Muslim identity. One of the converts, who does not hide her hair on a regular basis, admitted that she envies her *sisters* who can do it and feels sad when she's the only one without a headscarf in a room. She deems the headscarf an important and missing element of her attire and the lack of it results in her feeling not 100% Muslim. From the women's stories it appears that it is mostly negative attention, like unkind looks, comments, or being called names:

> *You know, I have positive experiences. (…) There have been times when I heard the words "Arab whore" said behind my back, but I feel neither Arab nor a whore. So, they shout, no big deal. Last year I went to play by a fountain with other sisters. And it got heated for the first time in three years: "Arab whore", "go back home to Egypt". Shit! There was nothing for so many years and I guess that's why I had to hear it laughs]. Anyway they were all drunk and it was late.* (R9)

> *There were three of us and someone shouted "Allah's Army" after us. We pretended not to hear.* (R13)

> *Everyone makes fun that among all Muslim women I attract those kind of people the most. I look Arab. Most of the time I'm called names. At the beginning I would cry and rebel. Later on I noticed that the people that say those things about me are very far away from God. (…) Now I try to turn it into a joke. I noticed that when I smile at them or wish them a good day they don't know what to say.* (R6)

The women try to ignore and not to worry about these chance encounters. They do worry, however, about their employers and colleagues' reactions. Some of them feared they might lose their job because of the headscarf.

> *I converted to Islam on a Friday and I had a feeling I would not wear a headscarf. That Friday I left the mosque with a scarf on my head, but the following Saturday I didn't put it on when I went shopping. I didn't last long. I did the shopping and on the way home I put the scarf back on. I thought, OK it's the weekend so I can wear the scarf but on Monday I'll go to work as usual. I was afraid of the boss. But then I thought, I should either fear my boss or Allah. I went to work wearing a scarf, but with a bun at the back. For the first two or three weeks I wore it like that, but then I realized there's no need to be silly about it and I put on a regular headscarf.* (R9)

> *People at work thought I was in chemo. With time they all got used to it. I started slow with a Spanish wrap.* (R13)

> *The biggest problem is in the mind of some Muslims! And I'm a Muslim so I know. People who know me know why, but everyone else thinks that when a Muslim with a headscarf decides to study psychology it's pointless. They think I went to college just to have some studying experience, get a husband and kids, because finding a job as a Muslim woman in a headscarf is impossible. Maybe when you don't have contact with clients, but that's the only exception… In my opinion, this is all in our heads. I realized it when I tried to become a trainee in a psychological counselling center for kids. I was really worried what the kids' parents and the owners of the center and everyone else would say. I was also afraid of my own reactions if they look askance at me. I was still living my "before" life, hence all those fears. And in fact, everything went smoothly, no negative experiences. I realized it all depends on us. If we walk into something with self-confidence, smiling, we have an idea, a project, then people see us differently than when we are filled with fear.* (R12)

> *I have a few shops and I had this interaction in one of them. A man and his wife came into the shop in the railway station and he asked me: "what kind of convent allows you to work". I answered "marriage" [laughs]. The difference between the life of a nun and the life of a Muslim woman is that the latter has a husband. And also the Muslim's life is subject to Allah, she follows principles.* (R1)

For most of the women the reaction of the *boss* and people at work was not as bad as they had expected. Initially, their new outfit was a surprise which took away their self-confidence. After the initial *shock*, which infected some of the colleagues, the women started to feel more confident and put on their headscarves.

Not all of them, however, wanted to take the risk, so they applied for jobs in which outfit and appearance are not an issue. One of them became a telephone consultant in a call center. It *might not be a dream job*, but it gives the respondents some stability and allows them to wear a headscarf *stress-free*. In this group, however, there was a woman who suffered some negative consequences of wearing a headscarf:

> *A female professor told me that in an exam I have to wear regular clothes. It was at the Polytechnics. I was in an oral exam with another girl who was wearing shorts and you could see her bottom and this was considered normal while my clothes weren't. I have to retake the course. I kind of regret not filing a complaint or something. I could have. I was afraid it might cause more problems. In the end I gave up the exam.* (R6)

A headscarf is only one element that sets the attire of Muslim women apart from Poles. It is usually ac-

companied by long-sleeve tops, loose-fitting tunics, solid footwear, skirts, or trousers. The interviewees differed in their opinions about those elements too. They were especially discordant in their attitude to wearing trousers. The women from Warsaw, they established a group for Muslim women "Alejkumka", wear jeans and do not see a problem with it. But, among the respondents there were also women who see trousers as an improper element of attire as they accentuate the female shape too much.

Other aspects connected with attire and appearance are make-up, jewellery, and nail polish. I noticed all of the women wore make-up. It was usually delicate enough and did not stand out in comparison to what one can see on Polish women. One of the women did not wear make-up at all and five of them used rather strong make-up with visibly similar elements. Those elements were pronounced eyes, with strong eyeliner and mascara effect. Such a type of make-up is popular with Muslim women, particularly the Arabs. I am under the impression that it became a part of the standard of beauty and now women all over the world use it, not only the Muslims[13]. Another shared element in their appearance was jewellery, similar to what I observed in Muslim and Arab countries, that is, gold rings, bracelets and earrings. One of the women in particular wore a lot of gold jewellery, mostly bracelets and a gold nose ring, a typical feature seen in Hindu women. During the interview I learnt that her non-Muslim husband's roots were in that particular culture, which would explain her fondness for that style.

The third element I have analyzed as part of attire and appearance was nail polish. I noticed it in three of the women. One might question the importance of nail polish as a means of expressing identity. Many Polish women use it after all. In contrast to them, interviewees make their decision in favor of or against using nail polish following the rules of Islam. Those rules are not very clear, and hence some of the interviewees think using nail polish is allowed (*halal*) and some think it is forbidden (*haram*) according to the teachings of Islam. Heated discussions about who is right sometimes turned into arguments:

> *There is no such thing in Islam as all people thinking alike. There are different schools, different opinions, and they're all equal. There were situations when people would start to fight. There are so few of us, but we still began to argue about different opinions about our everyday life, for example whether using nail polish is good or bad. It might seem like a ridiculous example, but it would lead to conflicts and divisions.* (R12)

The women I interviewed picked their clothes, accessories, and make-up very consciously. Wearing a headscarf was not only a manifestation of their inner beliefs but also a choice which made them vulnerable. Long tunics, skirts, gold jewellery, nail polish, or even Arabic style make-up would probably not attract people's attention if it weren't for the scarf which to Poles is a symbol of Islam and raises controversies among some people. It is the previously "uncommon" headscarf that makes a woman wearing it the center of attention, attracting the eyes of the public. It is not out of the question that converting to Islam and putting on a headscarf was a manifestation of wanting to "be different" and to attract attention. Some modern sociologists believe the need to be noticed is a result of a particular character of the culture of consumerism, which puts weight on expressing oneself by means of one's own style, one's uniqueness (Finkelstein 2007). An individual attempts to "create" a project that would fulfil their own and the society's expectations. Up to now it has been associated with Muslim women who visited our country. It did not raise controversy because it was worn by women from another culture who were only in Poland temporarily. A headscarf on the head of a Slavic-looking girl who speaks Polish, assumes a different meaning. It could be interpreted as a symbol of giving up Catholic and also partly Polish tradition in favor of a Muslim one, which is regarded as strange or hostile by the public. It attracts attention not only to the woman who wears it but also to her family, who become the subject of friends and neighbors' conversations. This is why it *bothers* the parents of the interviewed women so much. Sometimes they are willing to accept their daughter's choice on the condition that she *does not wear the headscarf in public*, meaning she does not manifest her choice. For the interviewed and their close-ones wearing a headscarf could have a greater power than the verbal declaration *I'm a Muslim*. It is possible that the headscarf is not so much a manifestation of a rebellion, as a desire to be "different" and to attract other people's attention. Being a Muslim and wearing a headscarf in a society that has a different way of expression, prompted by a different worldview, offers an individual a chance that her project will be noticed, "remembered", and she will therefore feel special. An essential role in this is played by the surroundings, an audience which might criticize the choice of an individual, but is at the same time a witness and a mirror which validates the individual's new identity:

> We need other people not only to realize our various efforts but for those efforts to appropriate the right sense, to become recognized as an example of self-realization and not just childish inclinations (Marody 2010: 68).

Nevertheless, no matter what the motivation behind the choice of "new" attire and appearance was, the interviewed women said it is to them a source of trouble and of joy at the same time. On the one hand, they attract negative comments, terms of abuse, and on the other they stand out, they're unusual.

## Summary

Converting to Islam marks the boundary between the things that were and that currently are, between the old and the new identity. The elements of verbal and non-verbal communication served the people participating in the study as tools in the process of interaction. All emotions that participants express during an interaction through non-verbal language – body language, personal distance in a public sphere, attire, and make-up –have a meaning that mutually affect their behavior. They are very important for the sender of the message who by means of those elements signalizes a big change that occurred in their life. They also affect the recipient who notices

[13] When we write "Arabic make-up eye" in internet search engines, we get more than 16 million hits (3 January 2017), including 160 thousand videos, describing the characteristic features of the make-up Arabic women wear and showing how to do it. The instructors were both Muslim (wearing a headscarf) and non-Muslim women.

a change in their partner and reinterprets reality by analyzing their actions (Blumer 1975: 57).

The analysis of individual elements of communication has demonstrated that despite what George Mead believed, non-verbal communication can play a distinct role in the process of interaction. The example of attire, especially the headscarf hiding women's hair, showed that non-verbal communication can be even stronger than verbal messages. In many cases, wearing of headscarf was more difficult for participants and their families than saying "I am Muslim".

Moreover, the conversion to Islam does not mean that the respondents adapt to a certain standard, it helps them in the development of their own identity in the way they chose, and it is up to them what kind of a Muslim they will choose to become. Travisano wrote about it, saying that it is an individual that is the major factor in the process of conversion (Travisano 1970). Converting to Islam marks, for them, the beginning of the construction of a new Muslim identity. Whereas for us, observing the process from the outside, it is an interesting example of new Polish-Muslim hybrid identities ("new hybrid identity", see Jensen 2008: 401; Roald 2006: 67), in which you can also find some elements of Polish, Muslim, Arab identity and many others as well. Results of the empirical study only confirm that the identity, especially identity of converts, should be perceived as a process which is steered by the individual.

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## Komunikacja werbalna i niewerbalna w procesie stawania się muzułmanką

**Abstrakt:** Inspiracją do napisania niniejszego artykułu były wyniki badań jakościowych, które przeprowadziłam wśród polskich konwertytek na islam. Zebrany materiał zachęcił mnie do zakwestionowania kilku założeń z zakresu interakcjonizmu symbolicznego, który stanowił ramę teoretyczną projektu badawczego. Jedno z nich mówi o roli komunikacji werbalnej i niewerbalnej w procesie kształtowania tożsamości.

**Słowa kluczowe:** komunikacja werbalna i niewerbalna, tożsamość muzułmańska, polskie konwertytki na islam