

# What about your friends back home?

FARIA KHAN

Right after O Levels were done with and we stepped into our magical summer, friends started dropping like flies left and right over the next two years. Most of us in our school had been together for at least 10 years, so getting used to depressing farewells became a major part of our lives. Missing someone is just the mere starting line. This is for those who don't understand how we actually felt back home.

When you are the one moving away, you are mentally prepared for a brand new environment. You'll be seeing new eager faces, learning new things, experiencing things different from what we're experiencing every day. The rest of us, who are still here, don't get to have a new environment. We don't get to see new faces. It's because we're not in some place new, but the same old. We have to fit in, all over again, in the same routine but now with a different take on things.

Back in 11th grade, when my main friend circle got smaller and a few of my close friends were the only ones remaining in school, we found it hard to fit in. Even though we were in the same place with the same faces, we thought we were lost. New friends were

not what we were looking for, because after so many years together, we thought we knew everyone of the batch inside out and we simply couldn't replace the ones who left. We were depressed. Being 16, friends were one of the top priorities, as is the norm, but

I remember having a conversation with a friend about how jaded we were becoming and that honestly scared me.

All the friends who left were obviously facing hardships – making friends who come from a completely different background, dealing with the

weather and most importantly learning to live a life without a helping hand. These things made them have less free time than we expected them to have. Meanwhile, we sat at home with our phones in our hands, waiting for them to reply to our texts, and maybe even get a call from them. Nevertheless, as interesting as their new experiences were, most of us here were secretly jealous every single time they shared a story with us.

As months went by, some of the people we thought we knew inside out became our new best friends. At this point, the jealousy reciprocated from the friends abroad. They may not have liked the fact that we were making new friends; they felt as though they were being replaced. Distance and time were things we couldn't do anything about. Truth is, we didn't replace any of our old friends. Life goes on and we too, learnt to adapt.

Both the groups, the ones here and the ones abroad were missing out on things and most importantly, missing each other. Summer meant everyone's back home. Luckily for us, nine months apart didn't do much harm to our friendship but just putting it out there, you're not the only ones suffering; we do too.



# PHASES OF A SKYPE CALL

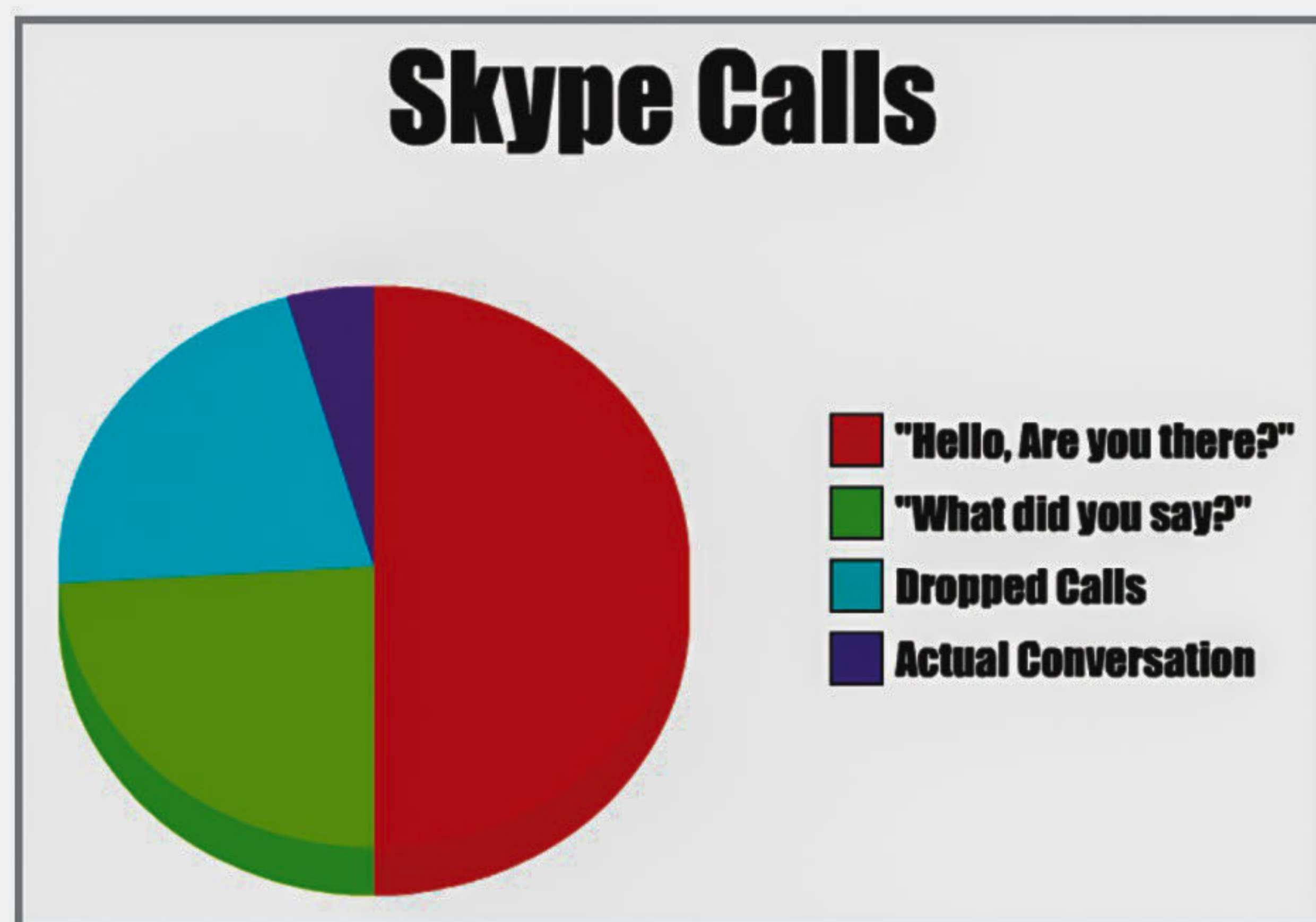
MYAT MOE KHAING

Welcome to Bangladesh, a land where the internet connection is as fragile as our CGPAs. If you talk about the duration of the call connection, it is as infrequent as my concentration during Chemistry class. Don't believe me? Wait till you Skype with someone and come across these phases.

Connecting with a friend living abroad over Skype involves hassles because the time zones don't match. The planning commences weeks ahead until both parties realise they cannot do much about being stuck at two opposite ends of the world. Even if you are Skyping with someone living in your city for let's say, a group project, let's face it: it ain't happening that easy.

Finally the day arrives and we sit in front of our computers to make the Skype call. Out of nowhere a big face from either the angle of the chin or forehead appears on the screen as you receive the call. Followed by an awkward silence we realise we aren't having eye contact and are mostly talking to each others' foreheads.

Sometimes there are connection issues and your voice messages get delayed in being sent to the other end of the screen. This can lead to some hilarious results.



Person 1: Can you hear me?  
 Person 2: Hello?  
 Person 1: How are you?  
 Person 2: Yes, I can hear you. Can you hear me?"  
 Person 1: Did you have your dinner?  
 Person 2: Yes, I am doing good.

The next phase involves discussing the place and surroundings people are Skyping in. If you're at your university

dorm in call with your mom, she will definitely ask you for a virtual tour so that she can confirm you're up to no good in living alone. However, before you Skype, you can choose a location decent enough to set an impression your room isn't a mess.

If you're unfortunate, the other person you are Skyping with has his fan close to his mic. If you mention it, he will tell you

about how pandas are becoming extinct due to global warming.

The following phase is the time your friend argues with his mom halfway through the conversation "Mom, I'll go to bed when I want to."

You can hear someone shouting from the next room to which your friend replies, "No, it's not midnight!"

While Skyping with a family member, at one point, other family members start joining in the conversation leaving you wondering if you would have ever have the privacy to ask your dad for next semester's tuition fees.

Auntie 1: Arre, Adity ma, you grew so thin!  
 Auntie 2: I have a marriage proposal for you. Son of that doctor uncle who presented you a doll on your fifth birthday has become a doctor too.

Cousin 1: Please send me an original financial calculator for my CFA exam.

Mom: What's the result of your last semester?  
 At this point, you squint at the screen blankly and go, "What are you saying? I can't hear you. My doll's financial calculator grew thin? What?"

There goes the connection.

Myat Moe is an occasional philosopher whose favourite pastime is confusing people with her nationality. Reach her @145michelle@gmail.com