

INTERNATIONAL MANAGEMENT

CROSS CULTURAL COMMUNICATION

"Culture Connect: Navigating Cross-Cultural
Communication"



Hadijah Kodiron
& Emilyya Zurda

CROSS CULTURAL COMMUNICATION

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Communication"**



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Preface

Welcome to “Culture Connect,” a straightforward guide to the essentials of cross-cultural communication in the world of international management. This e-book is your practical companion, designed to help you navigate the varied landscapes of global business interactions with ease and confidence.

Here, you’ll find simple yet effective strategies for understanding and adapting to different communication styles. Whether it’s a boardroom in Malaysia or a field office in Mumbai, the principles in these pages will help you connect with colleagues and clients from all corners of the world.

With clear examples and actionable advice, “Culture Connect” demystifies the complexities of international communication. It’s not just about talking; it’s about connecting, understanding, and building lasting relationships that transcend cultural boundaries.

So, whether you’re a seasoned executive or stepping into international management for the first time, let this book be your guide to a more connected and effective professional world.

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to Allah SWT for giving me the strength, guidance, and perseverance to complete this book.

I am sincerely thankful to my Head of Programme, [Sir Mohd Norulhisyam bin Hassan], whose wisdom, encouragement, and constructive feedback have been invaluable throughout the project. Their insights especially concerning cross-cultural dynamics and nuances in verbal communication greatly shaped the direction of this work.

I also wish to acknowledge the support of [Madam Emily binti Zurda] who assisted me in gathering data on upward and downward communication in diverse cultural settings.

Without their participation and openness to share experiences, the chapters on communication hierarchies and power distance would not have been as rich or nuanced.

My heartfelt thanks go to [Madam Hairani binti Ahmad Zainuldin & Madam Fariza Haidayu binti Mohd Hashim] for reviewing earlier drafts, particularly on communication barriers and strategies for effective communication. Their critical comments helped me clarify theoretical concepts and improve the flow and readability.

To my family and friends, thank you for your patience, understanding, and moral support—your belief in me kept me going when the journey felt long.

Finally, I dedicate this book to all those striving to bridge cultures, to understand one another more deeply, and to communicate with respect and clarity. May this work contribute, in its small way, to fostering more effective, empathetic, and harmonious cross-cultural communication.

THANK YOU FOR READING!

*“Understanding different cultures enriches
our perspectives and enables meaningful
connections.”*



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ABSTRACT

This book explores the concept of cross-cultural communication by focusing on four key aspects that play a crucial role in interactions among individuals from diverse backgrounds. Firstly, verbal communication is discussed as the primary medium that shapes understanding, delivery styles, and message interpretation within different cultural contexts. Secondly, downward and upward communication are examined as essential channels in multicultural organizations, particularly in ensuring that messages from management are clearly conveyed to employees and that feedback can be effectively communicated back. Thirdly, communication barriers such as language differences, social norms, cultural values, and individual perceptions are highlighted as common challenges in cross-cultural communication. Finally, communication effectiveness is analyzed by emphasizing strategies, communicative competence, and cultural sensitivity as determining factors in building mutual understanding. Overall, this book aims to provide insights into how cross-cultural communication can be better understood, enhanced, and practiced to support interpersonal and professional relationships in today's globalized world.

C H A P T E R

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INTRODUCTION

In today's globalized world, cross-cultural communication has become a critical skill for individuals and organizations alike. As people from diverse cultural backgrounds interact more frequently in personal, professional, and social contexts, understanding how to navigate these differences effectively is essential.

Cross-cultural communication refers to the process of recognizing and addressing the differences in communication styles, behaviors, and perceptions that arise when people from different cultural backgrounds interact. It encompasses verbal and non-verbal communication, as well as variations in cultural norms and values.

The importance of cross-cultural communication cannot be overstated. It enhances collaboration, fosters mutual respect, and reduces misunderstandings in various settings. For businesses, effective cross-cultural communication can lead to successful international partnerships, improved customer relations, and a more inclusive workplace. In personal interactions, it promotes empathy and enriches our understanding of diverse perspectives.





THE OVERALL COMMUNICATION PROCESS

The word communication is derived from a Latin word meaning “to share.” Communication can be defined as “purposefully and actively exchanging information between two or more people to convey or receive the intended meanings through a shared system of signs and (symbols)”.

The communication process is a systematic series of steps that enable the exchange of information, ideas, and messages between individuals or groups. This process involves several key components, each playing a critical role in ensuring that communication is effective and meaningful.

The communication process includes the steps we take in order to ensure we have succeeded in communicating. The communication process comprises essential and interconnected elements detailed in the figure above. We will continue to reflect on the story of your friend in the coffee shop to explore each element in detail .

COMMUNICATION

The communication process includes the steps we take in order to ensure we have succeeded in communicating. The communication process comprises essential and interconnected elements detailed in the figure above. We will continue to reflect on the story of your friend in the coffee shop to explore each element in detail. In addition, as suggested in the opening World of International Management, the means and modes of communication have changed dramatically in recent decades

For example, the advent of the telephone, then Internet. Most recently personal communication devices (“smart phones”) has influenced how, when, and why people communicate. These trends bring both benefits and disadvantages. On the positive side, we have many more opportunities to communicate rapidly, without delays or filters, and often can incorporate rich content, such as photos, videos, and links to other information, in our exchanges.



On the other hand, some are concerned that these devices are rendering our communication less meaningful and personal. In a recent book, Nicholas Carr argues that when we go online, “we enter an environment that promotes cursory reading, hurried and distracted thinking, and superficial learning.” Mr. Carr calls the Web “a technology of forgetfulness”. Web pages draw us into a myriad of embedded links while we are assaulted by other messages via e-mail, RSS, Twitter and Facebook. He suggests that greater access to knowledge is not the same as greater knowledge and that an ever-increasing plethora of facts and data is not the same as wisdom. Despite these concerns, communication-verbal and otherwise-remains an important dimension of international management. In this chapter, we survey different communication styles, how communication is processed and interpreted, and how culture and language influence communication (and miscommunication).

Communication Component

Source:

The source generates with an idea and sends a message in order to share information with others. The source could be one other person or a group of people. In our example above, your friend is trying to share the events leading up to their first hockey goal and, likely, the feelings they had at the time as well.



Figure 1: Example sources of communication

<https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/career-development/direct-communication>

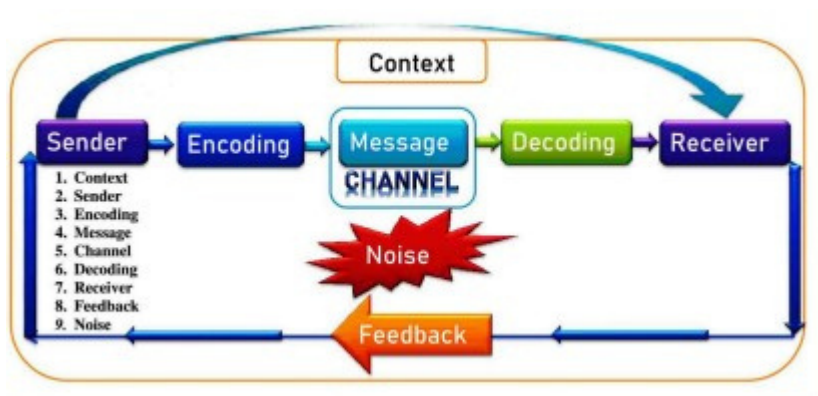


Figure 2.:Process Communication

Message:

The message is the information or subject matter that source is intends to share. The information may be an opinion, feelings, instructions, requests, or suggestions. In the our example above, your friend identified information worth sharing, perhaps the size of the defence players on the opposing team, in order to help you visualize the situation.

Communication Component

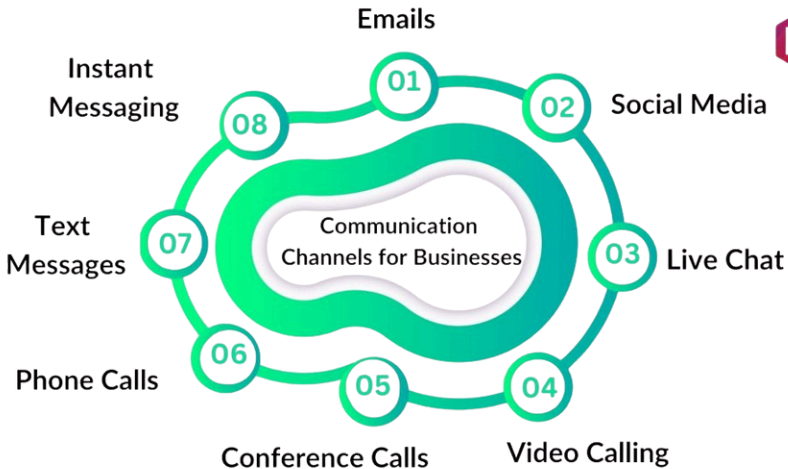


Figure 3. : Example Channel in Business

Channels:

The source may encode information in the form of words, images, sounds, body language, etc. There are many definitions and categories of communication channels to describe their role in the communication process.

This module identifies the following channels: verbal, non-verbal, written, and digital. In our example above, your friends might use sounds or body language in addition to their words to emphasize specific bits of information.

COMMUNICATION CHANNEL

Verbal Communication Channels:

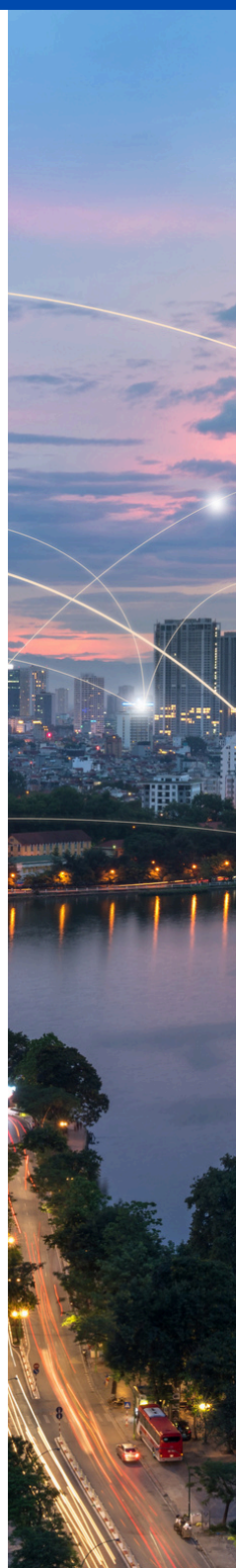
- **Face-to-Face Conversation:** When people communicate directly, either in person or through video calls, it's a powerful channel for sharing information and emotions.
- **Telephone Calls:** Traditional phone calls remain an essential channel for quick and real-time communication.
- **Video Conferencing:** In today's digital age, video conferencing tools enable remote teams to collaborate effectively.

Nonverbal Communication Channels:

- **Body Language:** Facial expressions, gestures, and posture convey unspoken messages.
- **Written Communication:**
 - **Emails:** A common written channel for formal communication.
 - **Text Messages:** Quick and concise messages exchanged via mobile devices.
 - **Social Media Posts:** Platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram facilitate communication through written content.

Digital Communication Channels:

- **Social Media:** A powerful channel for sharing ideas, news, and connecting with a global audience.
- **Online Chat and Messaging Apps:** Instant messaging tools allow real-time communication.
- **Video Streaming:** Platforms such as YouTube and TikTok enable visual storytelling.



Communication Component



Figure 4. : Example Receiver in communication

Receiver:

The receiver is the person for whom the message is intended. This individual is responsible for decoding the message in an attempt to understand the intentions of the source. In the example above, you as the receiver may understand the overall concept of your friend scoring a goal in hockey and can envision the techniques your friend used. However, there may also be some information you do not understand—such as a certain term—or perhaps your friend describes some events in a confusing order.

Receiver Definition:

- The receiver (also known as the audience or decoder) is the individual or group to whom a message is directed in the communication process.
- In face-to-face conversations, the receiver is the listener. In written communication, it's the reader. During presentations the entire audience becomes the receiver is the reader

Role of the Receiver:

- The receiver's task is to interpret the sender's message—both verbal and nonverbal—with as little distortion as possible. This process of interpreting the message is known as decoding.
- Effective communication hinges on how well the receiver understands and analyzes the message.

COMMUNICATION COMPONENT

Communication is a complex process that involves multiple components working together to facilitate the exchange of information



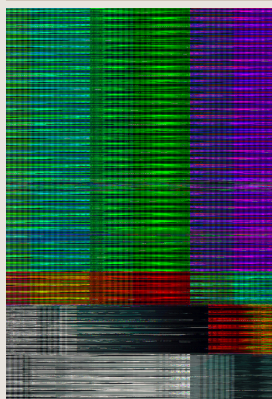
ENVIRONMENT

The environment is the physical and psychological space in which the communication is happening. (McLean, 2005).

It might also describe if the space is formal or informal. In our example above, it is the coffee shop you and your friend are visiting in.

CONTEXT

The context is the setting, scene, and psychological and psychosocial expectations of the source and the receiver(s) (McLean, 2005). This is strongly linked to expectations of those who are sending the messages and those who are receiving the messages. In our example above, you might expect natural pauses in your friend's storytelling that will allow you to confirm your understanding or ask a question.



INTERFERENCE

There are many types of interference (also called "noise") that inhibit effective communication. Interference can disrupt the form of poor audio quality, excessive background noise, poor image quality, inadequate lighting, or even distractions that reduce attention. In our working environment, the coffee shop might be quite busy and thus very loud. You would have trouble hearing your friend clearly, which in turn might cause you to miss a critical word or phrase.

SCAN ME



**COMMUNICATION
COMPONENT IN
SOFTWARE (E.G., REACT /
ANGULAR)**

**ORGANIZATIONAL
COMMUNICATION
FLOW**



CROSS-CULTURAL
COMMUNICATION IS
ESSENTIAL IN OUR
INTERCONNECTED WORLD. IT
ENRICHES OUR LIVES,
BROADENS OUR HORIZONS,
AND FOSTERS MUTUAL
UNDERSTANDING.

AS BENJAMIN LEE WHORF
WISELY SAID,

“LANGUAGE SHAPES THE WAY
WE THINK, AND DETERMINES
WHAT WE CAN THINK ABOUT”.

EMBRACING CULTURAL
DIVERSITY ENHANCES OUR
COMMUNICATION SKILLS AND
PROMOTES COLLABORATION.





COMMUNICATION

VERBAL |01

STYLE

5.1 VERBAL COMMUNICATION

One way to examine how individuals convey information is by looking at their communication styles. In particular, as noted by Edward Hall, context plays a key role in explaining many communication differences.¹⁴ Context is information that surrounds a communication and helps convey the message. In high-context societies, such as Japan and many Arab countries, messages are often highly coded and implicit.

As a result, the receiver's job is to interpret what the message means by correctly filtering through what is being said and the way in which the message is being conveyed. This approach contrast sharply with low-context societies, such as the United States and Canada, where the message is explicit, and the speaker states precisely what he or she means.

These contextual factors must be taken into account considered when marketing messages are being developed in disparate societies. For example, promotions in Japan should be subtle and convey a sense of community (high context). Similar segments in the United States, a low-context environment, should be responsive to expectations for more explicit messages.



Verbal Communication Style : Direct & Indirect

Direct communication involves expressing thoughts, feelings, and intentions in a straightforward and explicit manner. It is like saying “no” directly to a request without ambiguity. On the other hand, indirect communication conveys messages more subtly, often relying on non-verbal cues or implied meanings. For indirect communicators politeness and maintaining harmony matter more than brevity.



Figure 6. : Detail about Verbal Communication Style



Figure 5 : Definition Direct and indirect communication style

Direct communication is characterized by clarity, assertiveness, and active listening. When we communicate directly, we express our thoughts and feelings openly, leaving little room for misinterpretation.

Indirect communication, on the other hand, relies on non-verbal cues, implied meanings, and context. It is often used in situations where directness may be perceived as rude or confrontational.

DIRECT & INDIRECT COMMUNICATION



Indirect Style:

- Relationship-oriented: Put people first and focus on the individual.
- Friendly Communication: Avoid causing trouble and prevent humiliation.
- Examples: Japan, China, South Korea.
- In indirect cultures, relationship-building matters. They might start with a friendly greeting before seeking assistance

Direct Style:

- Task-oriented: Prioritize responsibilities to achieve goals within given deadlines.
- Straightforward Communication: Emphasize honesty, even if it might upset someone.
- Examples: United States, Germany, Netherlands.
- In direct cultures, clear communication is valued. For instance, asking a store worker directly, "Where can I find eggs?" is common.





DIRECT AND INDIRECT COMMUNICATION STYLE

In high-context cultures, messages are implicit and indirect. One reason is that those who are communicating—family, friends, co-workers, clients—tend to have both close personal relationships and large information networks. As a result, each knows a lot about others in the communication network; they do not have to rely on language alone to communicate. Voice intonation, timing, and facial expressions can all play roles in conveying information.

In low-context cultures, people often meet only to accomplish objectives. Since they do not know each other very well, they tend to be direct and focused in their communications.

One way of comparing these two kinds of culture—high context and low context—is by finding out what types of questions are typically asked when someone is contacted and told to attend a meeting. In a high-context culture it is common for the person to ask.

Fun Facts

Do You Know...??

Offering a direct sightline into communication theory, *Explaining Communication* provides in-depth discussions of communication theories by some of the foremost scholars working in communication today. With contributions from the original theorists and scholars known for their work in specific theoretical perspectives, this distinctive text breaks new ground in giving these scholars the opportunity to address students firsthand, speaking directly to the coming generations of communication scholars.

Activity

Simple Instructions for Role-Playing Direct and Indirect Communication

Objective:

- Understand the differences between direct and indirect communication styles through role-playing activities.

SCAN ME



Verbal Communication Style :

Elaborate to Succinct

The **elaborate style** is often very common. There is a great deal of talking, description includes extensive detail, and people often repeat themselves. This elaborate style is widely used in Arabic countries. The exacting style is more common in nations such as England, Germany, and Sweden, to name three.

This style focuses on precision and the use of the right amount of words to convey the message. If a person uses too many words, this is considered exaggeration; if the individual relies on too few, the result is an ambiguous message.



Figure 7 : Definition Direct and indirect communication style

The **succinct style** is most common in Asia, where people tend to say few words and allow understatements, pauses, and silence to convey meaning. In particular, in unfamiliar situations, communicators are succinct in order to avoid risking a loss of face.

Researchers have found that the elaborating style is more popular in high-context cultures that have a moderate degree of uncertainty avoidance. The exacting style is more common in low-context, low-uncertainty-avoidance cultures. The succinct style is more common in high-context cultures with considerable uncertainty avoidance.



Figure 8. : Detail about Verbal Communication Style

ELABORATE VS SUCCINCT COMMUNICATION



Elaborate Style:

- Provide detailed explanations and context. Use stories and examples to illustrate points.
- Example: When discussing a project, an elaborative communicator might say, "This reminds me of a similar project we did last year where we faced these challenges. We addressed them by..."

Succinct Style:

- Get to the point quickly and provide only necessary information. Avoid unnecessary details.
- Example: When discussing the same project, a succinct communicator might say, "We faced similar challenges last year. We solved them by doing X."



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Fun Facts

Do You Know...??

Hofstede's model includes several dimensions of culture, one of which is "Individualism vs. Collectivism."

Collectivist Cultures:

- Tend to use an elaborate style, as maintaining relationships and social harmony is important.

Individualist Cultures:

- Tend to use a succinct style, as individual expression and efficiency are valued.

Activity

Simple Instructions for Role-Playing Elaborate Style and Succinct Style Communication

Objective:

- Understand the differences between elaborate and succinct style communication styles through role-playing activities.

SCAN
ME



Example Activity!



CONTEXTUAL AND PERSONAL COMMUNICATION STYLE

A **contextual style** is one that focuses on the speaker and relationship between the parties. For example, in Asian cultures people use words that reflect the role and hierarchical relationship of those in the conversation. As a result, in an organizational setting, speakers choose words that indicate their status relative to the status of the others. Commenting on this idea, Yoshimura and Anderson have noted that white-collar, middle-management employees in Japan, commonly known as salarymen, quickly learn how to communicate with others in the organization by understanding the context and reference group of the other party: A salaryman can hardly say a word to another person without implicitly defining the reference groups to which he thinks both of them belong.

Example : Juniors defer to seniors in Japan, but even this relationship is complicated when the junior person works for a much more prestigious organization (for example, a government bureau) than the senior.

CONTEXTUAL AND PERSONAL COMMUNICATION STYLE

A **personal style** focuses on the speaker and the reduction of barriers between the parties. In the United States, for example, it is common to use first names and to address others informally and directly on an equal basis. Researchers have found that the contextual style is often associated with high-power-distance, collective, high-context cultures.

Examples : Japan, India, and Ghana. In contrast, the personal style is more popular in low-power-distance, individualistic, low-context cultures. Examples include the United States, Australia, and Canada.



Contextual Style

Respect hierarchy and use formal titles and language. Acknowledge the roles and relationships involved.

Example: In a meeting, a contextual communicator might say, "Mr. Smith, as the head of the department, what are your thoughts on this proposal?"



Foster a relaxed and informal atmosphere. Use first names and emphasize personal connections.

Example: In the same meeting, a personal communicator might say, "John, what do you think about this proposal?"

Personal Style

Fun Facts

Do You Know...??

Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) :

Examines how individuals adjust their communication styles based on their conversation partners and context.

Adapting one's communication style to be more similar to the other person's style to increase understanding and rapport.

Deliberately using a different communication style to emphasize social distance or distinction.

#Howard Giles#

SCAN ME



Video about Communication
Accommodation Theory (D=CAT)



GAMES



AFFECTIVE AND INSTRUMENTAL STYLE

The affective style is characterized by language that requires the listener to carefully attend to both what is being said and how the sender is presenting the message.

Quite often the meaning that is being conveyed is nonverbal and requires the receiver to use his or her intuitive skills in deciphering what is being said.

The part of the message that is being left out may be just as important as the part that is being included. In contrast, the instrumental style is goal-oriented and focuses on the sender.

The individual clearly lets the other party know what he or she wants the other party to know.

The affective style is common in collective, high-context cultures such as the Middle East, Latin America, and Asia. The instrumental style is more commonly found in individualistic, low-context cultures such as Switzerland, Denmark, and the United States.

Verbal Communication Style :

Affective and Instrumental

The **affective** communication style is focus on building relationships and expressing emotions. Use language that conveys empathy and understanding.

Example:

When giving feedback, an effective communicator might say, "I really appreciate the effort you've put into this project. I think we can make it even better by looking at these areas."



Figure 1 : Affective Communication style



Figure 2. : Detail about Verbal Communication Style

Instrumental communication style is goal-oriented and focuses on the task at hand. It's uses clear, practical language to achieve specific outcomes.

Example:

When giving feedback, an instrumental communicator might say, "The project needs improvement in these areas to meet our objectives. Let's focus on these specific changes."



MAJOR CHARACTERISTICS OF VERBAL STYLE

Verbal Style	Major Variation	Interaction Focus and Content	Cultures in Which Characteristic Is Found
Indirect vs. direct	Indirect	Implicit messages	Collective, high context
	Direct	Explicit messages	Individualistic, low context
Succinct vs. elaborate	Elaborate	High quantity of talk	Moderate uncertainty avoidance, high context
	Exacting	Moderate amount of talk	Low uncertainty avoidance, low context
	Succinct	Low amount of talk	High uncertainty avoidance, high context
Contextual vs. personal	Contextual	Focus on the speaker and role relationships	High power distance, collective, high context
	Personal	Focus on the speaker and personal relationships	Low power distance, individualistic, low context
Affective vs. instrumental	Affective	Process-oriented and receiver-focused language	Collective, high context
	Instrumental	Goal-oriented and sender-focused language	Individualistic, low context

Verbal Styles Using in 10 Select Countries

Country	Indirect vs. Direct	Elaborate vs. Succinct	Contextual vs. Personal	Affective vs. Instrumental
Australia	Direct	Exacting	Personal	Instrumental
Canada	Direct	Exacting	Personal	Instrumental
Denmark	Direct	Exacting	Personal	Instrumental
Egypt	Indirect	Elaborate	Contextual	Affective
England	Direct	Exacting	Personal	Instrumental
Japan	Indirect	Succinct	Contextual	Affective
Korea	Indirect	Succinct	Contextual	Affective
Saudi Arabia	Indirect	Elaborate	Contextual	Affective
Sweden	Direct	Exacting	Personal	Instrumental
United States	Direct	Exacting	Personal	Instrumental

Source: Anne Marie Francesco and Barry Allen Gold, *International Organizational Behavior: Text, Readings, Cases, and Skills*, 1st Edition © 1998. Electronically reproduced by permission of Pearson Education, Inc., Upper Saddle River, New Jersey.



EXERCISE 1 : ROLE PLAY SCENARIO

Communication Style

Communication Styles in Malaysian vs. International Settings:
A Malaysian manager (Puan Aisyah) negotiating project deadlines with a German partner (Mr. Müller).

<p>Comparison of Communication Styles</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Malaysia (High-context, polite, indirect)• Figurative language 44 honorifics• Hormat pada, “pana” fnoꣳunyt• Honorifics ꣳ onau, Puan• Japan (High-context, formal, indirect)• Non-verbal cues ꣳ (smiles, silence)• “Yes” tidak semestaney• Low-context, informal, direct	<p>Role-play Scenario</p> <p>A Malaysian manager (Puan Aisyah) negotiating project deadlines with a German partner (Mr. Müller)</p> <p>Dialogue Sample</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• We will try our best to complete the report by end of this month,• but it may take some adjustment depending on our internal discussion <p>Mr. Müller</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• I need a clear date. Is it possible by 30th August: yes or no?
<p>Reflection & Bridging Gaps</p> <p>Misunderstanding happens because Malaysians avoid being too direct (seen as impolite) Germans/US expect clear commitment</p> <p>Bridging the gap: Ininanne tamips</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Malaysians can more precise but still polite: “We can confirm 30th August, but we will keep you updated on any issues.”• Foreign counterparts learn to read politeness cues and allow space for indirect communication• Use written follow-up emails to avoid ambiguity	





02|DOWNWARD & UPWARD COMMUNICATION

Downward Communication

Downward communication is the transmission of information from managers to subordinates. The primary purpose of the manager-initiated communication flow is to convey orders, instructions and important information. Managers use this channel to inform employees what needs to be done and to provide feedback on how well task are being performed.

The channel facilitates the flow of information to those who need it for operational purposes. Communicating with subordinates can be both challenging, especially when a manager required deliver news and instructions that he or she does not personally agree with.



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Some suggest that managers should consider pushing back with their superiors to gauge whether there is some flexibility.

If you haven't fully bought into it, "your employees will be able to tell in from the tone of your voice or your body language that you do not believe in what you are doing," says Ray Skiba, Director of Human Resources at Streck, a manufacturer of clinical laboratory products in Omaha, Nebraska.

Regardless of the outcome, sending a mixed signal is never helpful.



PURPOSE

- To give instructions, directions, or orders.
- To share policies, rules, and procedures.
- To provide feedback on performance.
- To communicate organizational goals and strategies.

Examples:

- A CEO sends an email to all staff announcing a new strategic plan.
- A school principal gives a circular about examination rules to teachers.
- A manager assigns daily tasks to team members during a morning briefing.
- Human Resource (HR) department issues guidelines on workplace safety.
- A lecturer explains assignment instructions and marking rubrics to students.
- A company director sends a memo about changes in working hours.
- A supervisor provides performance feedback to an employee.



Advantages

Maintains authority and discipline.

Ensures uniformity and standardization.

Helps subordinates understand expectations.

Disadvantages

Risk of distortion if passed through many layers

May cause lack of feedback if one-way only

Can demotivate if tone is too directive

Upward communication is the transfer of information from subordinates to superior. The primary purpose of this subordinate-initiated upward communication is to provide feedback, ask questions, or seek assistance from higher-level management. In recent years, there has been a call for and a concerted effort to promote more upward communication in the United States. In other countries, such as in Japan, Hong Kong, and Singapore, upward communication has long been a fact of life.

Managers in these countries have made extensive use of suggestion systems and quality circles to get employees' input and always are available to listen to their people's concerns. Here are some observations from the approach the Japanese firm Matsushita uses in dealing with employee suggestions: Matsushita views employee recommendations as instrumental to making improvements on the shop floor and in the marketplace. [It believes] that a great many little people, paying attention each day to how to improve their jobs, can accomplish more than a whole headquarters full of production engineers and planners.

Praise and positive reinforcement are an important part of the Matsushita philosophy. Approximately 90 percent of suggestions receive rewards; most only a few dollars per month, but the message is reinforced constantly: "Think about your job; develop yourself and help us improve the company." The best suggestions receive company-wide recognition and can earn substantial monetary rewards. Each year, many special awards are also given, including presidential prizes and various divisional honors.

Purpose



Upward Communication

The purpose of upward communication is to allow employees to share their feedback, ideas, concerns, and reports with higher management. It gives subordinates the opportunity to inform superiors about work progress, challenges faced, and suggestions for improvement. This type of communication helps management understand the real situation on the ground, make better decisions, and foster a sense of involvement among employees. By encouraging upward communication, organizations can build trust, improve morale, and create a more participative work environment.

Examples :

1. Employees submit monthly progress reports to their manager.
2. A teacher reports classroom challenges to the head of department.
3. A worker raises safety concerns through a grievance form.
4. Staff share suggestions for improving productivity through a suggestion box.
5. Students give feedback about teaching methods through course evaluation forms.
6. An employee proposes a new idea in a team meeting.
7. A junior engineer sends an email requesting clarification on project instructions.



Advantages & Disadvantages


Advantages Upward Communication

1. Feedback to Management – Allows top management to understand employees' views, complaints, and feedback.
2. Better Decision-Making – Helps managers make decisions based on real information from the ground level.
3. Employee Participation – Provides employees the opportunity to contribute ideas, which increases motivation and sense of value.
4. Problem Identification – Issues at the operational level can be detected early before they become bigger problems.
5. Improved Trust and Relationships – Encourages two-way communication, strengthening the relationship between employees and management.
6. Encourages Innovation – Suggestions from employees can lead to process improvements and innovation.



Disadvantages Upward Communication

1. Fear of Repercussion – Employees may hesitate to speak honestly, fearing punishment or negative judgment.
2. Filtering of Information – Information may be filtered (only good news is passed up, while real problems are hidden).
3. Slow Flow of Information – Messages can take a long time to reach top management if they pass through many levels.
4. Possibility of Miscommunication – Information may change or be misunderstood as it moves up the hierarchy.
5. Reluctance to Share Ideas – Some employees may feel insecure or believe their ideas are not important.
6. Information Overload – Too much feedback without proper filtering can overwhelm management.



Exercises 2: *Negotiation Simulation* *Malaysia vs. Japan*

Objective :

To explore and compare negotiation styles between Malaysia and Japan, and to develop skills for managing cross-cultural business negotiations.

Scenario

A Malaysian palm oil exporter is negotiating a business deal with a Japanese buyer. Both parties aim to reach an agreement while respecting cultural differences.

Task 1: Role-Play Preparation

- Students are divided into two groups:
 - Group A: Malaysian exporters.
 - Group B: Japanese buyers.
- Each group researches cultural negotiation traits, for example:
 - Malaysians: Relationship-oriented, polite, may avoid direct confrontation.
 - Japanese: Value consensus, harmony, indirect communication, long-term trust.

Task 2: Negotiation Simulation

- Conduct the negotiation between both parties.
- Each group should apply cultural traits they researched.
- Possible discussion points: pricing, delivery terms, long-term partnership.

Task 3: Reflection & Discussion

- Reflect on the experience:
 - What tactics did each side use?
 - What challenges or misunderstandings arose?
 - How were they resolved?
 - What was the outcome of the negotiation?
- Discuss how cultural awareness can improve negotiation success in real business contexts.

Theory Facts

Do You Know...??

Cultural Iceberg Model (Hall, 1976)

Communication barriers often come from the invisible layer of culture (values, beliefs, attitudes), not just visible elements like language.

Key Idea: Effective communication requires understanding hidden cultural meanings.





COMMUNICATION | 03

BARRIERS

COMMUNICATION BARRIERS

A number of common communication barriers are relevant to international management. The more important barriers involve language, perception, culture, and nonverbal communication



LANGUAGE BARRIERS

Language barriers occur when there is a lack of a common language, limited vocabulary, or the use of jargon, slang, and technical terms that are not understood by the receiver. These barriers make it difficult for the message to be conveyed clearly and interpreted as intended. Mispronunciation, different accents, or even poor grammar can also contribute to language barriers. In global or multicultural organizations, language differences are one of the most common causes of miscommunication.

PERCEPTUAL BARRIERS

Perceptual barriers arise when individuals interpret the same message differently based on their personal experiences, emotions, values, and assumptions. Each person views the world through their own “lens,” and this perception shapes how they understand communication. For example, a message intended as positive feedback may be perceived as criticism if the receiver is insecure or already feels undervalued. Perceptual barriers are often influenced by past experiences, stereotypes, biases, and individual attitudes, which can distort communication and lead to conflict.



THE IMPACT OF CULTURE

Cultural barriers arise when people from different cultural backgrounds communicate using distinct norms, values, beliefs, and social practices. Culture shape how people express themselves, interpret body language, use gestures, view authority, and even perceive time. What is considered respectful in one culture may be seen as rude in another. Is viewed as a sign of confidence in many Western cultures but may be considered disrespectful in some Asian cultures.

COMMUNICATION BARRIERS

A number of common communication barriers are relevant to international management. The more important barriers involve language, perception, culture, and nonverbal communication



PHYSICAL BARRIERS

- Definition: Barriers caused by the physical environment that interrupt communication.
- Examples: Noise in the workplace, poor internet connection, long distance between sender and receiver, or faulty equipment.
- Impact: Message not delivered clearly, delays, or total breakdown in communication.

PSYCHOLOGICAL BARRIERS

- Definition: Barriers related to emotions, attitudes, or mental state of individuals.
- Examples: Stress, fear of authority, low confidence, lack of motivation, or personal prejudices.
- Impact: People may misinterpret messages, withhold information, or avoid communication.



TECHNOLOGICAL BARRIERS

- Definition: Barriers that occur when communication tools or technology fail.
- Examples: Poor video conference connection, email server down, outdated software.
- Impact: Interrupts communication flow and causes inefficiency.

INTERPERSONAL BARRIERS

- Definition: Barriers that occur due to poor relationships or lack of trust between people.
- Examples: Conflict between colleagues, manager showing favoritism, lack of respect.
- Impact: People may avoid communication, share limited information, or distort messages.



A group of five people, three women and two men, are sitting on a yellow modular sofa in a modern, brightly lit room with large windows. They are all smiling and looking towards the center of the group. In the foreground, the back of a person's head and shoulders are visible, looking towards the group. A round wooden table in front of them holds some papers and a small box. The overall atmosphere is warm and collaborative.

"Cross-cultural communication is not just about words, but about building bridges between hearts and minds."

"WHEN WE LEARN TO LISTEN ACROSS CULTURES, WE OPEN THE DOOR TO UNDERSTANDING, RESPECT, AND TRUE COLLABORATION."

EXERCISES 3 :

MISCOMMUNICATION IN A MULTICULTURAL TEAM

Objective

To recognize the causes of miscommunication in multicultural settings and develop strategies to resolve communication breakdowns effectively.

Scenario :

A project team consisting of Malay, Chinese, and Indian members is facing delays. The main issues arise from indirect communication, different assumptions, and cultural values influencing interaction.

Task 1: Identify Root Causes

- Students analyze why miscommunication occurred.
- Consider factors such as:
 - Indirect communication styles.
 - Assumptions about roles and responsibilities.
 - Misinterpretation of silence or politeness.

Task 2: Suggest Strategies

- Propose culturally sensitive solutions, for example:
 - Using clear and respectful feedback.
 - **Establishing common meeting etiquette.**
 - **Encouraging clarification instead of assumptions.**

Task 3: Cultural Reflection

- Reflect on how cultural values may shape communication, such as:
 - Saving face (elak memalukan pihak lain).
 - Respect for elders or hierarchy.
 - Importance of harmony within the group.





04|EFFECTIVE OF COMMUNICATION

EFFECTIVE Communication

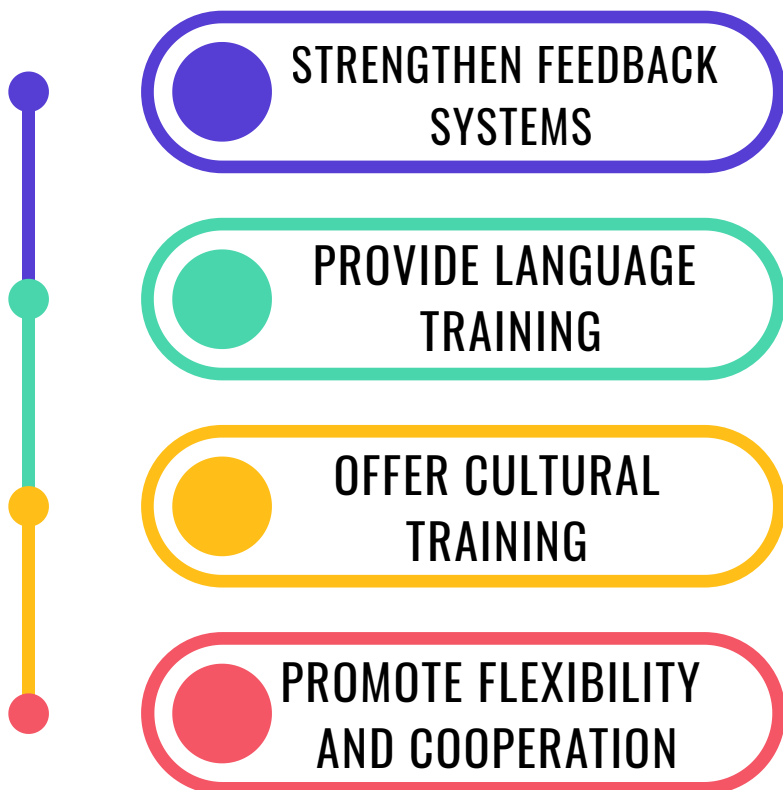
A number of steps can be taken to improve communication effectiveness in the international arena. These include strengthening feedback systems, offering language and cultural training, and promoting flexibility and cooperation.

Communication is one of the most important skills in both personal and professional life. It is the process of sharing information, ideas, and feelings between individuals or groups to create mutual understanding. However, communication is truly effective when the message is conveyed clearly, accurately understood correctly, and leads to the desired response. This is what we call effective communication.

Effective communication goes beyond just speaking or writing; it also involves active listening, using the right medium, showing empathy, and providing feedback. When communication is effective, it reduces misunderstandings, strengthens relationships, increases productivity, and creates a positive environment for collaboration.



IMPROVING COMMUNICATION EFFECTIVENESS IN THE INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT



Improving communication effectiveness in International Business (IB) means making sure that messages between people from different countries, cultures, and organizations are clear, accurate, and well-understood so that business goals can be achieved without confusion or conflict.

Improving Communication Effectiveness in the International Context



.. Scan Me!



In an international business environment, communication becomes more complex because of:

- Language barriers (different mother tongues).
- Cultural differences (values, behaviors, etiquette).
- Different communication styles (direct vs. indirect).
- Geographical distance (headquarters vs. overseas affiliates).

So, when we talk about improving communication effectiveness in IB, it refers to efforts such as:

- Building better feedback systems (two-way communication between HQ and affiliates).
- Providing language training (so managers/employees can communicate fluently).
- Offering cultural training (to reduce misunderstandings and respect differences).
- Encouraging flexibility and cooperation (adapting to different working styles).



**IN SIMPLE TERMS:
IT'S ABOUT
REMOVING
BARRIERS AND
BUILDING BRIDGES
SO THAT
INTERNATIONAL
COMPANIES CAN
WORK SMOOTHLY
ACROSS BORDERS.**



EFFECTIVE OF COMMUNICATION

01

*Strengthen Feedback
Systems*

STRENGTHEN FEEDBACK SYSTEMS

An effective feedback system is critical for smooth coordination between headquarters and their international affiliates. One of the most effective ways to enhance communication effectiveness in the international context is by strengthening such systems. Feedback plays a vital role in ensuring that affiliates can keep their home office informed about progress, while the home office can monitor performance, provide guidance, and establish appropriate goals and standards.

There are two main types of feedback systems:

PERSONAL FEEDBACK

such as face-to-face meetings, telephone conversations, and personalized emails. These channels allow for immediate clarification, faster problem-solving, and stronger relationship building.

IMPERSONAL FEEDBACK

such as reports, budgets, and strategic plans. These provide structured and detailed information that supports decision-making and long-term planning.

EXAMPLE

A German automobile company operating in Malaysia conducts monthly video conferences (personal feedback) with local managers to review production targets, while also requiring quarterly financial reports (impersonal feedback) to track overall performance. This combination of personal and impersonal feedback ensures transparency, accountability, and alignment across borders.

**GERMAN AUTOMOBILE COMPANY
MALAYSIA
MONTHLY VIDEO CONFERENCES
QUARTERLY FINANCIAL REPORTS
TRANSPARENCY &
ACCOUNTABILITY**





EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

02

*Provide Language
Training*

PROVIDE LANGUAGE TRAINING

Language barriers are among the most common obstacles to effective communication in multinational organizations. Many host-country managers often struggle to communicate clearly with their counterparts at headquarters, which can lead to misunderstandings and inefficiencies. Since English has become the international language of business, non-native speakers are strongly encouraged to develop sufficient proficiency to participate effectively in meetings, telephone conversations, and email correspondence.

However, relying solely on English is not always sufficient. If the language of the parent company is not English, learning this additional language is equally important. Doing so not only improves communication but also demonstrates respect for the parent company's culture, thereby strengthening professional relationships. For instance, a U.S. manager working in a Japanese multinational company explained that although English was the official international language, employees at the home office often communicated in Japanese among themselves.

language training is not just about learning to speak; it is about building a bridge of understanding that connects people from different backgrounds and ensures smoother, more effective international communication.



PROVIDE LANGUAGE TRAINING

To truly understand the dynamics of the organization, the manager decided to learn Japanese, realizing that “if you really want to know what’s going on, you have to talk their language.”

Example 1: ASIA

A Japanese car manufacturer with operations in Thailand provides English training for Thai employees to communicate with international suppliers, while Japanese managers take Thai language courses to understand local staff better. This reduces misunderstandings on the production floor and strengthens cooperation across cultures.

Example 2 : EUROPE

A German pharmaceutical company with affiliates in Spain organizes Spanish language classes for German managers, while Spanish employees attend English training sessions. This approach ensures smooth communication in regional meetings and allows both sides to collaborate more effectively on research and development projects.

Example 3: MIDDLE EAST

A U.S. construction firm operating in Saudi Arabia offers Arabic language training for expatriate engineers and project managers. At the same time, Saudi employees take English lessons to interact more confidently with headquarters. This dual training system improves safety communication on construction sites and builds trust between local and foreign staff.

A glass globe with a world map is the central focus, resting on a computer keyboard. The globe is transparent, showing the continents and lines of latitude and longitude. The keyboard is visible in the background, with keys slightly out of focus. The overall color scheme is a cool, muted blue.

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

03

*Offer Cultural
Training*

OFFER CULTURAL TRAINING

Language alone is not enough—cultural knowledge is equally important in international business. It is very difficult to communicate effectively with someone from another culture unless at least one party has some understanding of the other's values, etiquette, and work practices. Without such awareness, communication can easily break down, leading to inefficiency or even conflict.

Cultural training prepares employees to adapt to local environments, respect diversity, and build stronger professional relationships. This is especially important for multinational companies that operating across different parts of the world, where differences exist not only between countries but among subcultures within the same country. For example:

- Latin cultures (South America, Spain, Portugal) often emphasize personal relationships before engaging in formal business discussions. Building trust and rapport is seen as a necessary step before negotiations can progress.
- Anglo cultures (U.S., U.K., Canada, Australia) are generally more task-oriented and value direct, straightforward communication. Business discussions tend to focus quickly on objectives and measurable outcomes.



OFFER CULTURAL TRAINING

When a multinational has operations across regions such as South America, Europe, and Asia, multicultural training becomes essential. Such training helps employees understand cultural differences, avoid stereotypes, and foster mutual respect, which ultimately supports smoother collaboration across borders.

Example 1:

A U.S. tech company expanding to Japan provides cultural training into for its employees to understand Japanese business etiquette—such as bowing, exchanging business cards with both hands, and avoiding overly direct communication. This preparation reduces cultural friction, prevents unintentional offense, and helps build foster stronger, long-term partnerships with Japanese counterparts.



Example 2:

A European retail chain entering the Middle East trained its managers to understand local cultural norms, including the importance of gender roles, religious practices, and appropriate business attire. This cultural sensitivity not only helped the company avoid mistakes but also strengthened its reputation and customer acceptance in the region.



cultural training is as important as language training. It helps multinational employees bridge cultural gaps, develop respect for different practices, and enhance the effectiveness of international communication.

The background of the slide is a blurred image. On the right side, there is a semi-transparent globe showing latitude and longitude lines. On the left side, there is a blurred image of a calculator with its buttons visible.

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

04

*Promote Flexibility and
Cooperation*

PROMOTE FLEXIBILITY AND COOPERATION

International communication can only be truly effective when all parties are open, adaptable, and cooperative. While contracts and formal agreements provide an important framework for business relationships, the real success of global partnerships often depends more on the quality of interpersonal relationships. Effective international communication requires each party to be willing to compromise, demonstrate flexibility, and make adjustments to accommodate the expectations and needs of others.

Flexibility and cooperation are particularly important in cross-cultural partnerships, where differences in business practices, communication styles, and cultural values can otherwise create friction. Companies that encourage open-mindedness and mutual respect are better positioned to resolve misunderstandings, build stronger networks, and achieve long-term success.



PROMOTE FLEXIBILITY AND COOPERATION

Kenichi Ohmae, a well-known strategist, highlighted that multinational companies must recognize and address the subtle challenges of intercompany relationships. According to him, success in international cooperation does not lie solely in contracts or financial arrangements, but rather in the quality of the people at the interface between organizations. He emphasized the importance of frequent, rapport-building meetings across at least three organizational levels—top management, staff, and line management. These interactions help clarify expectations, strengthen trust, and ensure that cooperation is embedded throughout the organization.

Example 1:

A British IT firm working with Japanese partners organizes joint workshops involving senior executives, middle managers, and frontline employees. These regular sessions not only clarify expectations but also promote knowledge sharing, encourage mutual respect, and create a culture of teamwork despite cultural differences.

Example 2 :

International Computers Ltd., a mainframe computer company with extensive business in Japan, trains its employees to focus on collaboration and relationship-building in international ventures. By prioritizing communication quality over strict contractual details, the firm has been able to establish long-lasting and cooperative partnerships with its Japanese counterparts.

Theory Facts

Do You Know...??

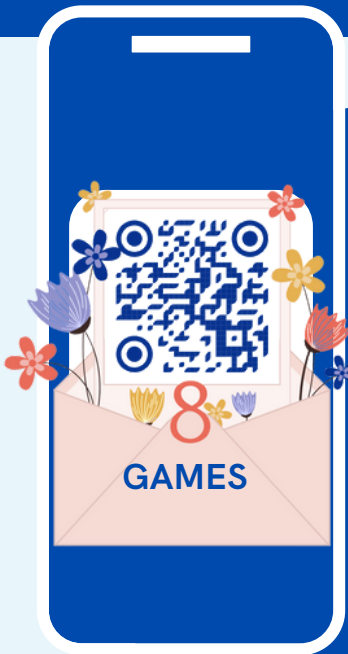
Face-Negotiation Theory (Stella Ting-Toomey, 1988)

Focuses on how people from different cultures manage conflict and communication.

Individualistic cultures: more direct, self-face concern.

Collectivistic cultures: indirect, mutual/other-face concern.

Key Idea: Communication style is shaped by how much people want to “save face.”



SCAN
ME!

Conclusion

In conclusion, communication is the lifeline of international business. It is not only about exchanging information but about creating understanding, building trust, and nurturing long-term partnerships. Organizations that strengthen their feedback systems, invest in language and cultural training, and promote flexibility and cooperation will be better positioned to thrive in a diverse and interconnected world.

Key Takeaways

- Feedback builds transparency and accountability.
- Language training bridges communication gaps.
- Cultural training reduces misunderstandings and fosters respect.
- Flexibility and cooperation ensure strong, long-term relationships.

Reflection

As future managers and leaders, ask yourself:

- How can I adapt my communication style to connect with people from different cultures?
- What steps can I take to build stronger, trust-based relationships in international business?

Remember, effective communication is not a one-time skill but a continuous journey of learning, adapting, and growing.

This book is dedicated to all who aspire to become effective global communicators—those who see diversity not as a barrier, but as an opportunity to collaborate, innovate, and achieve greater success together.

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