



MASTERING
CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

Five Communication Mistakes to Avoid When Leading High-Performance Global Teams

SCORE Los Angeles



Luiza Dreasher

Brazilian by Birth, Multicultural by Choice



My Life's Passion:

Helping Organizations Create More Inclusive Environments



This Webinar Is For You

- **Prevent misunderstandings before they happen** so that you can lead diverse teams with confidence and clarity.
- **Communicate in ways that resonate across cultures**, building stronger, more respectful relationships with employees, clients, and colleagues.

This Webinar Is For You

- **Apply practical strategies** that help you engage teams more effectively and foster open, productive dialogue—no matter the cultural context.
- **Enhance your leadership brand** as someone who brings people together and inspires collaboration across differences.

Agenda

- Mistakes you need to avoid when communicating across cultures
- Important communication styles to keep in mind
- Strategies for communicating more effectively with non-native English speakers
- Closing



Eliminate Distractions

Five Mistakes to Avoid When Communicating Across Cultures





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Mistake 1

Approaching the situation with the “*we are all humans*” mentality

Common Emotions



Sadness



Disgust



Anger



Fear



Happiness

Keep in Mind

When working with culturally diverse individuals, you need to understand that the same behavior can have a different meaning.

One behavior – different meanings



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Mistake 2

Assuming that the use of a common language (i.e., English) guarantees understanding



Jargon** Commonly Used in English

** words or expressions used by a particular profession or group **

- ***Out of left field***
- ***Ballpark figure***
- ***Curveball***



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Brazilian Slang

“The cow went to the swamp.”

(A vaca foi pro brejo.)



When Communicating Across Cultures

Consider the many ritualistic phrases we use:

- I'll see you later.
- Let's get together sometime.
- I'll talk to you again soon.
- Let's do lunch.
- Let me know if there's anything I can do.
- We'll pick this up later.
- You're going places.

Keep in Mind

- Just because you are using a common language, it does not mean individuals are understanding you.
- Remember to avoid jargon or ritualistic phrases.

Mistake 3: Failure to Go Beyond the Spoken Word

- The majority of what we communicate is done through nonverbal channels.
- Researchers agree that nonverbal communication carries **far more weight** than verbal communication.





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- Nonverbal communication can become especially problematic in situations where more than one culture is involved.
- Regardless of what you are intending to communicate, your behavior can be interpreted differently.
- The potential for misunderstandings or for you to offend is high.

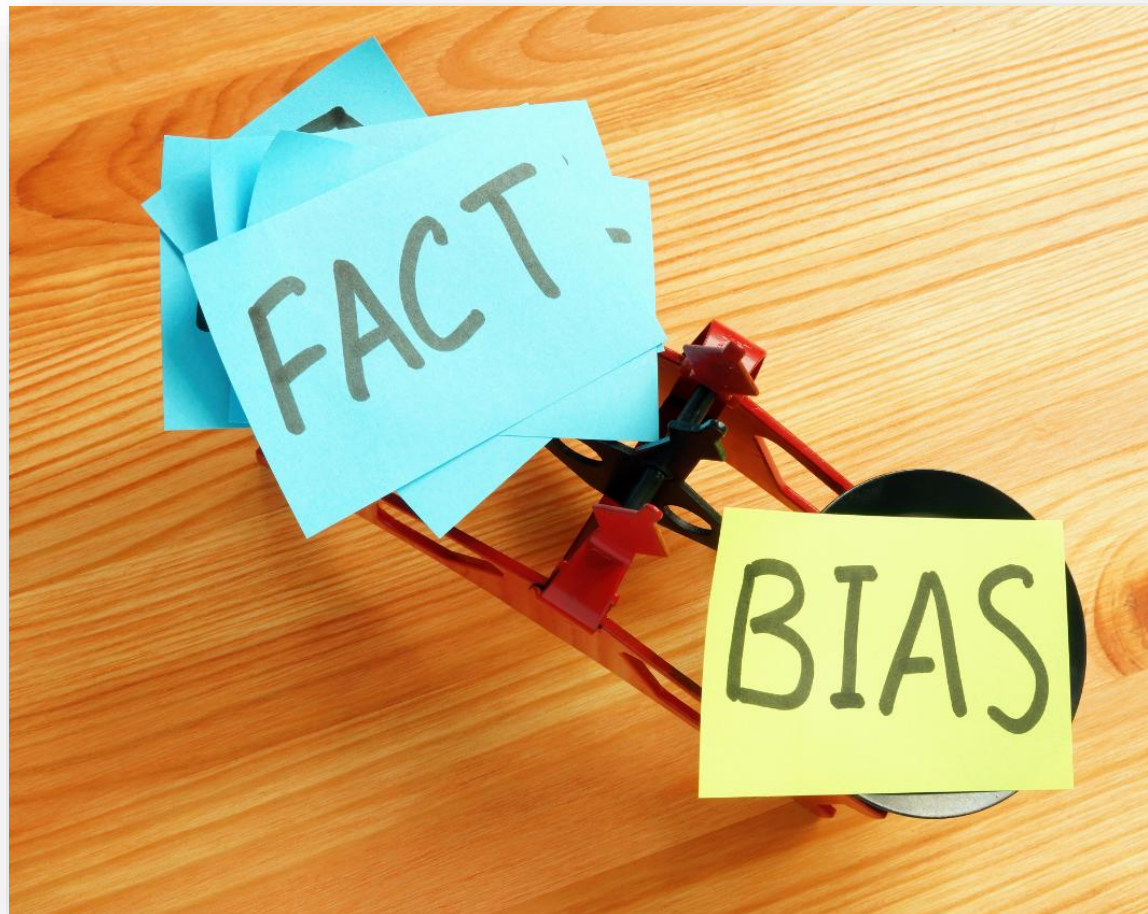


Keep in Mind

- The spoken language is just one aspect you need to consider.
- You also need to pay attention to observable nonverbal signs and symbols such as gestures, postures, facial expressions, and other body movements.
- **Never assume the same nonverbal gesture will have the same meaning across cultures.**

Mistake 4

Forgetting our biases impact how we see situations





What do you see?

Put your answer in the chat



Johannes Stotter

Luiza Dreasher, Founder and CEO, Mastering Cultural Differences



Luiza Dreasher, Founder and CEO, Mastering Cultural Differences



Keep in Mind



Our biases prevent us from seeing what is really in front of us (**reality**), which can, in turn, prevent us from being fair and inclusive.



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Mistake 5

Failure to recognize that we always see things from our own perspective



Keep in Mind

- Our tendency to evaluate “the other.”
- These evaluations are made from our own, ethnocentric perspective, which will likely prevent us from seeing things from their perspective.
- You don’t have to remove your “cultural lenses.” You just have to remember they are there.

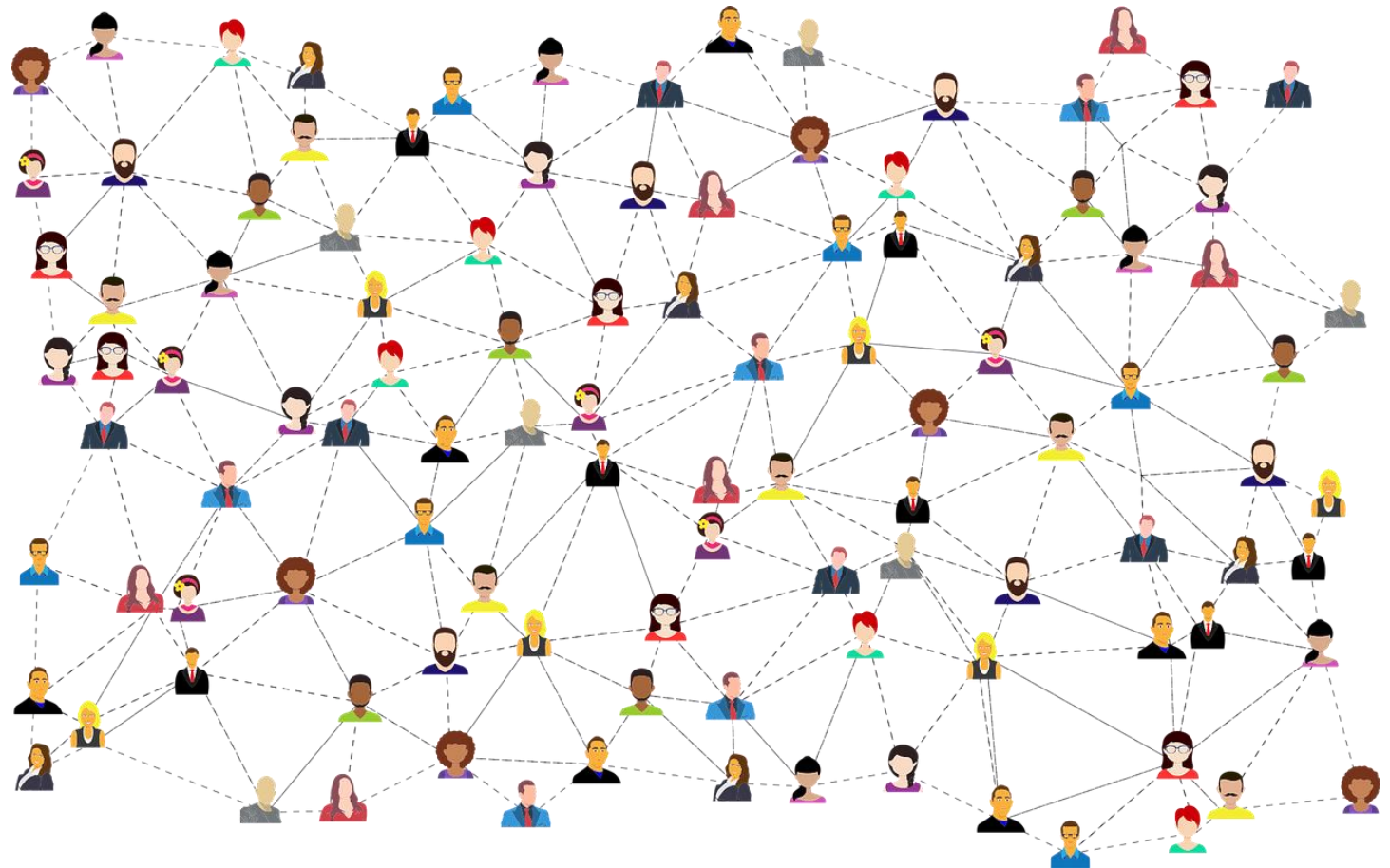
The Five Mistakes to Avoid When Working Across Cultures

1. Approaching the situation with the “we are all humans mentality.”
2. Failure to recognize that the use of a common language does not guarantee understanding.
3. Failure to go beyond the spoken word.
4. Failure to recognize our tendency to evaluate “the other.”
5. Failure to understand that we always see situations through our cultural lenses.



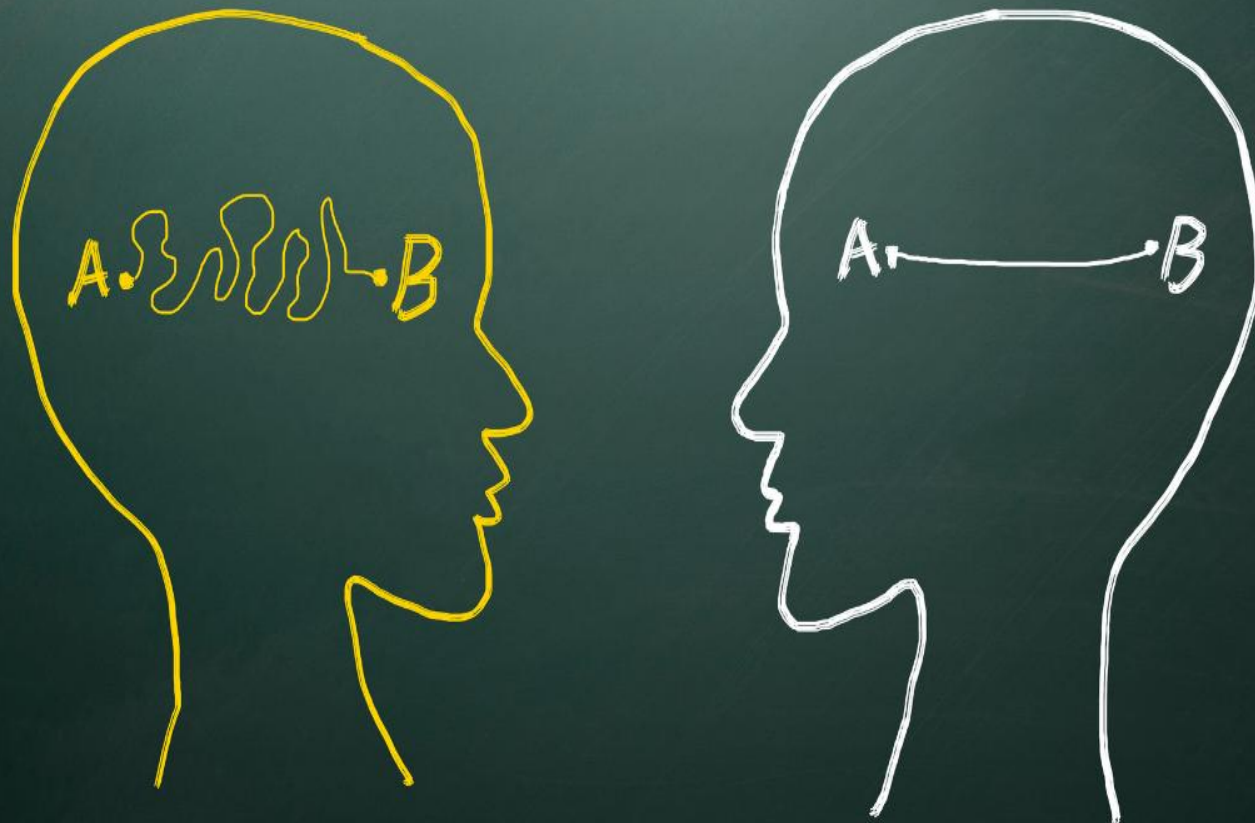
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Differences in Communication Styles





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Degree of Directness

Dialogue 1: Two Irish Americans

<i>Colin</i>	We are going to the Orange Bowl in Miami this weekend.
<i>Finn</i>	What fun! I wish I were going to the game with you. How long are you going to be there? <i>[If he wants a ride, he will ask.]</i>
<i>Colin</i>	Three days. By the way, we may need a ride to the airport. Do you think you can take us?
<i>Finn</i>	Sure. What time?
<i>Colin</i>	10:30 am this coming Saturday.
<i>Finn</i>	All right. No problem.

Dialogue 2: Two Latinx



<i>Manuel</i>	We are going to the Orange Bowl in Miami this weekend.
<i>Pedro</i>	What fun! I wish I were going to the game with you. How long are you going to be there?
<i>Manuel</i>	Three days. <i>[I hope he will offer me a ride to the airport.]</i>
<i>Pedro</i>	Do you need a ride to the airport? I will take you. <i>[He may want me to give him a ride].</i>
<i>Manuel</i>	Are you sure it's not too much trouble?
<i>Pedro</i>	It's no trouble at all

Dialogue 3: Latinx and Irish American

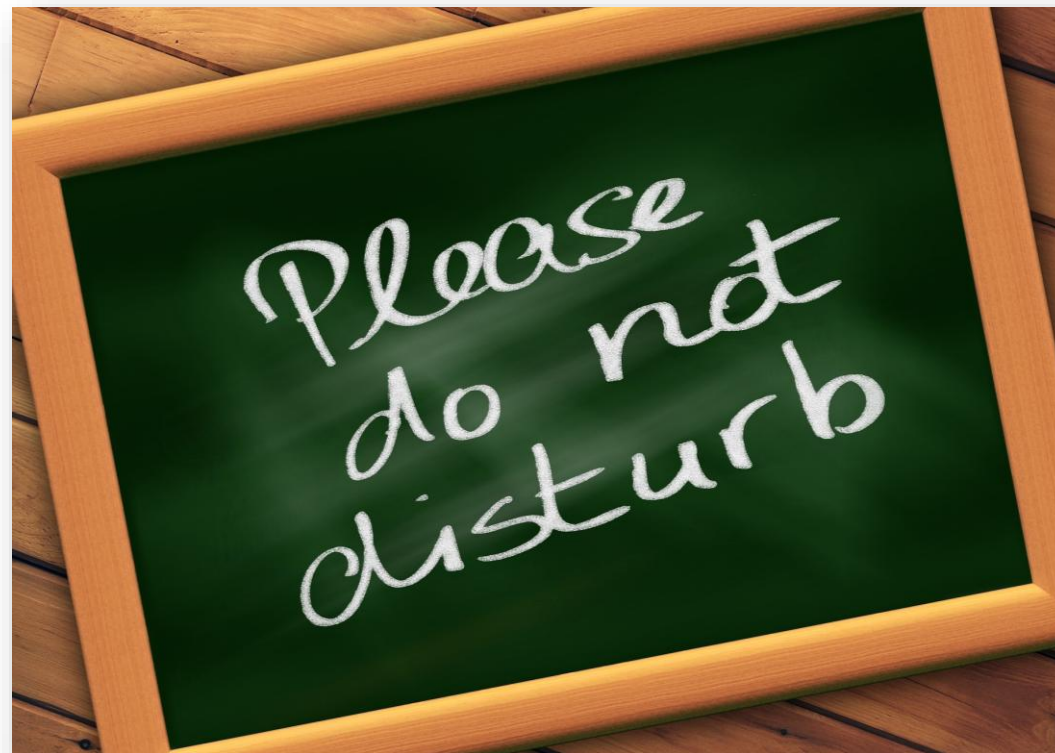


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<i>Latinx (Manuel)</i>	We are going to the Orange Bowl in Miami this weekend.
<i>Irish American (Finn)</i>	What fun! I wish I were going to the game with you. How long are you going to be there?
<i>Manuel</i>	Three days. <i>[I hope he will offer me a ride to the airport.]</i>
<i>Finn</i>	Well, have a great time! <i>[If he needs a ride, surely, he will ask me].</i>
<i>Manuel</i>	Thanks. I will see you when I get back. <i>[If he had wanted to give me a ride, he would have offered. I'd better ask someone else.]</i>

Direct Communicators

- Say what they mean and mean what they say.
- No need to read between the lines.
- Best to tell it like it is.
- People are less likely to imply and more likely to say what they are thinking.
- “Yes” means “yes.”



Indirect Communicators

- Do not always say what they mean or mean exactly what they say.
- **Listeners** must read between the lines.
- Are more likely to suggest or imply than to come out and say what they think.
- It is not always appropriate to tell it like it is (What if that upsets the other person?).
- “Yes” could mean “maybe” or even “no.”





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Why is this important?

Groups Perceive Each Other
Differently



Direct Communicators Think Indirect Communicators Are

- Vague
- Ambiguous
- Unfocused
- Evasive
- Wishy-washy
- Disconnected
- Too worried about tangential

Indirect Communicators Think Direct Communicators Are

- Brutally honest
- Impolite
- Socially unskilled
- Disrespectful
- Inconsiderate
- Too forward
- Conceited

Bottom Line...

If you are a **DIRECT COMMUNICATOR**, and you are having a conversation with an individual who is an **INDIRECT COMMUNICATOR**, **despite your intentions**, you may be coming across as impolite, disrespectful, rude, too honest, etc.

Think of the implications of that.

Exchange Between Two Japanese Women



Mrs. Kurogi:

Hello, Mrs. Yamashita...Your son Toji is entering his high school karaoke contest, isn't he? I envy you. You must be so proud of his talent. You must be looking forward to his future as a pop singer...I am really impressed by his enthusiasm – every day, he practices so hard, for hours and hours, until late at night...

Exchange Between Two Japanese Women



Mrs. Yamashita:

Oh, I'm so sorry...Toji is just a beginner in karaoke singing. We don't know his future yet...He is such a silly boy singing so late. We didn't realize you could hear all the noise next door. I will tell him to stop right away. I am so sorry for all the trouble. It won't happen again.



Low-Context Communicators

United States, Germany, Australia



- Intention or meaning is best expressed through explicit verbal messages.
- Preference for direct verbal mode (straight talk).
- The speaker is responsible for constructing a clear, persuasive message that the listener can decode easily.



High Context Communicators

Asians, Middle Easterners, Latin Americans



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- Intention or meaning can best be conveyed through the context (e.g., social roles, status, or positions) and through nonverbal channels (e.g., pauses, silence, tone of voice).
- Preference for indirect verbal mode and a roundabout way of expression.
- The **receiver** assumes the responsibility to discover the hidden meanings of the message, to “read between the lines,” and decode the nonverbal subtleties that accompany the verbal message.

Bottom Line....

- ***Never go into a conversation expecting that everything will be upfront or communicated to you directly.***
- When working with high-context individuals, remember to read “between the lines” and decode the nonverbal subtleties that are, no doubt, accompanying their verbal messages.
- You will have to coach your high-context employees, so they will feel more comfortable in expressing their intentions through explicit and direct verbal messages.



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Importance of Saving “Face”

“Face” is Less Important

- Telling the truth is more important than sparing someone’s feelings.
- Honesty is the best policy.
- It’s OK to say “no” and to disagree with people.
- Receiving/giving information efficiently is the primary goal of the communication exchange.

“Face” is More Important

- Preserving harmony in the relationship is a key concern.
- The truth, if it threatens harmony or someone’s face, should be adjusted.
- Individuals will say what the other person wants to hear.
- It’s not always proper to say “no,” disagree, or confront (that disturbs harmony).
- Preserving/strengthening the personal bond is the goal of the communication exchange.



Reluctance of Saying “No”

Consider the Following Example

“An individual from Tunisia had been in the United States for several months before he realized that if he was asked directions and didn’t know the location of the place, he should tell the truth instead of devising a response. He explained that he had been taught that it was better to engage in conversation, to give the person some response, than to disappoint the person by revealing that he didn’t know.”

Martin and Nakayama

When Working with Across Differences



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- Keep in mind the tendency for some individuals to “soften the negative.”
- Understand that responses such as “*maybe*”, “*perhaps*”, “*it’s difficult,*” or “*I will consider it,*” could actually mean “*no*” for some of them.
- **More effective strategy:** Avoid asking “yes” or “no” questions. Provide individuals with options so they can reject what they do not want without feeling they have offended you or disrupted the harmony of the relationship.

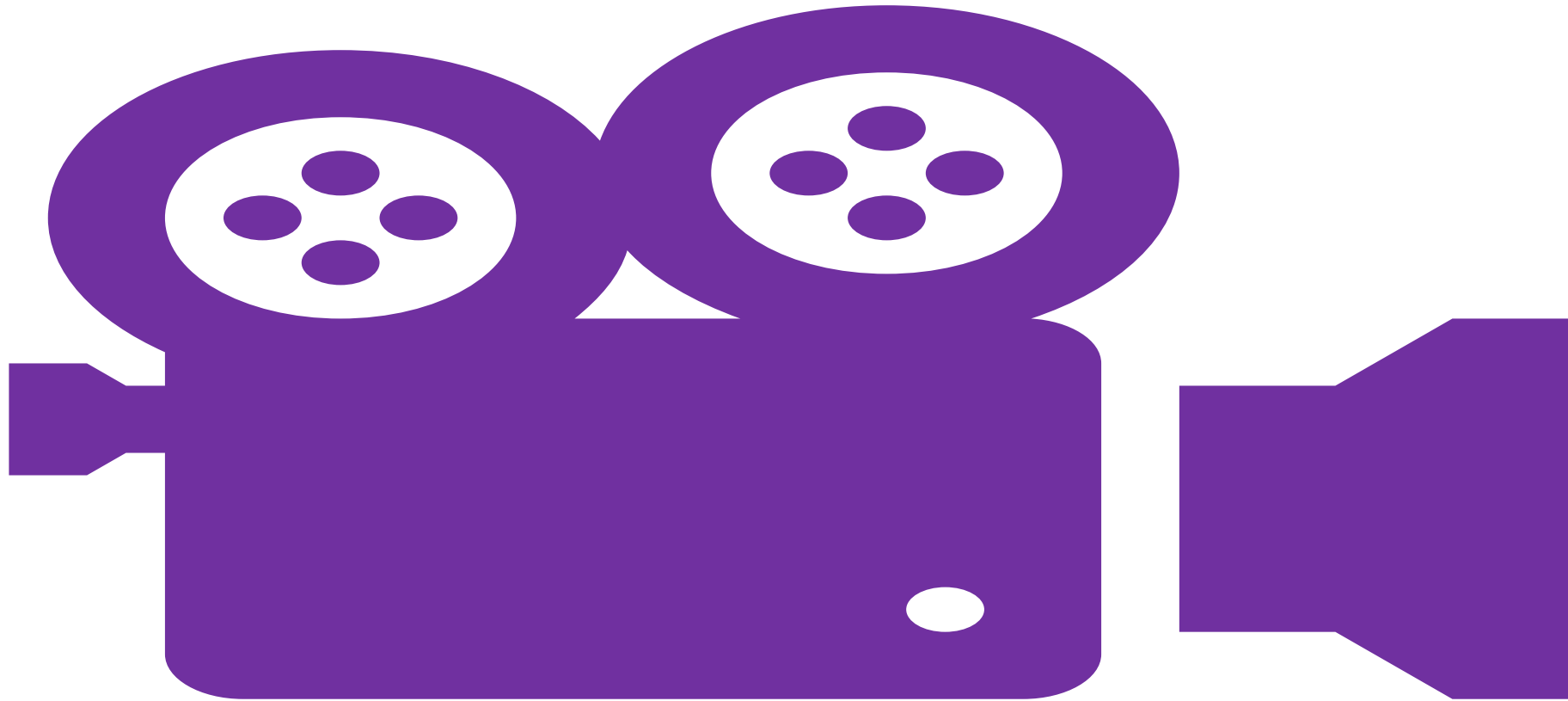
Tips for Communicating Effectively

As a Speaker and
a Listener





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Luiza Dreasher, Founder and CEO, Mastering Cultural Differences

As a **SPEAKER**, you should...

- Avoid shouting or raising your voice.
- Speak slowly and distinctly.
- Emphasize keywords.
- Allow for pauses.



As a **SPEAKER**, you should...

- Let the individuals read your lips.
- Use visual aids, handouts, and written words.
- Use familiar words.
- Check for understanding frequently



As a **LISTENER**, you should...

- Invite the speaker to speak slowly.
- Repeat what you believe was said.
- Encourage the use of written words/spelling.
- Read the speaker's lips.



As a **LISTENER**, you should...

- Give the speaker plenty of time to communicate.
- Listen to all the speaker has to say before assuming you don't understand.
- Observe the body language.
- Remember to listen and expect to understand.



Recap

- Five mistakes you need to avoid when communicating across differences.
- Four differences in communication styles
 - Degree of directness
 - Communication context
 - Importance of saving face
 - Reluctance of saying “no”
- Tips for communicating effectively (as a speaker, as a listener)

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A vertical business card for Luiza Dreasher. The top half has a blue background with a white wavy border. The bottom half is white with a blue border. It contains contact information for Luiza Dreasher, President and CEO of Mastering Cultural Differences. The contact details include a website, email, LinkedIn profile, YouTube channel, a 30-minute video, and a newsletter link. Each detail is preceded by a small blue icon representing the respective platform or service.

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- 30-min
- www.masteringculturaldifferences.com/dei-plus-newsletter





Biggest Takeaway

Q&A