



BACKPACK

CULTURAL DIVERSITY TRAINING

MODULE 2-SECTION 1

Intercultural Effective
Communication

BEFORE WE BEGIN

This is the Effective Intercultural Communication Module. In this section you will learn how your cultural background affects the way in which you communicate, and the effects it may have when communicating with those from a different cultural background.

The goal for this section is to learn to be more conscious of how you communicate and identify how using informal methods of speech, such as slang or jargon, could lead to communication issues when abroad.

We will review and assign meaning to communication practices that are common between individuals in an attempt to highlight how basic communication tendencies could lead miscommunications between individuals from different cultures.



INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

Intercultural communication can be defined as the sharing of information between people with different cultural orientations. In a wider sense, it is used to describe the situations and problems that occur when individuals from different religious, social, ethnic, and educational backgrounds interact.

Effective intercultural communication is “the ability of an individual or a group to achieve understanding through verbal or non-verbal exchange and interaction between cultures” (Richard, 1993, p.7).

To achieve the desired intercultural communication competence, people have to possess a well-defined set of skills, including valuing, observing, listening, speaking, and gesturing. These critical skills differ depending on the cultural background and personal characteristics of the people involved in communication.

THE IMPORTANCE OF INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION SKILLS

- **Academics:** In order to support travellers heading to new countries on academic travel such as study abroad, it is important to have a foundation of intercultural diversity and competency for integration, adaptation, personal growth and overall success while abroad.
- **Socially:** Our social world is becoming increasingly diverse. We come into contact with people who differ from us in terms of culture, ethnicity, religion, and nationality on a daily basis.
- **Increasing numbers of international and multicultural teams:** One effect of globalization is increasing numbers of international teams who sometimes work as virtual teams and rarely meet face-to-face. In addition, as a result of global migration our workplaces have become more diverse. Even when employees have good language skills, they may interpret written and verbal communication through the filter of their own culture which may cause misunderstandings and conflict.
- **Technology:** More and more people around the world are using technology and communicating with each other.
- **Ethics:** Cultures define what is good and bad behaviour. Cultural values tell us what is “good” and what “ought” to be good. Although an individual may want to “do the right thing” in a group, it is not always easy to know what is “right” in specific situations.

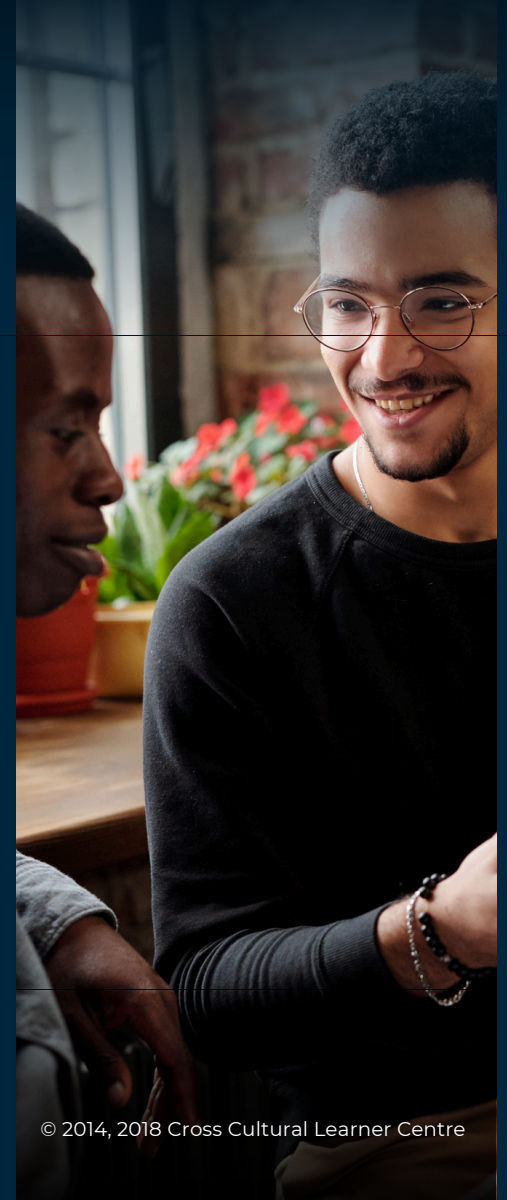
Diversity is a potentially powerful economic resource only if individuals can manage intercultural communication and relations.

SLANG

Using slang and/or jargon is one of the biggest culprits to intercultural miscommunication.

Consider the English language and how many slang terms we have for one word. Now think of how confusing this can be for a visitor to Canada trying to communicate with a native English speaker.

This section will highlight how it is important to use proper terminology when communicating with others from different countries and cultural backgrounds in order to avoid miscommunications.



SLANG OR JARGON ACTIVITY

Try to identify along the text all those words that would be considered slang or jargon.

Then try to identify potential difficulties someone unfamiliar with Canadian English would have listening to the speech.



SLANG OR JARGON ACTIVITY

Robert's speech:

Bob works at a multinational company, which is in charge of a fundraising event. He runs weekly meetings with the event team. However, some people have difficulty understanding the meetings. Here are some of Bob's statements.

"Thanks a million for coming to the meeting this morning. Without a doubt our upcoming fundraising event will be a real blast with all of you knocking yourselves out to make it totally awesome.

We have a top-notch orchestra this year. We're pricing the event tickets so they won't cost an arm and a leg. With our basement fees for good food and music, it should be a cinch to get a lot of people to show up. We have a head start on getting the decorations out of the way so they should be over-the-top. Our director Mr. Fields has given us his full support so we really have the management administration behind us.

With other responsibilities, I know you all have a lot on your minds, but we really need you all to give two hundred percent to make this year's fundraising a total blow-out. If we all work together it should be a piece of cake to make it a success."

SLANG OR JARGON ACTIVITY

Let's review

“**Thanks a million** for coming to the meeting this morning. **Without a doubt** our upcoming fundraising event will be a **real blast** with all of you **knocking yourselves out** to make it **totally awesome**.

We have a **top-notch** orchestra this year. We're pricing the event tickets so they won't cost **an arm and a leg**. With our **basement fees** for good food and music, it should be **a cinch** to get a lot of people to **show up**. We have a **head start** on getting the decorations out of the way so they should be **over-the-top**. Our director Mr. Fields has given us his full support so we really have the management administration behind us.

With other responsibilities, I know you all have a lot on your minds, but we really need you all to give **two hundred percent** to make this year's fundraising a total **blow-out**. If we all work together it should be a **piece of cake** to make it a success.”

SLANG OR JARGON

As you can see, there are a lot of ways in which we use words that are common in our everyday that can be confusing to others.

You will be subject to the same level of slang and jargon from others when visiting different countries. The miscommunication through usage of slang or jargon can happen between both parties but through your training we will work to mitigate the use in your vocabulary when abroad.



ASSIGNING MEANING

As you have been learning, attitudes, actions and behaviors all contribute to intercultural communication, whether in a positive or negative manner.

We have discussed attitudes and language, but the next activity will help show you there are actions we and others take that have different meanings in different cultures.

ASSIGNING MEANING ACTIVITY

What do these things mean to you? What may these things mean to others?

- Not making eye contact
- Saying No
- Saying Yes
- Manners or actions during or after a meal
- Shaking hands
- Long pause / silence
- Spending time on small talk
- Arriving late to school / class / meetings

TAKE AWAY

Although you act as an individual, the same as everybody around you, you have been influenced by your personal history and cultural context. The meanings you assign to words or gestures may differ from the meanings assigned by others.

Communication does not happen in a vacuum; you communicate with people with different social backgrounds. In this increasingly diverse world, it is essential to develop sensitivity and flexibility to change.

