

Language Partners and BBi Communication  
Present:

# The crucial role of effective communication

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Written by Paul van Zanten

These overlooked skills  
enable lasting international  
business success

 Language Partners  
PART OF

 BBi COMMUNICATION



COMMUNICATION

Language Partners and BBi Communication merged at the end of 2022. You can click on the following links if you'd like to learn more [about the merger](#) or [about our two founders](#).

With offices in Finland, the Netherlands, Spain and Sweden, as well as with our global network of consultants, we service clients around the world in two particular areas: language & communication skills, and intercultural competence.

Combined, our organisation has 91 years experience working to enable people to communicate, collaborate, and innovate together. Enabling individuals, teams and organisations to be successful in an international environment is something we get joy from. Doing so with continued quality and innovation allows us to maintain relevant services that meet the fluctuating demands of the market.

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## Introduction

As our already fast-paced world becomes increasingly globalised, it's easy to feel like things just pass us by. This whitepaper is inspired by that feeling, as it will serve to update you on the new skills that are imperative for effective business practices in the multicultural environment, that are now commonplace. We'll start by discussing the trends impacting the business world. Themes such as AI, economic shifts, employee & client retention and well-being will highlight this first section.

In part because of these changes, there has also been a shift in the ways that organisations manage, support and uplift their employees. Another part of it is the increase in diversity that the western business world is seeing. [Efforts aimed at recruiting and retaining a diverse talent pool are creating a need for a new approach.](#) Often falling under the umbrella acronym of DEI, these efforts work to enable diversity, equity and an inclusive culture. We'll connect this to the changes we're seeing, and have already seen.

After setting the stage of today's business environment, we'll explore the importance of language, communication skills, and intercultural competence for in-person and virtual professional relationships. These skills are now extremely important organisations of any size, as well as the individuals and teams within. We'll offer some practical tips and tricks to help start developing the skills that you won't want to be without.

We will then look at the challenges faced within multicultural and multilingual environments, how we can bridge cultural gaps and limit or remove linguistic fluency gaps. Once that is clear, we'll start talking about what individuals, teams, and organisations can do to earn increased innovation, collaboration, retention, profit, and trust.

The *what*, of course, is not simple. We'll expand on the efforts that must take place for the development of Intercultural competence and language & communication skills. Areas such as strong leadership, organisational structure and an inclusive culture are too often in the background. As is the necessary establishment and maintenance of psychological safety, which comes in multiple forms.

## Setting the stage - What's changed, what's changing, and why

It's no secret that the world is more interconnected than ever. Our globalised world allows us to learn about and experience new cultures and perspectives like never before. However, that's far from the only change impacting labour markets. The changes which we're about to go over are creating wide-reaching impacts. We're now seeing a need to reshape required skill sets. Arguments for and against different types of immigration are shifting, and a need to either up- or re-skill employees is being felt across industries.

Understanding the cause behind these shifts allows for a big-picture mentality to guide smaller-scale decision making. It further allows time to change with the world, rather than always being in a reactionary position. Maintaining such awareness only offers a stronger foundation for businesses everywhere.

## Impact on the European labour-market

[Automation and geographic economical shifts are creating change for economies of all sizes.](#) Industries such as manufacturing, logistics, office support and agriculture are being disrupted, and the impact is only getting stronger.

Europeans are spreading out. [Paris and London](#) have become job hubs of Europe. Madrid, Amsterdam, Copenhagen and Munich are not far behind. This can be a great thing for the places in which people emigrate to, but also quite harmful for the areas which struggle to retain or attract talent. By 2030, the EU is expecting to lose 4% of its workforce. These losses are already being felt in [Germany, the largest economy in the EU and the 4th largest in the world](#). In 2022, they reported an [all-time high](#) number of labour shortages. Unfortunately, this trend [will continue](#) into the next decade.

Fortunately, governments are starting to act. In November 2023, the German government enacted the [Skilled Immigration Act](#) as a part of their efforts to address these issues. This will lower the thresholds for immigrants coming to Germany from EU member countries. The European Commission is also [proposing](#) a way to expand the labour-pool. Secondary education is being made more [accessible](#) and relevant for the business world. Additionally, some economies [are shifting](#) to industries that will be less impacted by A.I. and automation.

While these labour shortages will come to an end, the world is changing in the interval. Diversity will increase and the needs of employees have evolved. These realities are a big part of why upskilling entire organisations is a necessity. New skills must be learned, and new perspectives explored. If you would like to dive deeper into these changes and the impact they are having, we have another whitepaper which offers much more on the changes impacting Europe. [Click here to read more.](#)

## Inclusive cultures and trends in HR

The practice of DEI is an approach to people management which aims to meet the needs of each individual and team, while aligning their development with the goals of the organisation. This requires agility and adaptability, as the needs of each individual are unique. Diversity is everywhere; nationality, age, religion, gender, and profession offer a glimpse. Because of this DEI practices have become commonplace in organisations of every type and size. When a diverse group is brought together, there will be a diverse mix of needs. When the needs of an employee are not met, they do not feel welcome, or they [lack trust](#) in management, they'll go elsewhere. And during the war for talent, it won't take them long to find another job.

Organisations that do not address this risk a high level of employee turn-over. A quick case study, [found here](#), might make this more clear. From the outside, it might seem that an employee just needs flexible hours, some variation of hybrid/remote working, or the ability to speak the local language. What is really needed is an inclusive organisational culture which is built on the pillars of inclusion. Let's establish some definitions before we continue:

Culture is the learned and shared patterns of behaviours, symbols, rituals, beliefs and values, held by a group, or groups, of interacting people.

An Inclusive culture is the patterns of behaviour, symbols, rituals, beliefs and values which allows for equal inclusion of everyone. It is created when feelings of fairness and respect are built upon by feeling valued and a sense of belonging, all of which helps earn trust. This in turn also creates, for everyone, the opportunity to be themselves and to contribute to the success of the company as their authentic selves. Furthermore, such a culture is one in which employee engagement is earned. Participation and collaboration are common, and stakeholders are given opportunities for growth and development.

An inclusive culture must be unique to each team and organisation. It can also bring a wealth of measurable benefits, which we'll cover further on.

## The pillars of inclusion and an inclusive culture



The Pillars of Inclusion by Language Partners/BBi Communication

As seen in the graphic above, there are four pillars making up the foundation of an inclusive culture. Each pillar is something that must be experienced by each and every member of the organisation. If one person does not, there is no inclusive culture. The first pillar, fairness, means everyone feels that they are treated fairly. The second is that each member must also feel respected, and display respect to each other. The third pillar recognises that everyone must feel they are valued, and the fourth is that everyone feels they belong.

Once these pillars are established, psychological safety can be earned. This means that someone is safe and able to be their authentic selves within their organisation. They are safe and able to learn, fail, contribute and challenge. When someone knows they are safe to do so, they will feel safe to be their authentic self. Thus, an inclusive culture can be earned. Jim Turly, the former CEO of Ernst & Young, puts it another way: "Diversity itself is about the mix of people you have. Creating an inclusive culture is about making that mix work." Each of these needs are reasons for why an inclusive culture has to be unique to the organisation developing it. Everyone is different, and that should be celebrated!

## The benefits of an inclusive culture

One huge advantage earned through an inclusive culture is the limiting or removal of the common information effect, also known as the [shared information bias](#). This bias impacts diverse teams who are not enabled by an inclusive culture. When you have a homogenous team (which is unlikely in today's world) there is a common store of knowledge which is fully shared. For example, a team of Dutch people would all have had a similar upbringing in terms of academic and cultural education. A diverse team, on the other hand, comes from a variety of backgrounds and has less common information available to them. But, when an inclusive culture is established, the sets of knowledge unique to each member of the team can be fully shared. When conversations enable us to get to know each other, an [increased level of understanding](#) is earned. People start to learn how their colleagues' perspectives might be different, and how much that offers!

Of course there are many other measurable benefits to be gained from an inclusive culture. Productivity, collaboration, trust, and innovation increase. As does both customer and employee satisfaction and retention. These benefits also have additional positive cascading impacts. If you're interested in learning more about the benefits of an inclusive culture, take a look at [this article](#). Whether you're human-centric or financial bottom line focused, the benefits of an inclusive culture are good for everyone.

## HR Trends

Some of the trends we're seeing are not only in response to globalisation, we're still feeling the effects of COVID-19. It has been difficult to understand which approaches should revert back to pre-COVID and what is here to stay. While some of these trends can be attributed to DEI efforts, they're more related to general well-being than inclusion.

Employees the world-over are developing a work-life balance that suits them. This of course looks different to everyone, but there are some general themes. The first is often talked about; remote or hybrid working. Another theme is also flexible scheduling, tailored to the individual. Our whitepaper 'The Future of International Business' goes further in-depth on this subject as well as the other changes impacting the business world. [To read more, click here.](#)

The line between employees' personal and private lives has been reduced. The level of work-related stress and anxiety has [gone up](#) and world-wide inflation is rising. Even when we disregard the impact of politics, it's easy to see why people are feeling insecure, and why there has been an increase in the number of people burning out. In some areas, burn-outs are higher now than they were during the [pandemic](#).

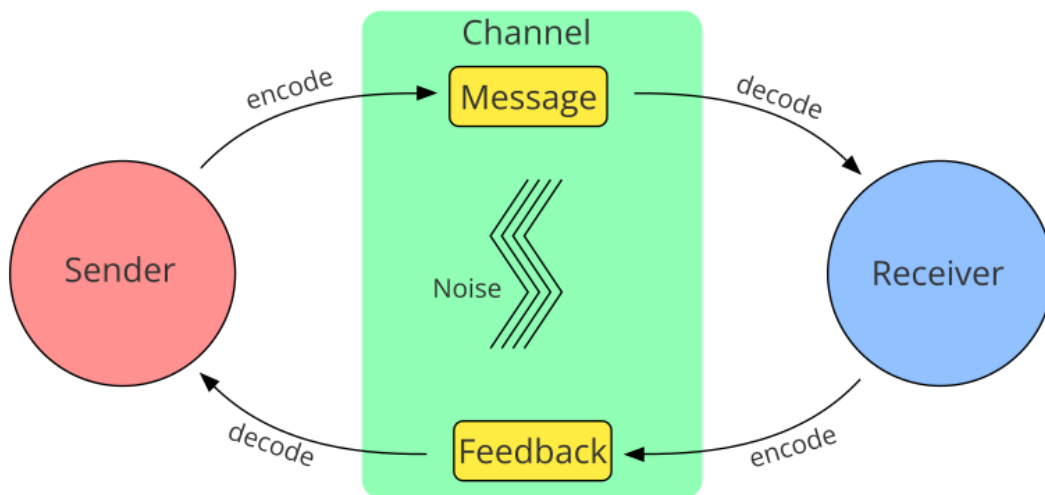
When you boil down these new approaches, the ability to collaborate and communicate have become absolute necessities. Organisations which fail to keep up lose their ability to retain a competitive edge, as well as their talent *and* their clients. The development of what was formerly known as 'soft skills' has become imperative to sustained success in our

increasingly transformed world. Businesses of all kinds must understand and adapt to these changes, or risk getting left behind.

## Essential skills for the future

As organisations adapt to the newly opened treasure chest of diversity and interconnectivity, the skills needed for success evolve. Intercultural competence, combined with language and communication skills are capabilities that have now become primary tools for professionals from every industry.

As both of these skills are in support of interpersonal interactions it's important to explore the structure behind the process of communication. In the infographic below you'll see that process clearly laid out.

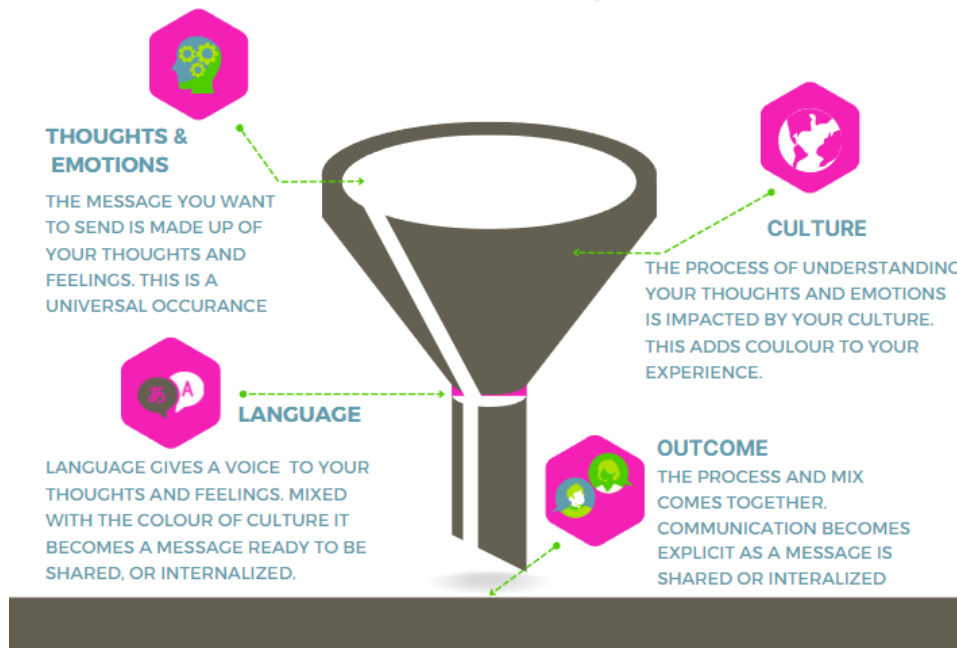


Common components of models of communication © 2022 by Phlsph7 is licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 4.0

First you have a sender who encodes, or translates, their thoughts and feelings into a message. That message is then sent using a channel. This can include methods such as body- or sign-language, a video, letter, or a verbally given message. The receiver then decodes the message before processing it. Our messages and communication are inevitably influenced by culture, and then language as it takes shape. The graphic below offers a glimpse into how.



## The Funnel of Perception



The Funnel of Perception by Language Partners/BBi Communication

When someone receives a message, or has a spontaneous thought or emotion, their cultural influences their perception of the message. In other words, our culture gives colour to our thoughts and feelings. [Language then takes](#) our thoughts and feelings and gives it a voice. The message is then ready to be sent. This holds true for communication with others as well as for our own internal monologues. If we can begin to recognise how our cultural background and language influences our perception and communication we can start to enable ourselves to be more effective communicators in multicultural settings.

## Intercultural Competence

It's almost impossible to work in the western world and not interact with a different culture. Organisations are reaching new markets, remote working creates teams with people all over the globe, and suppliers might be based anywhere. The ability to effectively communicate and collaborate across cultures has never been more important. This ability falls under what we call intercultural competence:

*Intercultural competence* is a range of skills, behaviours and attitudes which allow people to function effectively in intercultural settings. Further it is the ability to develop and engage in appropriate communication, behaviour and attitudes with varying cultural backgrounds and language levels. A simplistic way to put this is self awareness combined with knowledge and an open mind.

So, how can you start developing intercultural competence? Start with yourself. The first step has to begin with awareness. Becoming aware of your own cultural lens, or the ways in which your behaviour and perception has been programmed through

culture, is a must. Only then can you truly begin to understand and empathise with others. Just by reading this far, you've already begun.

Once awareness for one's own cultural lenses is generated, conversation ought to follow. Sharing your thoughts & feelings with others is helpful in not only continuing your own self reflection, but also in beginning to; recognise, understand, and respect other cultural perspectives. In training, comparative models are often useful for this. It also serves to continue developing awareness. Before we introduce you to an example, it is important to make one point:

Often when culture is mentioned, the focus is on national culture. This is a relevant distinction, and one that is often used to develop intercultural competence. However, it is important to recognise that your national culture is not the only cultural group you belong to. Like diversity, culture comes in many shapes and sizes. Your family and friend groups each have their own culture, as does your work or your favourite sport team.

Now, back to comparative models. You might know the name Geert Hofstede. He was a social psychologist, well known for his foundational research on cross-cultural groups with a [framework for measuring dimensions of culture](#). One cultural dimension placed cultures on a scale based on how individualistic or collectivistic they are. Cultures typically seen as individualistic will generally prioritise individuals taking care of themselves and their immediate family. On the other hand, collectivistic cultures will often prioritise being a part of a larger group, and act with that group in mind.

Understanding where your culture, as well as you as an individual, fall on this scale allows the self-reflection to continue. When discussing differences or similarities with the guidelines of cultural dimensions, recognition and understanding can lead to respect and trust. It is also important to recognise that in using comparative models, we are using generalisations. These models do not take into account other cultural influences, or personal character traits. When a comparison is made with language such as "Many Germans are punctual", they are making a generalisation. However if the statement was "All Germans are punctual", this should be avoided as it is stereotyping an entire culture.

Since Hofstede, many models have built upon his work. From Erin Meyer to Richard Lewis, there are a host of models which help us understand ourselves and each other. If we can identify and ultimately bridge gaps between cultures, access to the more advanced approach of building shared frameworks is often enabled. Such frameworks aim to not only make space for cultural diversity, but leverage it to everyone's benefit.

You might be wondering when intercultural competence is impactful. Let's explore that a bit. As organisations are pushed to geographically expand their recruitment efforts, more people are moving around the world, sometimes with a partner or family. These people, family included, would all benefit from intercultural competence as they get used to a new country and for the talent, a new organisational culture as well. Organisations who help both their newly recruited talent *and* their dependents have a much [higher retention rate](#).

We're also able to help when a team is multicultural. There, intercultural competence is used to foster understanding, patience, and ideally curiosity for colleagues. Doing so not only increases collaboration, but satisfaction, productivity and attendance as well. A lot of intercultural competence training is aimed at upskilling leadership. Without strong, inclusive, and mindful intercultural leadership, efforts at establishing diversity will struggle. All of these efforts have a fantastic byproduct, they work towards developing a future-proof organisation with an inclusive culture.

## Communication skills, language, and the influence of culture

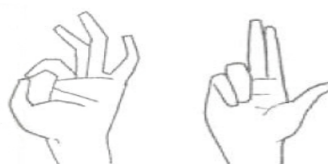
We all use some sort of language to communicate, be it spoken, written, body- or sign-language. We've been arguing that intercultural competence, as well as language and communication skills are the skills of the future. We've also demonstrated how our communication and thought patterns are influenced by our culture and language. We must recognise that people's perceptions of others are based on these skills. Therefore, these skills are ultimately all about managing those perceptions. That is exactly why we need to be aware of not only culture influence on behaviour and perception, but also the ways in which culture influences our use of communication and language.

"We don't see things as they are, we see them as we are". This famous quote, often attributed to Anaïs Nin, does a good job of representing how culture influences our communication style and language. To explore that, we'll look at words that don't translate well into other languages:

Lagom (LAH-gohm) – Lagom represents the Swedish concept of moderation and balance. It means "just the right amount" or "not too much, not too little." It emphasises the idea of contentment and avoiding excess. An example might be: when serving a drink to a guest, the host might ask, "Would you like more?" and they might respond with "No thanks, I had lagom".

We could write a whole article on other examples and not even scratch the surface. So, we did! [You can read more examples of culturally reflective words here](#). These words reflect their culture, rather than a more universal feeling or experience. And this is exactly why they're difficult to translate. Beyond the novelty, learning culturally specific words and phrases offers a deeper connection to the culture they come from, especially for non-natives living within. Learning words like this is one of the joys to be found in language learning.

Idioms and slang are other examples of culturally influenced language. Some of these might be widely recognised, even around the world, but that is never a guarantee. Being aware of these differences helps us limit miscommunications. Of course, miscommunication is not limited to spoken or written language. Body language can be misinterpreted as well. Take a look at the image below.



What does each gesture mean to you? For many, the first gesture might mean 'ok'. For others it can be an insult. The second gesture is often used to show 'three' in Europe, while it might be used to get the attention of a waiter in the United States. When amongst a new culture, it's easy to miss these differences. Knowing where differences might be found is helpful in developing patience and understanding.

The cultural influence on language and communication can be felt in more ways than culture-specific phrases. The eight ancient Greek words for love offer a starting point. The word 'agápē' was seen as the highest form of love. At one point it was specifically God's love for people and their love for god. 'Érōs' was used to signify love and desire, usually of a romantic nature. There is also 'Philía', which is affectionate love, usually involving friendship. One could argue that by having words which define different instances of love, there are more ways to experience it.

Vocabulary has a huge impact on our perception, as does the order in which we structure a sentence. It's also important to consider how the use of formal and informal language, gendered language, and intonation influence our perception. If you find this as illuminating as we do, you can [read more about how language influences our perception here](#).

Another cultural influence that often goes unrecognised is the use of silence. Maybe you need a moment to process something. Maybe you're speaking a non-native language and don't know what to say, or are concerned it might be wrong. Or you might feel that another person in the conversation has the right to speak first. In some Asian cultures, silence during a meeting demonstrates active listening or respect for the speaker. In other contexts, the use of pausing can be used to indicate different meanings. A pause might offer a moment to think, or it can be used to make a point. And in some cultures, a pause might be seen as an awkward thing to be avoided.

Understanding the complex relationship between culture, language, and communication skills is essential. These themes not only shape our interactions but also play a central role in how others perceive us.

## The nuanced experiences of diverse teams

As our teams and organisations enable the development of intercultural competence, language and communication skills, people will start to gain awareness of the nuanced experiences that come from diversity. All too often these experiences are underestimated.

Whether its cultural differences, a strong accent, or differing language skills, people often struggle to adapt to the unfamiliar. In these contexts, establishing equitable opportunities to contribute and be understood is a necessity. What is also important is understanding the nuanced feelings that come forth when cultures, and languages, mix. Barriers or limitations often arise within these environments. When left alone, they can create miscommunications as well as tension or frustrations.

When natives of a culture interact, unexpected miscommunication, tension and frustrations can also arise. The United States is a large country filled with many sub-cultures. People from California will have different cultural lenses than those from New York. The same applies to language. When someone from the United Kingdom interacts with a Canadian, there is a shared language, but idioms, slang, paralinguistics, and body-language might be different. These kinds of situations call for mindfulness as natives will often assume that other natives will be able to follow their meaning.

When cultural gaps are bridged, and linguistic fluency gaps addressed, well-being can improve, decision making can become more fluid, and collaboration increases. Additionally this all contributes to the removal of the common information effect and the establishment of an inclusive culture. For further lessons on enabling inclusion, [read our article enabling equity and inclusion](#)

## Tips and tools for sustained success

You've just read a lot. So to end with impact we'll leave you with an accessible explanation of tips and tools to help equip individuals, teams and organisations to face the challenges and changes we've discussed.

**Enabling a shared language, or lingua franca**, is often the first step towards enabling understanding and collaboration. While English is often used, the shared language can be whatever is best suited to the organisation. Having a shared language doesn't happen overnight. That knowledge is one of the pieces we need to be aware of. Other pieces offer a glimpse into the wealth of experiences that shape interpersonal interactions. More about working in multilingual environments, including the use of a lingua franca, can be found in our whitepaper: ["The Fluency Gap: combining language, intercultural communication and DEI to create business advantage"](#)

**Structures and rituals** should be used to build off of the conversations in which we learn about our differences. Maybe the meeting agenda needs to be sent *before* the meeting or maybe there needs to be a moment in meetings when everyone is allowed to speak. These kinds of conversations can uncover previously hidden differences. Understanding the unique needs of a team, and acting upon them serves to build inclusion and trust. More on the development of sustainable structures for organisational change can be [found here](#).

**Developing a shared goal** is a great target for HR and management with several positive by-products. Whether the focus is on team development or establishing equitable access to communication, a shared goal aligned with organisational strategy is the aim. When teams work towards a shared goal, they will increase their capacity and willingness to further understand colleagues, collaborate more, and [feel more comfortable with unfamiliar differences](#). This also serves as a way to develop patience and further conversations.

**Don't force it.** Forcing training on a team or organisation [backfires more often than not](#). Instead, work to earn the buy-in of your team or organisation. Sometimes that means starting with leadership, other times it might mean spreading general awareness for the issue. When someone buys-in, they will be more engaged, patient, and curious.

It is not only on the non-natives of a culture or language to make adjustments. Every member of a team, or organisation, has a role to play. [Leadership especially](#). A **shared responsibility** must be established, and buy-in must be earned.

Another role that is important for HR and leadership to assume is that of [offering assurance](#). Assurance is very helpful when aiming to bridge cultural gaps or mitigate linguistic fluency gaps. With all the possible ways anxiety can seep into the mind, it helps to remove one potential source of worry. Showing such team members that they are valued for their skills and personality, regardless of their language proficiency or cultural understanding will help. Be sure to build upon your assurances with opportunities to develop intercultural competence and/or language and communication skills.

When developing a shared goal, and establishing a shared responsibility, contributions will differ. Non-native speakers should work within the structures and rituals we discussed earlier to make sure they **speak up**. Is someone speaking too quick or using difficult vocabulary? Are they uncomfortable speaking in particular settings? Feedback is vital for establishing the equitable access we're working towards.

Natives of a language or culture often enjoy natural advantages when they're a part of a multicultural group. They don't have to learn the shared language or typical business norms. That doesn't mean that they don't have an important part to play. Unfortunately, this advantage often makes it more **difficult to accept a shared responsibility**. Because of that, more efforts might be considered for earning their awareness and buy-in.

Additionally, **native speakers, often unintentionally, [dominate conversations with non-natives](#)**. Their quick processing and speaking, use of idioms or slang and pop-culture references adds to this. It is also necessary to recognise that people have [varying comfort levels](#) with speaking. This can change based on the context. Native speakers have a responsibility to be mindful of others' needs. They can also confirm that their communication has been understood.

Besides these tips, if there is anything you should remember, it is this: when each and every member of a diverse team is safe to be their authentic selves, there are strong measurable benefits that can be enjoyed by each individual, team and organisation.

Finding a way to take these tips and tools into your organisation is a great start. We're here to help with the rest. With over 30 years spent developing the [intercultural competence](#) of 1,000's of clients and over 50 years enhancing [language and communication skills](#), we understand the challenges international teams and organisations face. [Contact us today](#) to see how we enable our clients to reap a wealth of financial, and human benefits.

## Definitions

**AI** - Short for Artificial Intelligence, AI is the ability for computer systems to perform tasks that typically need human interaction.

**Automation** - The use of technology to reduce human interaction and intervention in various processes.

**Bias** - The inborn or learned (conscious or subconscious) favouring or prejudice for one group over another. Typically seen as unfair and

**Bilingual** - A label for someone who speaks two languages fluently. Examples and definitions of the seven types of bilingualism and more can be found [here](#).

**Cross-cultural communication** - An area of study which looks at the communication tendencies of people from various cultural backgrounds. Another way to put it is the exercise of recognising the communication tendencies of various cultural groups in order to increase effective communication and collaboration.

**Culture** - The learned and shared patterns of behaviours, symbols, rituals, beliefs and values, held by a group, or groups, of interacting people.

**DEI** - Abbreviation for diversity, equity and inclusive culture(s).

**Diversity** - The condition of having or being composed of differing elements. In this sense diversity includes but is not limited to, quantifiers such as gender, ethnicity, age, religion, sexual orientation, professional orientation, education level, neurodivergence, nationality and people with health conditions or ailments

**Equity** - The quality and promotion of fairness, impartiality and justice.

**Fluency** - The ability to flow or be at ease with something. Language fluency is a common example, yet one can also be fluent in areas such reading, writing, speaking and listening fluency. Additionally, one can also be fluent in the usage of tools or conducting a process, for example.

**Globalisation** - The concise definition offered by the United Nations defines globalisation as the global integration of economies and societies. It can be further built upon with how innovation, trade and technology has helped shape a world that is more connected and dependent on others than ever before.

**Inclusion** - The act, or practice, of including everyone.

**Inclusive culture** - The patterns of behaviour, symbols, rituals, beliefs and values which allows for equal inclusion of everyone. It is created when feelings of fairness and respect are built upon by feeling valued and a sense of belonging, all of which helps earn trust. This in turn also creates, for everyone, the opportunity to be themselves and to contribute to the

success of the company as their authentic selves. Furthermore, such a culture is one in which employee engagement is earned. Participation and collaboration are common, and stakeholders are given opportunities for growth and development.

**Intercultural communication** – Interactions between two or more people from different cultures.

**Intercultural competence** – Intercultural Competence is made up of a range of skills, behaviours and attitudes which allow people to function effectively in intercultural settings. Further it is the ability to develop and engage in appropriate communication, behaviour and attitudes with varying cultural backgrounds and language levels.

**Labour market** - In relation to supply and demand, the labour market represents the availability of employment as well as the availability of labour.

**Labour pool** - A group of people who are both contextually relevant and available to work.

**Lingua franca** - A selected language which is used as a common language when there is a mix of speakers with different native languages.

**Linguistics** - [The study of] how language is structured and used.

**Linguistic fluency gap** - When communication is limited and/or negatively impacted due to differing language skills. This occurs when parties of differing language proficiency communicate. For example, if a non-native Dutch speaker joins a company full of native speakers, there will be gaps in what they are able to understand, as well as in their ability to fully express themselves.

**Multicultural** – This refers to the communication between members of a society or group that live or work alongside each other. It is the coexistence with each other that denotes a multicultural group.

**Multilingual** - This word is used to describe a person who speaks multiple languages. It can also be used to describe a culture or atmosphere in which multiple languages coexist.

**Native language** - A native language is most often used to note the language someone learned as a child. It can also be used to indicate the language spoken by the majority in a particular region. Additionally native language can also be used to demonstrate that the person speaking it is from the region that the language is spoken in. Native language is often used interchangeably with 'mother tongue' which has been used to highlight the connection the speaker has to their mother, and how the language was acquired from her.

**Paralinguistics** - The non-lexical, or non-word-based, aspects of communication. Includes components such as intonation, speed, pitch, hesitation, gestures and facial expressions.

**Social learning** - An educational process that prioritises an active and social approach to learning. Using a combination of hands-on activities, social interactions, and formal training, social learning is an effective tool for behavioural change. The exchange of feedback



between students and teachers, as well as students and peers, plays a crucial role in the development of the students' attitude and motivation. These developments are needed for the acquisition of knowledge and skills.

**Social cohesion** - Also known as group cohesion or group cohesiveness, social cohesion occurs when bonds between group members are formed. The strength of the relationships can be influenced by [four main dimensions](#); interpersonal relationships, task-based relationships, sense of unity or solidarity, and emotions.

**Stakeholder** - A person or group with an interest in something, often related to business.

**War for talent** - Coined by Steven Hankin, this term refers to an increasingly competitive and busy market for both recruiting and retaining talent.