

## TUTORIAL

## 4.11

# Styles of Communication: 2

In this tutorial you will begin by thinking about how to communicate in a more indirect way. Then you will do some exercises to observe non-verbal communication and conversation style.

## Introduction

This tutorial assumes that you come from a culture that has a more direct communication style. Because it can be difficult for people from a direct culture to understand and practice indirectness, this tutorial is designed to help you to begin that process.

However, if you come from a culture that has an indirect communication style, you may already have encountered a direct culture and have learned, at least to some degree, how to communicate with people who leave little unspoken. Whatever cultural background you have, if you are intending to live and work in a cross-cultural situation, you need to know your own communication style, and to be willing to practice another style of communication in order to 'speak' clearly to people in your new community.

This tutorial also includes exercises for you to do in your local community - observing and noting different kinds of non-verbal communication. These exercises are helpful for you to begin to get a feel for taking part in and observing real life situations in a deeper, more objective way.

## Practicing indirectness

For people who are direct communicators, it can be quite a challenge to say things indirectly - it takes careful thought and patience. Below are seven direct statements, with some suggestions under each one as to how they could be said more indirectly. Read each statement, and before you look at the suggestions, try to rephrase the statement in several different ways to make it more indirect. Then look at the suggestions to see how you did.

While these statements could be appropriate in some situations, imagine that the context here is a formal meeting, where allowing people to save face is important.

1. I don't think that's such a good idea.
  - *Do you think that's a good idea?*
  - *Are there any other ideas?*
  - *I like most parts of that idea.*
2. That's not the point.
  - *That's an interesting point.*
  - *That's another good point.*
  - *Thank you, we seem to be making progress toward the point.*
3. I think we should....
  - *I have one possible suggestion.*
  - *What do you think of this idea?*
  - *I wonder if this might be something to try...*
4. What do you think, Bob?
  - *Does anyone else have any suggestions?*
  - *Have we heard all the opinions?*
5. Those figures are not accurate.
  - *I have some other figures here.*
  - *Those figures may be slightly old.*
  - *I was just given some updated figures.*
6. You're doing that wrong.
  - *I would do that like this.*
  - *Have you tried doing that this way?*
  - *I've done this before, can I help you?*
7. I don't agree.
  - *I have another idea.*
  - *What do you think of this idea?*
  - *May I make a suggestion?*
  - *We might see this slightly differently...*

## Decoding indirectness

This exercise is the opposite of the one you just finished. In this activity, the given statements are indirect. You have to explain in direct language what the speaker probably means. Suggestions are given below each statement, but just as in the last exercise, try to rephrase the statement first yourself.

Looking at the first statement, "That is a very interesting viewpoint," remember that the person may mean exactly that, but sometimes it's an indirect way of saying "I disagree with you." In communicating across cultures, you need to at

least entertain the possibility that the speaker may mean something other than what he or she has said.

1. That is a very interesting viewpoint.
  - *I don't agree.*
  - *We need to talk more about this.*
  - *You're wrong.*
2. This proposal deserves further consideration.
  - *We don't like it.*
  - *It needs work.*
  - *Propose something else.*
3. I know very little about this, but....
  - *I'm something of an expert on this but am too polite to say so.*
  - *What I think we should do is...*
4. We understand your proposal very well.
  - *Do you have another proposal?*
  - *We don't like it.*
5. We will try our best.
  - *Don't expect much to happen.*
  - *Your project is not our top priority.*
6. I heard another story about that project.
  - *I don't agree with what you said about that project.*
  - *I think you might be exaggerating or trying to 'spin' the truth.*
7. Can we move on to the next topic?
  - *We don't want to talk about this now.*
  - *We need to consult with people not in the room before we can decide.*
  - *Our discussion is not going well on this topic.*

## Non-verbal communication

Communication falls into two classic categories: verbal and non-verbal. Non-verbal communication can also be divided into a number of specific subcategories. As you work on this tutorial, you are going to do some practical exercises that will focus on several types of non-verbal communication.

Just like words, gestures, eye contact and other non-verbal cues can have different meanings in different cultures, and they can actually communicate a great deal. It is important to understand them if your goal is to communicate naturally and clearly in another culture. A great place to start is to observe what an important role non-verbal communication has in your own culture, and to take note of all the different forms it takes. The following exercises will help you to do that.

In order to observe non-verbal communication, you will need to hang out in places in your community where you can observe people interacting with one another, like at a church, a shopping centre, a restaurant or just around the local streets - take a note book or record audio notes. Your notes from the following exercises will be your assignment to submit for this tutorial.

### **Gestures**

In a number of different settings, watch what people do with their arms, hands, fingers, and whole body. Take notes and try to describe the gestures that you see as “scientifically” as possible (*a man held out his hand, palm down, and wiggled his fingers*) and indicate what you think is the meaning of each gesture (*to call a waiter to his table*). Take notes on at least four gestures that you observe for each of the following:

1. Arms
2. Hands
3. Fingers
4. Whole body

### **Eye Contact**

Observe the degree and nature of eye contact in as many of the following situations as possible and note down what you find for each case:

1. Between two men of the same age
2. Between two women of the same age
3. Between an older and younger man/woman
4. Between a man and woman
5. Between a husband and wife in public
6. Between a boss and employee
7. Between a teacher and a student
8. Between a parent and child
9. Between people passing on the street

### **Conversational Style**

Observe the following non-verbal aspects of typical conversations and take note of what you find:

1. How much gesturing goes on in general?
2. How does the transition from one speaker to the next take place? Pick one:
  - speaker A starts before speaker B finishes
  - speaker A starts just after speaker B finishes
  - speaker A pauses before starting
3. How long does one person speak before allowing the other to speak?
4. How do people indicate they want to end the conversation?
5. How do people show disagreement?

6. How do people show displeasure with what they hear?
7. How do people show pleasure at what they are hearing?
8. What is the pattern of eye contact between speaker and listener?

### **Facial Expressions**

Observe what people do with their head, eyes, eyebrows, mouth, nose, chin, etc. Record any observations as accurately as you can, indicating what the different facial expressions mean for the following:

1. The Head and Forehead
2. Eyes and Eyebrows
3. The Nose
4. The Chin and Jaw
5. Any part of the face or head in combination with the hands and fingers

### **Personal Space**

Observe how close various kinds of people stand or sit to each other in various settings:

1. In normal conversation, at work, or on the street
2. In line at the post office, bank, cinema, etc.
3. In an elevator
4. Two men
5. Two women
6. Two children
7. An older and younger person
8. Parent and child
9. A man and woman
10. Husband and wife

### **Touching**

Observe how much and in which parts of the body the following people touch each other:

1. Two men
2. Two women
3. Husband and wife
4. Unrelated man and woman
5. Parent and child
6. Older and younger person



## DISCUSSION POINTS

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1. How easy did you find it to go out in the community with the purpose of observing the behaviour of others - what kind of a challenge is that for you personally? What, if any, responses did you get from people - did you have any conversations with people, or any personal contact during the course of doing the exercises in this tutorial?
2. If people saw you taking notes, what, in your cultural setting, would you say their assumptions might be about what exactly you were doing?
3. Imagine you were doing these same tutorial exercises in a setting where you looked like a 'foreigner' and were new to the culture - what different challenges or advantages do you think you might have?



## ACTIVITIES

*Styles of Communication: 2*

1. Complete the activities in the tutorial and submit any notes with your assignment. The following template for notes with a few examples might help.

### Gestures:

	<b>Gesture</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
1. Arms	<i>patting someone on the shoulder</i>	<i>an expression of friendship or empathy</i>
2. Hands		
3. Fingers		
4. Whole body		

### Eye Contact

Note the degree and nature of eye contact between:

1. Two men of the same age - *constant and direct eye contact is maintained throughout the conversation.*
2. Two women of the same age -
3. An older and younger man/woman -
4. A man and woman -
5. A husband and wife in public -
6. A boss and employee -
7. A teacher and a student -
8. A parent and child -
9. People passing on the street -

### Conversational Style

Notes summarizing your observations of typical conversations in your local community:

1. How much gesturing goes on in general? *Some people use a lot, some use little.*
2. How does the transition from one speaker to the next take place? Pick one:
  - speaker A starts before speaker B finishes
  - speaker A starts just after speaker B finishes
  - speaker A pauses before starting
3. How long does one person speak before allowing the other to speak?
4. How do people indicate they want to end the conversation?
5. How do people show disagreement?
6. How do people show displeasure with what they hear?
7. How do people show pleasure at what they are hearing?
8. What is the pattern of eye contact between speaker and listener?

### Facial Expressions

	Gesture	Meaning
1. Head and Forehead	<i>Lowering head and looking pointedly over top of glasses</i>	<i>I want to hear more about that, I'm not sure if what you are saying is true</i>
2. Eyes and Eyebrows		
3. Nose		
4. Chin and Jaw		
5. Any part of		

the face or head in combination with the hands and fingers		

### Personal Space

How close do people stand or sit in various settings:

1. In normal conversation, at work, or on the street - *Usually one to two metres, generally a lot of personal space is given*
2. In line at the post office, bank, cinema, etc. -
3. In an elevator -
4. Two men -
5. Two women -
6. Two children -
7. An older and younger person -
8. Parent and child -
9. A man and woman -
10. Husband and wife -

### Touching

How much and in which parts of the body do the following people touch each other?

1. Two men - *handshake, sometimes a shoulder grab or pat on the shoulder if they are good friends meeting.*
2. Two women -
3. Husband and wife -
4. Unrelated man and woman -
5. Parent and child -
6. Older and younger person -