

Unit 1

Communication

Learning Objectives

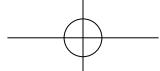
After studying this unit, you'll be able to

- understand different communicative barriers and the causes;
- promote the communicative competence;
- have a good application of the scanning skill.

Starter

The ability to communicate effectively is important in relationships, education and work. Effective communication is the process of transferring signals/messages between a sender and a receiver through various methods (written words, nonverbal cues, spoken words) clearly and unambiguously. It is also the mechanism we use to establish and modify relations with others. Developing advanced communication skills begins with simple awareness of communication barriers. Communication skills can be practiced every day in settings that range from the social to the professional.

Have you ever had trouble communicating? Have you ever used your own communication skills?



Passage A



INTRODUCTION

Communication is an essential part of successful life. To make communication effective, there are some barriers that we should eradicate. To develop the communicative competence, we need to find out the main types of communicative barriers and overcome them.



TEXT

Communication Barriers

Communication, the most powerful instrument for millions of years, is a method which assists¹ in conveying or expressing thoughts or ideas from one person to another. Effective communication means to deliver your thoughts and ideas unambiguously² and to be understood by the receiver properly. If the message is not clear or the receiver finds himself unable to understand the meaning of a message, then it means the sender is facing a communication barrier. Almost everyone desires to communicate effectively, but many do not have a keen enough appreciation of the communication barriers faced. Because of such barriers, there is ample³ opportunity for something to go wrong in any communication. Do you recognize the barriers to effective communication?



During a conversation, have you ever been distracted by pictures on a wall, the view outside a window, a report lying open on a desk, or a conversation taking place in an adjacent⁴ room?

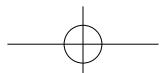
In perusing written communication, have you ever been confused by

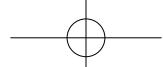
1. assist: *v.* 帮助；援助

2. unambiguously: *adv.*
不含糊地；明确地

3. ample: *adj.* 足够的；
充足的

4. adjacent: *adj.* 相邻的





irrelevant background material or illogical details given by the author?

In the field of professional communication, have you ever been troubled by a large work area which is physically divided into several work sections (i.e. separate places for people of different ranks)? How about other environments, such as the ones with noise coming from the back, the background music in a PPT presentation, a cell phone ringing at a meeting, or phone calls outside your office, etc.?

These are material/physical barriers. This type of barrier, which is the biggest hurdle⁵ in effective communication process, may be any random or persistent disturbance of surroundings, backgrounds and environments that obscures⁶, reduces, or confuses the clarity or quality of the message being transmitted.

There are many types of linguistic barriers. Different vocabulary is one of the linguistic barriers in communication. Words are symbols which usually have more than one meaning. The meanings of these symbols are understood by the sender and the receiver in their own ways which can result in misinterpretation⁷. If the communicator uses difficult or inappropriate words or if the message is not explained in a proper manner, this can result in misinterpretation.

One day, a student was sitting beside the window reading a book. Suddenly, he heard someone shouting “Look out!” He stretched his head out of the window, and was nearly hit by a falling plank. The student misunderstood the phrase “look out” here. He thought it meant “look out of the window.” However, the person yelling “look out” meant “be careful.”

Inconsistent and negative body language is another linguistic barrier. Nonverbal communication should reinforce⁸ what is being said, not contradict⁹ it. If you say one thing, but your body language says something else, your listener will likely feel you’re being dishonest. In nonverbal communication, it is important to pay attention to the nonverbal cues you send when you communicate. Your tone of voice, body language and facial expressions all contribute to the effectiveness of a message. For example, suppose you’re having a conversation and the other person says, in a boring, monotone, “I’m so excited to have this opportunity to work with you.” But His facial expression is lifeless. What’s more, he never looks you in the eyes, and instead fidgets with a pen. You would most likely question his credibility and sincerity, and not care about what he is going to say. At your

5. hurdle: *n.* 障碍；困难

6. obscure: *v.* 使听不清；使难理解

7. misinterpretation: *n.* 误解；曲解

8. reinforce: *v.* 强化

9. contradict: *v.* 与……矛盾



product presentation, when your listeners vary from poker-faced to blank, they must definitely wonder whether you really believe your product is better than other competitors' and whether you look as confident as you're saying you are. The benefits of your product would not be reliable if you don't communicate with passion, enthusiasm, and commitment through your facial expressions. If you smile while communicating a serious or negative message, you create a discrepancy¹⁰ between your facial expressions and your message. The same discrepancy occurs when you communicate a positive message without facial expressions.

Cultural communication barriers may also arise when two people in any organization belong to different cultures, places or religions. There are many other cultural factors like age, social position, mentality, economic status, political views, values or rules, ethics or standards, motives and priorities. Communication done without these cultural differences might not miss its meaning, but once a culture is mixed up with communication, its exact meaning may get lost. The almost universal simple gesture and expression that nodding means yes and shaking the head means no turns out to have some striking exceptions. For example, in Bulgaria nodding means “no”, and in India “yes” is conveyed by shaking the head, completely reverse the more common meaning.

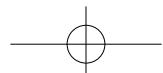
Moreover, in the business field, there is a fairly obvious cultural divide: in the countries of North America and northwestern Europe, business is largely based on analysis, rationality, logic and systems, but, on the other hand, in the Latin cultures of South America, personal relations, intuition, emotion and sensitivity may be of much greater importance. A 50-year-old Brazilian might quite simply be offended by having to negotiate with an aggressive, well-educated, but inexperienced American or German 20 years his junior. He would also want to spend time getting to know the person with whom he is negotiating, and would not appreciate an assertive American or German who wanted to sign a deal immediately and take the next plane home.

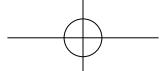
We have examined the principal barriers to effective communication. It is important to remove barriers to effective communication in order to streamline and smooth out the whole process. Surmounting¹¹ communication barriers is of great significance in everyday life, and therefore even more essential in professional situations.

(935 words)

10. discrepancy: *n.* 不一致; 不符合

11. surmount: *v.* 战胜; 克服





EXERCISES

1. Choose the best answer according to the text.

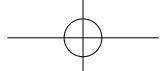
- 1) Which of the following is NOT a material/physical barrier?
A. Pictures on the wall. B. Cell phone rings in the meeting.
C. Facial expressions in the chatting. D. Irrelevant background material in the writing.
- 2) A linguistic barrier is a kind of misinterpretation resulting from _____.
A. language B. action C. symbols D. social positions
- 3) What's the true meaning of the phrase "look out" in the text?
A. Look out of the window. B. Look towards the outside.
C. Look at farther distance. D. Be careful.
- 4) What is the reason why the old Brazilian would quite simply be offended by the young well-educated American?
A. The envy of his youth. B. Culture differences.
C. Prejudice against him. D. His social status.
- 5) What's the author's opinion on communicative barriers?
A. It's not necessary to be paid attention to.
B. Many people are aware of them.
C. It's very important to remove them.
D. It has only one type.

2. Complete the table by giving the causes of the following three barriers according to the text.

Material/physical barriers	Linguistic barriers	Cultural barriers
1)	2)	3)

3. Discuss the following questions.

- 1) Have you ever come across communicative barriers? And what are they?
- 2) How can we overcome communicative barriers?
- 3) What's your opinion on the relation between communicative barriers and language learning?



Passage B



INTRODUCTION

To communicate effectively, communication skills have to be promoted. There are several ways to become a better listener. First, use articulate, clear, concise and assertive language, then utilize the accurate body language and manage emotions and stress.



TEXT

Effective Communication

Effective communication is how you convey a message so that it is received and understood by someone in the exact way you intended. It enables you to communicate with even negative or difficult messages without creating conflicts¹ or destroying trust. When people are able to communicate effectively, they are also able to solve problems together and deal with negative situations without harming the relationship. Effective communication is the glue that helps you deepen your connections with others and improve teamwork at home or in social situations. Being an effective communicator is vital for most dimensions² in your life and more particularly so in your business world.

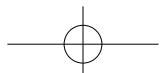
Many people communicate a lot, but very few communicate effectively. People could understand the speakers better, if they have good communication skills. Basic tips will help most people improve their communication skills and provide the guidance they needed to feel confident in what is being said.

Active listening is one of the most effective communication skills. People often focus on what they should say, but effective communication is more about listening than it is about talking. If your goal is to fully understand and connect with the other person, listening effectively will often help. So, you should be a good listener first.

Successful listening means not just understanding the words or the information being communicated, but also understanding how the

1. conflict: *n.* 冲突；
矛盾

2. dimension: *n.* 方面





speakers feel about what they're communicating. Effective listeners should first understand the key factors and challenges in a given situation; then, get the input and ideas of the speakers; and finally, convey their genuine³ interest and concern for the speakers.



Effective listening can build stronger, deeper connections (when you really listen, you make the other person feel heard and understood). Effective listening can create an environment where everyone feels safe (listeners' eye contacts and appropriate facial expressions will make the conversation atmosphere calm and safe). Effective listening can save time: avoid interrupting speakers, just listen carefully and directly get the right information. Only through effective listening can clear information be obtained. And only in this way can conflicts and misunderstandings be avoided. Moreover, effective listening can not only diffuse negative emotions, but also allow for real understanding or problem solving.

Articulate⁴, clear, concise and assertive language is another very effective communication tip. Effective speakers always communicate with a crisp but relaxed pace and emphasize important words and phrases. Conciseness⁵ helps protect against key points being diluted⁶ by less important comments or phrases. Clarity refers to a speaker's ability to present specific and direct points and avoid vague or ambiguous comments. Being assertive means expressing your thoughts, feelings, and needs in an open and honest way, and standing up for yourself while respecting others.

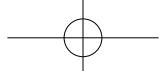
How can we improve assertiveness? At first, try to value yourself and your opinions, which are as important as anyone else's. And also, know your needs and wants, which should be expressed without infringing on the rights of others'. And then, express negative thoughts in a positive way as much as you can. You may be angry, but you have to remain respectful. In such cases, words or phrases that intimidate, stereotype, or offend individuals should be avoided. Furthermore, receiving positive feedback means accepting praise graciously, learning from your own mistakes, and asking for help when needed. Moreover, it's vital to learn to say "no." In order not to be

3. genuine: *adj.* 真正的

4. articulate: *adj.* 明晰的；清楚的

5. conciseness: *n.* 简洁；简明

6. dilute: *v.* 降低（质量）；削弱（信念）



taken advantage of by others, you should know your limits, and if necessary, dissent immediately and look for alternatives. In this way, everyone will feel good about the other optional outcome.

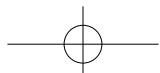
On the other side, accurate body language is essential and very useful in social communication. In some cases, unspoken messages influence communication as much as or more than words do. Not only may skillful communicators use body language as much as possible, but also great speakers fully know that reading others' body language is a key communication skill. Effective speakers who recognize gestures and subtle⁷ mannerisms may pick up on things to help avoid misunderstanding. Being closely connected is a key way to intuitively sense what nonverbal gestures mean.

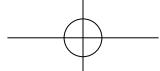
By using open body language—arms uncrossed, standing with an open stance or sitting at the edge of your seat, and maintaining eye contact with the person you're talking to, effective communication can be enhanced. Moreover, such body language, for example, as patting a friend on the back while complimenting him on his success, or pounding your fist to underline a message, can emphasize or enhance your verbal message.

Furthermore, another vital factor of effective communication is effective management of emotion. Emotional awareness provides you with the tools for better understanding of both yourself and other people, and the real messages they are trying to communicate to you. To communicate effectively, you must be aware of and in control of your emotions, which also means learning how to manage your stress. When you're stressed, you're more likely to misread other people, sending confusing or off-putting nonverbal signals, and lapse into unhealthy knee-jerk⁸ patterns of behavior, and this can result in more frustration, misunderstandings, and conflicts. It's very important to manage your emotions, think on your feet, and effectively communicate under pressure. Many stalling tactics, for instance, having a question repeated, or asking for clarification of a statement before responding, can give you time to think and supply a pause to collect your thoughts. Silence isn't necessarily a bad thing; it can make you seem to be more in control than rushing your response. Other ways, such as taking a moment to calm down before deciding to continue a conversation or postpone it, are also better choices. By the way, humor is very useful in relieving stress in communication. When you or those around you start taking things too seriously, find a way to lighten the mood by sharing a joke

7. subtle: *adj.* 微妙的

8. knee-jerk: *adj.* 本能反应的





or an amusing story. What's more, taking a quick break and moving away from the situation might be even more important. So try to go for a stroll outside if possible, or spend a few minutes meditating⁹. Physical activity or finding a quiet place to regain your balance can quickly reduce stress.

9. meditate: v. 沉思;冥想

(1,023 words)



EXERCISES

1. Do the following statements agree with the information given in the text? Mark T for TRUE if the statement agrees with the information given in the text; F for FALSE if the statement contradicts the information given in the text; NG for NOT GIVEN if the information is not given in the text.

- 1) Effective communication enables you to communicate with even negative or difficult messages without creating conflicts or destroying trust.
- 2) Effective communication just helps you in social situations.
- 3) Many people can communicate effectively.
- 4) Active listeners focus on what other people should say.
- 5) Effective speakers always communicate with other people clearly, unambiguously and in the honest way.
- 6) Skillful communicators may use body language as fully as possible.
- 7) To communicate effectively you may be aware of and in control of your stress.

2. Find a word in the text for each definition below.

- 1) angry disagreement between people or groups: _____
- 2) field, range, extent or aspect: _____
- 3) speak sth. clearly and distinctly: _____
- 4) showing a strong and confident personality: _____
- 5) short, with no unnecessary words: _____
- 6) think deeply, especially about spiritual matters: _____

3. Discuss the following questions.

- 1) What is effective communication?
- 2) What communicative skills are mentioned in this text?
- 3) Do you want to become an effective communicator? And what will you do in future?



Reading Skills

Scanning

There are different styles of reading for different situations. The technique you choose will depend on the purpose for reading. For example, you might be reading for enjoyment, information, or completion of a task. If you're searching for information, you might scan for only a particular word.

Scanning means running your eyes down the page, looking for specific facts like numbers or words. In most cases, you know what you're looking for, so you're concentrating on finding a particular answer.

For example:

The following is from a museum, scan the post and try to find out if you can enjoy the exhibition of Leonardo da Vinci's drawings in March.

EXHIBITION OF FINE ARTS

465 Huntington Avenue, Boston, Massachusetts 02115

Joel Sternfeld:

Photographs of the Roman Campagna

Through January 17

Late 20th Century Prints

Through January 31

On Kawara:

Date Paintings in 89 Cities

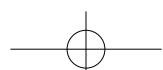
Through February 7

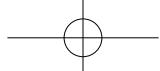
Leonardo da Vinci:

The Anatomy of Man: Drawings from the Collection of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II

Through February 21

Master European Paintings from the National Gallery of Ireland:





Mantegna to Goya	January 13-March 28
A Collection of Contemporary Art, Part I	January 28-July 3
Photography: Close-up/Still Life	February 10-May 23
Closed Thursday and Friday evenings	

Did you read the whole list of exhibitions word by word to find out the answer? You might only have to trace the letter “L” to find out “Leonardo da Vinci,” and then it would not take you much time to reveal that you cannot enjoy the exhibition of Leonardo da Vinci’s drawings in March.

Scanning is also useful when you first come across a resource and want to determine whether it will answer your questions. Once you’ve scanned the document, you might go back and skim or read it.

For example:

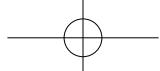
When you glance at the seventh paragraph of Passage B (*Effective Communication*), bear this question in your mind: How can we improve assertiveness?

Scan the text below:

How can we improve assertiveness? At first, try to value yourself and your opinions, which are as important as anyone else's. And also, know your needs and wants, which should be expressed without infringing on the rights of others'. And then, express negative thoughts in a positive way as much as you can. You may be angry, but you have to remain respectful. In such cases, words or phrases that intimidate, stereotype, or offend individuals should be avoided. Furthermore, receiving positive feedback means accepting praise graciously, learning from your own mistakes, and asking for help when needed. Moreover, it's vital to learn to say "no." In order not to be taken advantage of by others, you should know your limits, and if necessary, dissent immediately and look for alternatives. In this way, everyone will feel good about the other optional outcome.

You will find four ways to improve assertiveness: 1. try to value yourself and your opinions; 2. know your needs and wants; 3. express negative thoughts in a positive way; 4. learn to say “no.”

When scanning, look for the author’s use of organizers such as numbers, letters, steps, or the words “first, second, or next.” Look for words that are boldfaced, italicized, or in a different font size, style, or color. Sometimes the author also puts key ideas in the margin.



EXERCISE

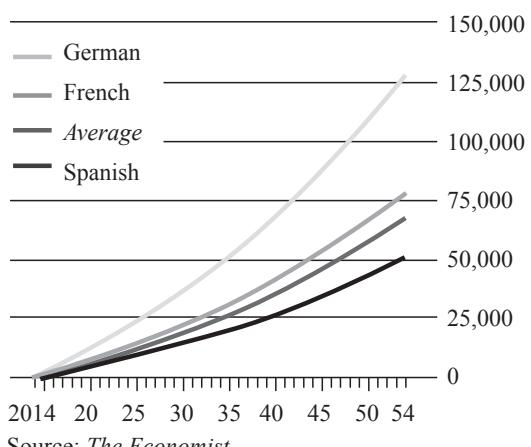
Scan Passage A and underline the key words, top sentences, summary and conclusion while reading. Then check with a partner about your findings.

Supplementary Reading

Foreign Language Learning Values

Accumulated language bonuses

Forecasts, €

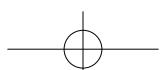


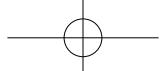
Source: *The Economist*

There are pros and cons of foreign language learning. The pros: working in a foreign language can help people to make better decisions, and bilingualism helps with improving executive function in children and dementia in older people. The cons: one study found that the earnings bonus for an American who applies a foreign language in work is just 2%. If you make \$30,000 a year, sniffed Mr. Dubner, that's just about \$600.

But for the sake of provocation, Mr. Dubner seemed to have had lowballed this. He should know the power of lifetime earnings and compound interest. Firstly, instead of \$30,000, assume the average starting salary of a university graduate, who in the US is likelier to communicate in a foreign language than someone without a university degree, is almost \$45,000 a year.

Then, imagine that these graduates save their “language bonuses.” “Compound interest





is the most powerful force in the universe" (a statement dubiously attributed to Einstein, but nonetheless worth committing to memory). Assuming there is just a 1% real salary increase per year for the foreign language communication and a 2% average real return over 40 years, a 2% foreign language bonus turns into an extra \$67,000 (at 2014 value) in the retirement account.

15 That's not bad for a few years of learning a foreign language.

Secondly, Albert Saiz, the MIT (Massachusetts Institute of Technology) economist who calculated the 2% premium, found quite different premiums for different languages: just 1.5% for Spanish, 2.3% for French and 3.8% for German. These different foreign languages communication bonuses account: your Spanish is worth \$51,000, but French, \$77,000, and

20 German, \$128,000. Humans are famously bad at weighting the future against the present, but if you dangled even a post-dated \$128,000 check in front of the average 14-year-old, Goethe and Schiller would be hotter than Facebook.

Why do the different foreign languages offer such different returns? It has nothing to do with the inherent qualities of Spanish, of course. The obvious answer is the interplay of supply

25 and demand. This chart above reckons that Spanish speakers account for a bit more of world GDP than German speakers do. But a more important factor is economic openness. Germany is a trade powerhouse, so its language is more economically valuable for an outsider than the language of a relatively more closed country.

But in the US context (which Mr. Saiz studied), the more important factor is probably

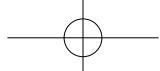
30 supply, not demand, of speakers in a given language. Non-Latinos in the US might study Spanish because they hear and see so much of it spoken in their country. But that might be the best reason for people not to study the language, from a purely economic point of view. A non-native user of Spanish will have a hard time competing with a fluent native bilingual for a job requiring both languages. Indeed, Mr. Saiz found worse returns for Spanish applicants

35 in states with a larger share of Hispanics. Better to learn and communicate with a language in high demand, but short supply—one reason, no doubt, is that ambitious American parents are steering their children towards Mandarin. The drop-off in recent years in the American study and application of German might be another reason for young people to have German books shelved on the top and forgotten.

40 And studies like Mr. Saiz's can only work with the actual economic situation. But of course changes in educational structures can have dynamic effects on entire economies. A list of the richest countries in the world is generally dominated by open, trade-driven economies. Oil economies aside, the top 10 includes countries where trilingualism is typical, such as Luxembourg, Switzerland and Singapore, and small countries like the Scandinavian ones,

45 where English knowledge and communication tends to be excellent.

There are of course many reasons that such countries have prospered. But a willingness



to learn about export markets, and their skills in mastering many languages, make it plausible. One study has estimated that lack of foreign language proficiency in Britain costs the economy £48 billion (\$80 billion), or 3.5% of GDP, each year. Even if that number is high, the cost of 50 assuming that foreign customers will learn and use your language, while you never bother to learn and apply theirs, is certainly a lot greater than zero. So if Mr. Saiz had run his language-premium study against a parallel-universe USA, in which the last half-century had been a golden age of language learning, he might have found a bigger foreign language bonus (and a bigger GDP pie to divide) in that more open and export-oriented fantasy USA. And of course 55 greater investment in foreign language teaching would have other dynamic effects: there would be more and better teachers and materials, plus a cultural premium on multilingualism, which means more people will actually master and communicate in a foreign language, rather than wasting several years of learning foreign languages but never use them in daily life, as happens in Britain and the US.

60 To be sure, everything has an opportunity cost. An hour spent learning French is much more valuable than an hour spent not learning something else. But it isn't hard to think of school subjects that provide less return—economically, anyway—than a foreign language. What is the return on investment for history, literature or art? Of course schools are intended to do more than create little GDP-producing machines—and there are also great non-economic 65 benefits to learning a foreign language. But if it is GDP you're after, the world isn't learning English as fast as some people think. One optimistic estimate is that half the world's people may speak English by 2050. That leaves billions who will not, and billions of others who remain happier (and more willing to spend money) in their own languages.

(964 words)

