

The reasoning behind each item

1. I am a very confident communicator in my native language and this means, I will be automatically a good communicator with people from other cultures. What works in your culture and in your social in-group, may not work with people from other countries. What may be acceptable, desirable or successful behavior in your own culture may mean the exact opposite in another culture. Your confidence precludes you from trying to find out more about reality.

2. People in different cultures communicate more or less in the same manner. There are big individual differences even in your own culture. Assuming all cultures communicate in the same manner makes you prone to ignoring differences whenever you encounter them. You will not be interested in asking partners for feedback and for their perspective.

3. If people want to do business with us, they are the ones that should study intercultural communication. Even if this is openly false, there are enough professionals who display such an arrogant attitude. However, turbulent world markets may reverse current power imbalances sooner than expected. In the past, Chinese were expected to learn English. Now, thousands of Western business people study Chinese.

4. I never get any negative feedback on my communication style. Maybe nobody is telling you what they think about you. You may be in a powerful position, or they just do not care.

5. I always get positive feedback on my communication style. People may just want to make you happy. Maybe they feel you are a bit insecure, so they try to "motivate" you to continue trying.

6. There is one perfect way of communicating, and I have learned it. Perfect communication would be a perfect match between your own and your counterpart's individual speaking habits and preferences. In reality, you should have a repertoire of different communication style and strategies.

7. There is one perfect way of communicating, and I want to learn it. With this attitude, you will try finding the most "persuasive" communication advice and then learn no more. Remember, what may seem "persuasive" to you does not necessary work in a different culture.

8. When using a foreign language, the most important thing is to have a perfect accent. Pronunciation is important, insofar as you speak clearly enough. Your accent should be adequate. Having a "gangster-style" accent certainly will not create the best impression. On the other hand, if I speak English with a perfect American accent, I may lose my "authenticity" as a "true German".

9. When using a foreign language, the most important thing is to avoid making mistakes. The importance should be placed on categorizing mistakes. Some mistakes may have a greater impact than others. Grammar mistakes, in general, may prove less dangerous, than mistakes in style (formal vs. informal), too scarce use of polite constructions or an absence of conversation markers.

10. When using a foreign language, the most important thing is to know a lot of words. Much more important is to know how to combine words correctly. If you do not know a concrete word, you may just paraphrase and say it using other words. When learning words, you should have a clear vision what words you really need in your situation.

11. In each language, there is one best way to express something. There are often countless of ways to express the same thing. Otherwise, what would be the point in literature. You should practice numerous ways of saying the same thing. Then, you can test what works best in your situation.

12. I will become a perfect speaker of a foreign language by just talking a lot. You will probably agree that not all inhabitants of your country are good speakers of their native language. Is their greatest problem that they are not talking enough? The problem is not lack of practice, but lack of "good practice", that is to systematically work on your own mistakes.

13. When speaking a foreign language, I want to impress the other with my excellent language skills. This will have the negative effect that you will talk too much. You care about the other person only as an audience for your performance. Not the greatest approach to building a long-lasting business relationship.

14. The best way to practice a foreign language for business purposes is to study with textbooks. The best textbooks are customer and supplier websites, industry publications and instruction manuals. You should treat them with the same attitude as you treated school books. You can make all kinds of grammar and vocabulary exercises based on technical and commercial texts.

15. If people do not understand me, they will always tell me. No, they won't! Even if they think you have just said something incredibly stupid or offensive, they may just believe you to be just like that: an incredibly stupid or offensive person! Does this sound offensive to you? If yes, do you never consider someone stupid or offensive? Do you always take the time to "clarify the other's intentions?" Probably not.

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