



Credits: 3

Learning hours: 30

Sector: ALL

Sub-sector: ALL

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Purpose statement

This module describes the skills, knowledge and attitude required to be able to successfully work in a socially diverse environment. The module will allow the participant to develop ways of communicating with customers and colleagues from diverse backgrounds and accommodating cultural differences. Furthermore, this module will enable the trainee to be able to identify issues that may cause conflict or misunderstanding in the workplace because of the cultural differences, find ways of resolving them and/or referring them to appropriate individuals or bodies.

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| | 2.3. key phrases From time to time we all have to deal with conflicts. Some of them take place at work, and others affect our love life. Conflict is a normal part of any social environment, but | |

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| | <p>it's better if you know how to handle the problem.</p> <p>Here below is a couple of useful phrases that will help you get out of any conflict the best way possible</p> <p>1. I'm with you on that...</p> <p>If you have to go through a difficult conversation, start it with this particular phrase. Even if the blame is on you, your readiness to fix the situation and give a helping hand can work magic. Explain to your opponent that you're on the same team, and this will help you avoid confrontation.</p> <p>2. Yes, you're right...</p> <p>Try to agree on something with your opponent, and wait for amazing results. If you work in sales and one of your customers isn't satisfied with some product or service, start the conversation with this phrase. When people realize that they're heard, it's more likely that they will conduct a constructive dialogue.</p> <p>3. Tell me what it is about me that irritates you.</p> <p>If you see that a colleague doesn't like you, the best thing you can do is find out what exactly irritates them. Even if you aren't able to (or you don't want to) change this thing about yourself, you'll show that you're a reasonable and mature person.</p> <p>4. How can I fix this?</p> <p>For example, if your boss didn't like your report, all you have to do is ask for new instructions to fix the situation. Try to get as much information as you can about exactly what needs to be done. This will help you end the conflict and avoid them in the future.</p> | |
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5. No need to take that tone of voice with me.

If a situation gradually turns into a confrontation, avoid conflict by all means. Don't get emotional. Maybe try leaving the building. All you need is some time alone. Cool down, and then resolve the problem without playing the blame game.

6. It's been worse than this. We'll get through it!

If you and your partner experienced far more difficult problems in the past, you 2 can overcome this one as well. It's just another fight that won't ruin your relationship. Use this phrase to remind yourselves that you're a great team and there isn't anything you can't do. Together, you can work it out!

7. What can I do to change the situation?

If you're ready to compromise, this phrase can help you avoid a bigger fight. Your partner might want you to take some action, so it's a perfect way to express your readiness and get detailed instructions. It's always good to know what your partner expects from you, even if you can't do exactly what he or she wants.

8. Help me understand. / Please, explain what you mean.

When 2 people are having a fight, it's hard to think clearly. Take a moment, and ask your partner to explain their position. Maybe it's not as unacceptable as you thought at the beginning of the argument.

9. Let's look at this from a different perspective.

Being able to see a problem from different angles is one of the characteristics of a mature personality. 2 partners have at least 2 different points of view, which means it's twice as easy

to find a compromise.

10. I understand.

A real lifesaver when you need to break a vicious circle of misunderstanding. Usually, none of the opponents are willing to listen and to hear, which is why one of you has to pronounce this phrase. It'll be the first step to resolving the conflict without arguing and yelling.

11. We should stop fighting.

It's a simple yet very effective phrase. If you feel that the conflict has gone too far, the best thing to do is stop where you are. There's no reason to fight over who is right because when it comes to relationships there should be no such thing as winning.

12. You're so pretty when you're angry!

A compliment, even during a fight, goes a long way. Plus, after receiving a compliment, your body releases the hormones of happiness. The result: your opponent smiles, and the conflict is settled.

13. Let's work on this problem together!

Remember that this phrase can save your relationship only if you can listen and accept someone else's opinion. It shows that you care about this person and that you're ready to hear his or her reasons.

14. I understand why you're upset...

If your partner appeals to emotions rather than uses arguments, just take his or her side. It won't help you avoid the conflict but it will make your conversation much more constructive.

15. Let's take a break, think it through, and then make the decision.

Sometimes in order to stop all the finger-pointing and blaming each other, you simply need to press the "pause" button. Take a 5-second break, and try to remember why the fight started in the first place. Maybe it had no reason, and the 2 of you were just in a bad mood. If so, breathe in, breathe out, and the argument will end naturally.

❖ The Collaborating

is when the concern is to satisfy both sides. It is highly assertive and highly cooperative; the goal is to find a "win/win" solution. Appropriate uses for the collaborating style include integrating solutions, learning, merging perspectives, gaining commitment, and improving relationships. Using this style can support open discussion of issues, task proficiency, equal distribution of work amongst the team members, better brainstorming, and development of creative problem solving. This style is appropriate to use frequently in a team environment. Collaborating skills include the ability to use active or effective listening, confront situations in a non-threatening way, analyze input, and identify underlying concerns. Overuse of the collaborating style can lead to spending too much time on trivial matters, diffusion of responsibility, being taken advantage of, and being overloaded with work. Under use can result in using quick fix solutions, lack of commitment by other team members, disempowerment,

❖ Avoidance to compromise own values

The Avoiding Style is when you do not satisfy your concerns or the concerns of the other person. This style is low

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| | <p>assertiveness and low cooperativeness. The goal is to delay. It is appropriate to use this style when there are issues of low importance, to reduce tensions, or to buy time. Avoidance is also appropriate when you are in a low power position and have little control over the situation, when you need to allow others to deal with the conflict, or when the problem is symptomatic of a much larger issue and you need to work on the core issue. To develop skills in this style use foresight in knowing when to withdraw, learn to sidestep loaded questions or sensitive areas by using diplomacy, become skillful at creating a sense of timing, and practice leaving things unresolved. Overuse of the avoidance style can result in a low level of input, decision making by default, and allowing issues to fester, which can produce a breakdown in communication between team members. This can inhibit brainstorming sessions from being productive and can prevent the team from functioning. People who overuse avoidance feel they cannot speak frankly without fear of repercussions. The overuse of conflict avoidance can often be a result of childhood experiences, past work-related incidents, and negative experiences with conflict resolution. Behaviours associated with the overuse of avoidance include being silent, sullen, and untruthful when asked if something is wrong being. A milder form of avoidance behavior is when the team member procrastinates about getting work done and deliberately takes an opposing point of view inappropriately during a decision-making situation, or is timid, withdrawn, or shy. Extreme behaviours can occur when avoidance is overused. A person begins to be negative, critical and sarcastic. Other extreme avoidance behaviours include becoming passive aggressive by being late and not paying attention at meetings. It also lends a greater importance to this style as compared to the other styles because you have devoted such a disproportionate amount of time to the style.) Under use of the avoidance style results in hostility and hurt</p> | |
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feelings. In addition, work can become overwhelming because too many issues are taken on at once, resulting in an inability to prioritize and delegate. When avoidance is underused a team member may deny that there is a problem and allow their hurt feelings to prevent communication.

❖ **being accommodating**

The Accommodating Style is foregoing your concerns in order to satisfy the concerns of others. This style is low assertiveness and high cooperativeness; the goal is to yield. The accommodating style is appropriate to use in situations when you want to show that you are reasonable, develop performance, create good will, keep peace, retreat, or for issues of low importance. Accommodating skills include the ability to sacrifice, the ability to be selfless, the ability to obey orders, and the ability to yield. Overuse of the accommodating style results in ideas getting little attention, restricted influence, loss of contribution, and anarchy. People who overuse the accommodating style exhibit a lack of desire to change and usually demonstrate anxiety over future uncertainties. One of their main desires may be to keep everything the same. When accommodating is overused certain behaviours emerge. Some of these emergent behaviours include giving up personal space, making "me" or other victim statements, being overly helpful and then holding a grudge, and speaking in an extremely quiet almost unintelligible voice. Under use of the accommodating style can result in lack of rapport, low morale, and an inability to yield. When the accommodating style is underused a person may display apathy as a way of not addressing the anger or hurt, and make statements full of innuendo and double meanings.

Six Fundamental Patterns of Cultural Differences

In a world as complex as ours, each of us is shaped by many factors, and culture is one of the powerful forces that acts on us. Anthropologists Kevin Avruch and Peter Black explain the importance of culture this way:

...One's own culture provides the "lens" through which we view the world; the "logic"... by which we order it; the "grammar" ... by which it makes sense. In other words, culture is central to what we see, how we make sense of what we see, and how we express ourselves.

As people from different cultural groups take on the exciting challenge of working together, cultural values sometimes conflict. We can misunderstand each other, and react in ways that can hinder what are otherwise promising partnerships. Oftentimes, we aren't aware that culture is acting upon us. Sometimes, we are not even aware that we have cultural values or assumptions that are different from others'.

Six fundamental patterns of cultural differences -- ways in which cultures, as a whole, tend to vary from one another -- are described below. The descriptions point out some of the recurring causes of cross-cultural communication difficulties. As you enter into multicultural dialogue or collaboration, keep these generalized differences in mind. Next time you find yourself in a confusing situation, and you suspect that cross-cultural differences are at play, try reviewing this list. Ask yourself how culture may be shaping your own reactions, and try to see the world from others' points of view.

1. Different Communication Styles

The way people communicate varies widely between, and even within, cultures. One aspect of communication style is language usage. Across cultures, some words and phrases are used in

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| | <p>different ways. For example, even in countries that share the English language, the meaning of "yes" varies from "maybe, I'll consider it" to "definitely so," with many shades in between.</p> <p>Another major aspect of communication style is the degree of importance given to non-verbal communication. Non-verbal communication includes not only facial expressions and gestures; it also involves seating arrangements, personal distance, and sense of time. In addition, different norms regarding the appropriate degree of assertiveness in communicating can add to cultural misunderstandings. For instance, some white Americans typically consider raised voices to be a sign that a fight has begun, while some black, Jewish and Italian Americans often feel that an increase in volume is a sign of an exciting conversation among friends. Thus, some white Americans may react with greater alarm to a loud discussion than would members of some American ethnic or non-white racial groups.</p> <p>2. Different Attitudes Toward Conflict</p> <p>Some cultures view conflict as a positive thing, while others view it as something to be avoided. In the U.S., conflict is not usually desirable; but people often are encouraged to deal directly with conflicts that do arise. In fact, face-to-face meetings customarily are recommended as the way to work through whatever problems exist. In contrast, in many Eastern countries, open conflict is experienced as embarrassing or demeaning; as a rule, differences are best worked out quietly. A written exchange might be</p> | |
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the favored means to address the conflict.

3. Different Approaches to Completing Tasks

From culture to culture, there are different ways that people move toward completing tasks. Some reasons include different access to resources, different judgments of the rewards associated with task completion, different notions of time, and varied ideas about how relationship-building and task-oriented work should go together.

When it comes to working together effectively on a task, cultures differ with respect to the importance placed on establishing relationships early on in the collaboration. A case in point, Asian and Hispanic cultures tend to attach more value to developing relationships at the beginning of a shared project and more emphasis on task completion toward the end as compared with European-Americans. European-Americans tend to focus immediately on the task at hand, and let relationships develop as they work on the task. This does not mean that people from any one of these cultural backgrounds are more or less committed to accomplishing the task, or value relationships more or less; it means they may pursue them differently.

4. Different Decision-Making Styles

The roles individuals play in decision-making vary widely from culture to culture. For example, in the U.S., decisions are frequently delegated -- that is, an official assigns responsibility for a particular matter to a subordinate. In many Southern European and Latin American countries, there is a strong value placed on holding decision-making responsibilities oneself.

When decisions are made by groups of people, majority rule is a common approach in the U.S.; in Japan consensus is the preferred mode. Be aware that individuals' expectations about their own roles in shaping a decision may be influenced by their cultural frame of reference.

5. Different Attitudes Toward Disclosure

In some cultures, it is not appropriate to be frank about emotions, about the reasons behind a conflict or a misunderstanding, or about personal information. Keep this in mind when you are in a dialogue or when you are working with others. When you are dealing with a conflict, be mindful that people may differ in what they feel comfortable revealing. Questions that may seem natural to you -- What was the conflict about? What was your role in the conflict? What was the sequence of events? -- may seem intrusive to others. The variation among cultures in attitudes toward disclosure is also something to consider before you conclude that you have an accurate reading of the views, experiences, and goals of the people with whom you are working.

6. Different Approaches to Knowing

Notable differences occur among cultural groups when it comes to epistemologies -- that is, the ways people come to know things. European cultures tend to consider information acquired through cognitive means, such as counting and measuring, more valid than other ways of coming to know things. Compare that to African cultures' preference for affective ways of knowing, including symbolic imagery and rhythm. Asian cultures' epistemologies tend to emphasize the

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| | <p>validity of knowledge gained through striving toward transcendence.</p> <p>Recent popular works demonstrate that our own society is paying more attention to previously overlooked ways of knowing. Indeed, these different approaches to knowing could affect ways of analyzing a community problem or finding ways to resolve it. Some members of your group may want to do library research to understand a shared problem better and identify possible solutions. Others may prefer to visit places and people who have experienced challenges like the ones you are facing, and get a feeling for what has worked elsewhere.</p> <p>LO 2.3. Referring problems and unresolved issues to the appropriate team leader or supervisor for follow-up.</p> | |
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Learning Unit 1: Communicate with customers and colleagues from diverse backgrounds

LO.1.1. Value customers and colleagues from different cultural groups and treat them with respect and sensitivity.

Introduction

Many workplaces are staffed with people from various cultures. Also staff interacts with and serves people from different nations and cultural backgrounds. It is vital that all these people, whether staff and customers, are treated with respect and sensitivity.

- **Topic 1: Treating different groups effectively**

1. Forms of address

Different cultures use different forms of address when greeting.

Where we use what we regard as a standard, acceptable and polite greeting, there is always the potential that the recipient of the greeting can feel affronted when we fail to conform to their culturally-based expectations.

One culture may not observe the same use of titles that we consider to be normal and polite. Our failure to use their system of address is not necessarily indicative of any lack of respect, or intention to cause offence but it can nonetheless create confusion, misunderstanding and be indicative of a lack of knowledge and care regarding the relevant culture.

For example, guests may feel that if we are unable to greet them appropriately then we can't meet their other culturally-based needs and wants.

2. Levels of formality or informality

There is always a need for us to act professionally in the industry and part of that requirement is a need to act in a manner appropriate to the venue where we are working.

Some properties may encourage a more relaxed style while others insist on a much more formal level of service. In either case there is the possibility that the level of formality can give unintended offence to guests.

A relaxed approach may give the impression that staff are inappropriately over-familiar and rude. A very formal approach may give the unintended impression that staff are removed and detached, uncaring, unfriendly and disinterested from the customer and their needs.

In addition, there is also the possibility that a guest or another staff member may try to adopt and use what they believe to be a local "attitude" when talking or interacting with us believing that this is the approach we prefer. In many of these cases this orientation can often lead to situations where the user gets it wrong and appears over-familiar and too friendly or the opposite.

In these circumstances we need to be able to recognise the situation for what it is and ensure we are not overly sensitive and do not take offence too readily.

3. Observance of special religious, feasts or other celebratory days

People from different countries treat these occasions differently. Some may not worry about them, whilst others take them very seriously.

They might be required by their faith to take time off from work to attend or observe a religious event, or take a break during traditional working hours to pray.

4. Customs, beliefs and values

It is accepted that a shared system of customs, beliefs and values is what underpins the core of any culture. It is the variation in these customs, values and beliefs that creates the central differences that exist between cultures.

Classic examples of the differences that can exist relate to:

- ✦ The vastly different attitude that different cultures have towards cows
- ✦ The way that Eskimos greet each other compared to the way Asians do
- ✦ The variations in beliefs that exist between different religions or belief systems
- ✦ The different values that certain people place on lifestyle choices.

These differences in orientations are usually learned by people from birth and become central to the definition of who that person is and how they see themselves. Naturally, to challenge this perspective is to disrespect them and to raise all sorts of negative issues.

The key when seeking to understand and accommodate these variations is to realise that you don't have to apply these customs, beliefs and values in your life, you only have to respect and accommodate them in relation to the customers you serve and the colleagues you work with.

5. Product preferences

It is to be expected that people from different countries and cultures have different needs, wants and preferences in relation to product and service) preferences.

These preferences may be based on:

- ✦ Wanting to try something from the country in which they are travelling – to sample the domestic product or to experience a product for which the host area is famous
- ✦ Wanting to re-experience something from their home country – to help them maintain their link with their roots
- ✦ Insisting that they are not served or sold anything from certain countries – these can be countries with whom their country is at war or with whom there have been hostilities in the past
- ✦ Ensuring products meet the demands of religious beliefs.

LO 1.2: Take into consideration cultural differences in all verbal and non-verbal communication and overcome language barriers.

Introduction

Working in a socially diverse environment necessitates communicating with people from different cultural and social backgrounds. This must be done, as we have already seen, in a respectful and sensitive manner. An essential aspect of this need is to ensure that the two components of communication, verbal language and body language, are appropriate to the person and culture being communicated with.

• Topic 1: Verbal and Non-Verbal Communication

There is more accommodation between cultures regarding problems, difficulties and misunderstanding today than there were several decades ago. The reason for this is the way in which the world has shrunk due to the availability of travel and the massive explosion in global electronic communication.

Regardless, there is always an on-going need for us to be sensitive and respectful in the way we:

- Communicate with others from a different culture
- Interpret the communication we receive from people from another culture.

Keys in factoring in appropriate verbal and non-verbal communication when dealing with people from another culture include:

- Identify the country and culture

- Take time to plan what to say and how to say it
- Be mindful of your body language – most non-verbal communication is spontaneous
- Avoid industry and establishment jargon
- Avoid local expressions
- Avoid complex statements
- Give the person your full attention
- Use alternative communication strategies to support the verbal communication
- Be alert to feedback from the other person – especially in regard to identifying when something you may have said or done has given unintended offence.

1. Verbal communication

Having a second language skill is looked upon favourably by hospitality, tourism and events employers. It is certainly a valuable tool when dealing directly with foreign customers, within the limitations of local accents, dialects and colloquialisms. When speaking to a person from a different culture, it is important to take into consideration their particular cultural differences.

This can include:

- Pitch or tone of your voice
- Volume of the talking
- Speed at which you talk
- Pauses in the conversation - to allow for understanding, questions to be asked, clarification.

When coming face-to-face with customers who speak another language, it is important to slow your speech, but not too slow to the point of sounding unnatural or giving the other person the impression that you think they are stupid! Always try to deliver your thoughts using basic words and sentence constructions. Remember that there are times when it is socially acceptable to say a particular word while in other circles the same language could be considered unacceptable.

Be careful when choosing your words, as confusion can result in cultural misunderstandings. Always try to modify your language to suit the listener as much as possible. Keep smiling! Your efforts at trying to help will shine through even though you may make an unintentional cultural gaff.

2. Non-verbal communication

Non-verbal communication is the process of conveying a message without the use of words either written or spoken. Non-verbal communication occurs in all person-to-person situations. Some people use more non-verbal communication than others, though we all use it to some degree. Some people read non-verbal communication better than others, but everyone forms an impression about the speaker based on their interpretation of their body language.

Non-verbal communication is traditionally more important when communicating with someone from a culturally diverse background where there is a spoken word language difficulty.

Types of non-verbal communication

- ✓ Your **stance** and **posture** may be interpreted as:
 - **Shoulders back** – positive attitude
 - **Shoulders slumped forward** – negative attitude.

- ✓ The **speed** with which you move may be interpreted as:
 - **Slow walk** – don't care
 - **Fast walk** – flat out and stressed.

- ✓ Your **facial expression** may be interpreted as:
 - **Grumpy face** – don't want to be at work; don't like the person they are talking to
 - **Smiling face** – happy with life; happy to work with customers.
- ✓ How you **hold your arms** may be interpreted as:
 - **Arms crossed** – defensive
 - **Arms at your side** – open to discussion

- ✓ **Hand and finger gestures** may be interpreted as:
 - **Waving a hand** – saying goodbye

- **Curling a finger** – beckoning
- **The thumbs up** – all is okay or some other more abusive message!
- ✓ How you attend to your **personal hygiene** may be interpreted as:
 - **Bad body odour** – don't care attitude; disrespect for others
 - **Hair tied back neatly** – person with pride; respect for others.
 - **Eye contact** may be interpreted as:
 - **Direct eye contact** – telling the truth, intimidating, sexual
 - **No eye contact** – not listening, disinterested or lying.

When using body language, be aware that you can also be transmitting feelings, which could be interpreted as conflicting with your words. It is important to be consciously aware of your own body language and that of others at all times when communicating.

Indeed, the following are of crucial in a business:

- Varied cultural interpretation of nonverbal behaviour and gestures
- Personal grooming, including dress and hygiene habits
- Language spoken
- Language written
- ✓ **Personal grooming and dress**

All staff are expected to comply with the requirements established by the employer but, naturally, these standards don't apply to customers. Without doubt some people dress to impress, and without doubt others dress to shock. We need to look beyond the clothes and grooming to what the person is about. We must ensure that we don't stereotype people simply on the basis of, say, their national dress, or grooming preferences that may be influenced by their cultural heritage.

The most important things to remember in relation to this are to:

- ✦ Not stare at people who are dressed differently – this applies especially to people who are dressed in their national dress
- ✦ Not make public derogatory comment about the way a customer presents themselves – it is however acceptable to make a positive and complimentary remark.

✓ **Hygiene habits**

Different cultures can have hygiene habits and activities that are different to what you may regard as normal. These variances should be accepted and accommodated and you must refrain from making adverse or negative comment.

These differences can include:

- ✦ The extent and timing of bathing or washing
- ✦ Frequency of bathing
- ✦ General ablution habits or styles
- ✦ Emphasis placed on personal hygiene – especially in relation to body odour.

✓ **Language spoken**

It is possible that one party thought they used a word in an appropriate context, but it may have been misinterpreted. This lack of a comprehensive understanding of a language can lead to many of the problems encountered. It is further possible that the lack of, say, an establishment to have a staff member who can communicate effectively with a person from a different language speaking background will give rise to frustration and annoyance.

Customers and colleagues may also have a strict position on bad language that causes an issue. For example, your personal broad-minded approach to bad language may not be shared by others and they may be upset or offended when they hear you use certain words. As a blanket statement, there is no room in the hospitality, tourism or events industry for staff to use bad language.

People from a different language speaking background can also be confused, embarrassed or offended by the use of local terms so this is best avoided.

• **Topic 2: Overcoming Language Barriers**

Introduction

Language barrier is everything that hinders effective communication. Providing the goodwill exists on your part to communicate with a person from another background, this can usually be successfully

accomplished. It will take a little extra time and will demand a little extra effort but it can normally be done.

There is no doubt that most failures to communicate between cultures are because one of the parties made no real and honest attempt to do so.

Language barriers

When faced with a language barrier, service staff should attempt to communicate through the use of gestures or simple words. While this is obviously not a perfect situation, it does at least show your desire to communicate. Gestures are preferable to saying nothing and risking the person feeling ignored.

1. The role of gestures

Attempts at gestures may include:

- Pointing to indicate a location, a position or a menu item
- Holding fingers up to establish quantities
- Rubbing your hands to indicate temperature
- Nodding your head in agreement
- Shaking your head in disagreement
- Using facial expressions to relay your feelings.

2. Planning and preparation

Very few attempts at overcoming language barriers will be successful unless there has been appropriate and sufficient planning and preparation: these can be seen as essential prerequisites. You should identify the languages that need to be taken into account. There are often more than just one, but often not more than three or four. Once these have been identified, develop phrases that will allow you to:

- **Meet, greet and farewell customers** – at different times of the day, and to different types of customers including men, women, children and business people
- **Provide simple directions**

- **Give simple instructions** – on how to use telephones, how to operate in-room and venue facilities
- **Answer simple enquiries** – such as questions relating to cost, availability of product, process of goods and services and local conditions
- **Prepare for, serve and assist customers** – in accordance with your designated work role and responsibilities. For instance, the language needs of a front office receptionist will differ to those of a room attendant which will be, in turn, different to those required by a food and beverage waiter or a bar attendant. This is also different to the language needs of electronics repairer as well as in mechanical area and even for Mason or Electrician.
- **Describe goods and service** – once again this will relate to your specific workplace role. For example, a food waiter should be able to describe tastes, smells, ingredients, cooking styles, portion sizes and so on.
Someone in a bank who describes services the offer like opening new account, loan requirements and types of credits in their bank.

Once you have developed these phrases you will need to practice them. Conducting role plays with staff from another country are a good idea and use them in the workplace whenever the opportunity arises.

3. Simple words in foreign languages

There is no expectation that you learn words in every language but you should identify countries from which co-workers and/or customers come and learn some simple words and phrases. The more you learn, the easier other words and phrases will become.

Make a start by learning simple words as follows:

- To greet and welcome
- To farewell and say goodbye
- Count the numbers 1 – 10
- The days of the week and months of the year
- Titles used by people including Mister and Misses
- Basic functions – walk, drive, sleep, eat and drink
- Basic establishment facilities
- Basic products and services

- Methods of transportation.

It can be useful to prepare a hard copy list that you can refer to, or to have a range of dual language dictionaries or phrase books. Never be afraid to try to communicate in foreign languages. Most people appreciate you making the effort even though your pronunciation may be wrong, or there is still a lack of clear understanding. You don't need to attend a formal course to learn these basic words or terms; you just need to have the desire to do so.

You can learn the above from:

- Customers
- The internet
- A foreign language dictionary
- Staff
- A local ethnic club or association.

4. Written communication

Where there is a problem with dialects or perhaps the customer cannot understand your accent, you may still be able to communicate but do so in writing. This can be especially true where staff have studied a second language. They can be reasonably competent with the written word but yet to develop their competency with the spoken word due to speed or accents. The use of pre-prepared written documents developed in various other languages is a great idea.

5. Sign language

When communicating with people with hearing impairment, it can be extremely useful to be able to use sign language. It may be worthwhile learning a few signs to help communicate.

LO.1.3. Obtain assistance from colleagues, reference books or outside organizations when required.

- **Topic 1: Learning the basics to do the job**

Introduction

Unless you have indicated to your employer that you have competencies with certain languages, no business will expect you to be proficiently communicate with people from other countries. They will, however, expect you to make an effort to learn the basics that will enable you to do your job properly.

To learn the basics, you will need to get help from other people, various agencies or external organisations. This section looks at where you might obtain such assistance.

1. Colleagues

You may be able to get help from co-workers or in-house trainers. Where a colleague is from a different speaking country, simply ask them to give you some lessons that cover basic words or phrases that may be helpful. This may be informal “training” but it can be very effective, and is a great way of demonstrating to them (and management) that you have an interest in their culture and in serving people from that country.

2. Customers

Never be afraid to ask customers to help you out, especially where the customer has good language skills. Make sure you don’t impose on them or their time but they will usually accommodate a request for either a very quick verbal “lesson” or a couple of written words or phrases.

3. Other people

In addition, you can seek information on different cultures and possibly get some language-related assistance from:

- Family, friends and acquaintances
- Service providers – private and public
- Suppliers
- Supervisors.

4. Sign language companies

Sign language companies provide training used for communicating with people with hearing impairment.

5. Translating and Interpreting Service

A Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS) may be useful if your organisation deals with lots of people from different language speaking backgrounds, also known as people from “culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds”.

6. Written information

Written information about different cultures and countries may be found through:

- The Internet – type key words or phrases in the search engine
- Media – especially newspapers, radio stations and magazines that are specific to certain countries
- Local cultural centres
- Local library – books and electronic formats
- Language centres
- Hospitality, industry and events industry groups or organisations
- Government or private training and educational providers
- Purchased or borrowed books.

- **Topic 2: Partnerships for efficient communication**

We have already mentioned some of the external organisations that may be able to help. They include:

- Interpreter services –private interpreters are also available on a fee-for-service basis
- Diplomatic services – various embassies can provide advice on where to obtain specific detailed information on languages and cultures. They may also have „Fact Sheets“ or similar that can be mailed or e-mailed to you. Some embassies may be able to provide on-the-spot interpretation of emergency language needs
- Appropriate government agencies
- Individual agencies specific to unique needs
- Department of Immigration and Citizenship

- Educational institutions – both public and private. These institutions can only be expected to provide advice and information to enrolled and fee-paying students or a commercial fee-for-service basis
- Disability advocacy groups.

Learning Unit 2: Address cross-cultural misunderstandings

LO 2.1. Identify issues that may cause conflict or misunderstanding in the workplace.

Introduction

It is important for all workplace conflict and misunderstandings to be identified immediately and dealt with on a case-by-case manner that is sensitive and respectful. This requirement applies to both colleagues and customers.

- **Topic 1: cultural Differences**

The cultural differences that you must ensure you take into account may relate to:

a. Race

The first basic fact to identify when communicating with people from another culture is to identify their race. That is, the country they come from. This is the primary indicator of what needs that person has in terms of their workplace needs for staff or their product and service needs for customers. You can determine their race by simply and politely asking them. This shows interest and helps demonstrate a willingness to accommodate their special needs.

b. Language

People from different countries may have trouble with your language. There is sometimes an expectation on our part that people from another country should speak your language but this is a false and dangerous assumption and one that is without basis.

In addition, those who have knowledge of your language can have trouble understanding you because of accents and local expressions.

It is generally accepted that we should:

- Speak slower to overseas people
- Avoid the use of industry jargon, local terms and expressions
- Try to learn some basic phrases in other languages
- Provide written information in a variety of languages. Where deemed necessary, many establishments provide a range of service information including maps, price lists, facilities and menus etc. in different languages to assist in this regard.

Many places also employ multi- or bi-lingual staff to help.

c. Special needs

Special needs commonly occur in relation to:

- Food
- Accommodation
- Privacy
- Religious devotion
- Beverages
- Sleeping requirements
- Business protocols.

Where a workplace regularly receives guests/customers from certain countries, there will usually be some form of in-house training and resources that assist you in offering services that are appropriate to meet these special needs.

Where these supports are not available, it is acceptable to ask the person what special needs they have and how you can assist them in meeting those needs.

The more you make the effort to meet these needs for customers, the better you and the establishment will be regarded and the greater will be the likelihood of repeat business from those people and referral business from those whom they recommend to us.

The more you meet these needs for colleagues, the greater will be the level of cooperation you receive from such people, and the more respect they will in turn have for you.

d. Family structure

The orientation we have to “the family” in your country may well be at odds with what clients from other cultures hold dear to them. The point being that we need to be respectful of the needs of others.

Family structure refers to the relationships that exist within families for the members of that family. It covers how family members treat each other, how they speak to each other, the freedom that family members are given, the roles of members of the family and the responsibilities that members are allocated or assumed to discharge.

Your perspective on family structure may not be the same as those from other cultures.

For example, different countries will have a different awareness and acceptance of:

- **The nuclear family** – where two generations of a family live together either by design or as a result of externally imposed need
- **Step-families** – where family units combine after divorce and there are children in the family from spouses who may not be in that family
- **Single-parent families** – where the family unit comprises only one parent plus a child or children.

This highlights the differences that can exist between cultures and again underlines that we must take care not to assume that our orientation to something will automatically be the same position taken by others. This doesn't make them wrong and us right, it just makes them different.

e. Disabilities

Whilst many of us encounter problems communicating with people suffering from certain disabilities, this problem is hugely compounded when the individual concerned is from another culture.

The keys are to:

- Identify the disabilities that colleagues and customers commonly present with.
- Plan how to accommodate these needs – by talking to support groups and talking to disabled people to learn about their needs, expectations and how they prefer to be treated.
- Implement the pre-planned strategies sensitively – meaning there is always a need to fine-tune service to meet specific individual need.

f. Gender

The equality experienced in your country may not be as strongly shared by people from other nations.

While many countries will have some form of equal opportunity legislation which purports to treat males and females equally, this arrangement does not exist within all cultures.

It is our role when dealing with people from another culture is to recognise this difference and accommodate it. It is not our role to try to force those people to align with your view in this regard.

While we may see it as acceptable to talk directly to a female customer, making direct eye contact and smiling to them, other countries may find this approach rude, offensive and indicative of sexual overtones.

g. Age

In some countries it may be the case that old age confers respect and prestige while in other countries it may be the young people who are regarded with respect and prestige.

In each country laws govern the treatment of people on the basis of age but these laws may not apply elsewhere.

We must be sensitive to these age-related considerations and treat each culture appropriately based on their traditional approach to age. We need to sensitively apply any legal requirements that apply to age-related issues, such as the service of alcohol, which may be different in different countries.

h. Sexual preference

In our country, it is a taboo to homosexual (gays and lesbians). But, sexual preference is not the taboo it once was in some countries; however, we need to be mindful of not giving offence to people who are different in this way. We also need to be mindful of not imposing our liberal approach in this regard onto others.

i. Law and Culture

All people should be valued and treated with respect when it comes to their individual differences. Equal Opportunity (EO) legislation has been devised in some countries to be enforced in society in general with specific emphasis on activities in all workplaces. These laws which may not exist in all countries can vary between different countries but remain essentially the same, identifying features that may cause prejudices among groups of people.

body language, are appropriate to the person and culture being communicated with.

• **Topic 2: The diversity of customers and colleagues**

People are different. Here below are a number of things that make us all different, including:

- **The way they live** – including where and how they live
- **Values and principles** – the importance placed on people, actions and things, and personal guidelines for living life
- **Educational background** – how far they got through schooling, and whether or not they did any further education
- **Sporting interests** – whether they play sport, or whether they are even interested in sport and which sport (football, cricket, Rugby, Volleyball, Tennis, Basketball and so forth.)
- **Food and beverage tastes** – do they drink alcohol or prefer juice, do they eat red meat or are they vegetarian?
- **Lifestyle background** – what car do they drive, where have they worked? What kind of house do they like to live in? Which kind of clothes do they like? Type of hair dress, haircut etc.
- **Place of birth** – which country where they born in? were they born in city or in rural areas?
- **Styles of communication** – what is their preferred communication medium and method?
- **Religious beliefs** – who or what do they believe in? Christian, Muslim, Buddhism, Atheist
- **The preferred language** – what is their preferred language?

All of these factors and a whole lot more, combine to produce a world full of different people. It is critical to remember that just because these people are different to you doesn't make them any better or worse. They are just different. In your industry workplace you must, therefore, make sure that any personal bias is not allowed to adversely influence and affect the way you interact with such individuals. In an industry that is such a strong service-oriented industry there is absolutely no room for prejudice.

Prejudice relates to holding a personal bias or point of view that disposes you to prejudging a person or situation rather than deal with the facts.

Valuing customers and colleagues

An essential element of working in a socially diverse environment is to make sure that customers and colleagues feel valued. This means making sure that they know and that we demonstrate in practical terms that those people are important to the business and that the business appreciates their presence.

As an individual worker within a business you must therefore make sure other staff understand that you place worth on their:

- Working abilities and skills
- Workplace and product knowledge
- Experience within the industry, customers and other relevant stakeholders including management, authorities and suppliers
- Their contribution to discussions – such as Occupational Health and Safety (OHS), general work planning, suggestions and input to daily workplace activities
- Achievement of team and workplace goals.

The key to doing this, is that the value you place on these co-workers should be based on them as an individual and not influenced by any irrelevant issues such as *age, gender, race or disabilities*.

Make sure all customers understand you place worth on their:

- Presence on the premises
- The money they spend with us
- The other customers they bring to the business.

• **Topic 3: Expressing respect and sensitivity**

1. Respect and sensitivity

Respect and sensitivity are two of the characteristics we should display towards colleagues and customers when demonstrating the value we place on them.

a. Respect

So what is involved in demonstrating respect for other workers, and for towards customers?

Respect means:

- **Holding that person in high regard for who they are, not what they are** – acknowledging them for being who they are
- **Being deferential in the way the person is treated** – as in the saying “treating the person with respect”
- **Showing courtesy to the person.**

b. Sensitivity

The second part in valuing others is to be genuinely sensitive to their personal individual needs where they have special needs based on their cultural diversity.

In many ways showing sensitivity is more difficult than being respectful because it takes more time and more commitment.

Being sensitive to the cultural needs of others involves:

- Identifying what their cultural or social background is
- Determining what special considerations should be given to that person
- Taking action to ensure that their specific cultural needs are met to the best of your ability, in-line with your other work-related obligations.

In essence, being sensitive means knowing that another person merits consideration based on their cultural or social background, and accommodating that need. Being sensitive is the exact opposite of knowing that a social or cultural need exists and ignoring it!

2. Internal and external customers

Customers come from outside the business and may be referred to as “**external**” customers. That is, they are external to the business. By contrast, “**internal**” customers are other staff, workers and colleagues from within the business.

This allows us to regard all people with whom we interact as customers. This is useful as it underlines the need for us to treat everyone in the workplace with respect and sensitivity

It is very true that a business does not exist except for its customers but it is easy to forget this and to forget how essential customers (*internal and external*) are to all businesses.

3. Different cultural groups

In your working life in the industry it is possible that you will function alongside people from a variety of different culture. Some of these will be first generation and many will be second or third generation. In lots of cases it will be obvious by virtue of appearance and language that they have a different background, but in many other cases this will not be so obvious. It may occur that our industry employs people from many countries either as full-time staff who have residency in the country, or as those working on visas.

Locations from which these people arrive include:

- East African countries
- Other African countries
- European Community countries
- Middle Eastern countries
- Subcontinent Countries
- North & South American countries
- African Countries
- Chinese in building and construction
- Others

It is of crucial, in any business to know where your customers come from. It is important that the organisation and your staff understand the profile of your customers, so you can tailor their products and services accordingly.

• Topic 4: Learning about difference cultural requirements

Knowing about the various cultural differences that exist does not come naturally. The first requirement in learning about these differences is a desire to find out about how these cultures vary, and how you can

accommodate those needs. Without this individual wish to find out information it is rare that industry employees will ever successfully be able to work effectively with people from socially and culturally diverse environments.

In practical terms, the following can assist in finding out what is culturally appropriate for the people with whom you may be required to work or interact.

1. Attend a cultural awareness program

These have become very popular over recent years and are structured programs that guide you through the lifestyles and backgrounds of various cultures.

Some establishments conduct regular, compulsory in-house cultural awareness programs especially where they have lots of staff or customers from a certain country.

These classes explain cultural needs, wants and preferences and advise you in relation to a range of things such as:

- Basic greetings and phrases
- Body language of that country – what is acceptable and what is not, what may be offensive and things to avoid
- General expectations of people from that country – in terms of service, formality, food and beverages, visitor expectations
- History of their country
- Basic geographical awareness
- Contributions made by that country to the world
- Religious issues and observations
- Values and value systems
- Customs and taboos
- Beliefs
- Role and importance of family.

2. Talk to people from different cultures and countries

Naturally this can be difficult where there is language issue, but in many cases you should be able to find someone from a culture that speaks your language and will be all too willing to explain their culture to you. Many people are eager to share their culture when they find an interested person.

You might find a suitable person:

- On the staff where you work
- Amongst the customers you deal with
- Amongst your friends
- Amongst the network of contacts, you should start developing as part of your professional role within the industry
- Working with an industry stakeholder – this may be a supplier, service agency, government body or peak industry body.

Many cultures have clubs or groups in different locations and a phone call to them can often quickly answer any query you might have.

Many of them will be willing to arrange for a speaker to come and talk to staff where you work, often at no charge, because they see part of their role as promoting an understanding of their culture within your country.

3. Reading books, watching DVDs and getting on-line

There are lots of excellent books about different cultures and newspapers can also be a great source of information. Travel documentaries provide a good background for understanding too. Searching the “net” for various cultures or support services is also a good way to go.

4. Visit embassies and consulates of various countries

You may wish to visit the embassies or consulates of key countries that are important to your business. They will be able to provide you with literature or may be able to meet and chat to you.

• Topic 5: Causes of conflicts

1. What is conflict and misunderstanding in the workplace?

In relation to working effectively and successfully in a socially diverse environment, “*conflict* and *misunderstanding*” must be given a very broad interpretation and definition. Anything that upsets another person, whether that person is a customer or colleague, can be regarded as a conflict or a misunderstanding. There are degrees of it ranging from being mildly upset all the way through to outright anger and rage.

Addressing workplace conflict and misunderstanding properly and as early as possible seeks to:

- Keep all conflict and misunderstanding at the “mild” end of the spectrum
- Clarify any perceptions that arose due to misunderstanding
- Rectify the situation to the greatest extent possible, given the circumstances that applied.

There are a number of key areas that can cause conflict misunderstanding in the workplace. Remember that all messages sent, whether verbal or non-verbal, are part of a two-way process. If a message is not interpreted in the way the sender intended, problems can easily arise.

Difficulties or conflict can also arise out of misunderstandings due to:

- Poor communication
- Lack of communication
- Intolerance
- Impatience
- Poor judgement
- Conflicting personal values, beliefs and opinions
- Personal prejudices.

Examples of situations that can cause conflict or misunderstanding

Misunderstandings may occur when:

- **Welcoming clients** – due to the body language used or an incorrect attempt to use a foreign language to greet people. The informal or formal manner used by different people can readily

give offence or if an Asian or German guest is referred to by their first name. Similarly, a handshake can cause embarrassment to some guests who prefer a brief bow instead

- **Giving directions or instructions** – where the use of even simple language and gestures leads to confusion or the wrong message being received by the client
- **Answering questions** – where the necessary complexity of a response causes misunderstanding and frustration
- **Serving customers** – for example, offence may be caused in the following situations:
 - ❖ Offering an alcoholic drink to someone whose religion forbids the consumption of liquor
 - ❖ Recommending pork or shellfish dishes to certain customers
 - ❖ Serving beef-based dishes to certain customers
 - ❖ When building a house to a Muslim and put a Cross sign on his house
- **Describing products, services and facilities** – especially where the description is somewhat excessive and leads the guest to false expectations. Many overseas visitors have a strict time constraint on their time and anything that wastes this precious commodity is definitely frowned on
- **Working with colleagues** – the pressure of work sometimes gives rise to a comment or “look” that is easily misinterpreted. There is always a need to act professionally while at work in order, amongst other things, to prevent these situations arising
- **Socialising with colleagues after work** – even in a social setting, it is possible to give unintended offence by a look or a statement that is deemed by the other party to be offensive or inappropriate.

• **Topic 6: How to identify Issues that may cause conflict at Workplace**

Issues causing conflict or misunderstanding in the workplace are most commonly identified by:

a. Personal observation

This is where you notice by seeing or hearing that something you have said or done has upset someone. Commonly you notice a change in their facial expressions, their demeanour or the way in which they verbally respond to you. This may include either changing their previous attitude to you or shunning you. You become better at doing this with experience.

Unfortunately, the more you upset people, the better you get at identifying the factors that caused the problem!

b. Being informed by the person themselves

This is where the person explains that your action or words have upset them and have offended them. Any situation where a person discloses that you have upset them should be seen as a positive because it gives you the opportunity to rectify things as opposed to having matters simmer away, get worse and turn into a much bigger problem than is really necessary.

You will never get a better chance to put things right than where the person involved comes up to you and tells you about the issue.

Remember:

- **It isn't always your fault** – the misunderstanding may be caused by their misinterpretation of facts or words
- **Be open-minded to their assertion that you said or did something unacceptable** – don't immediately become defensive and start trying to defend a position that is essentially wrong or indefensible
- **Apologise where necessary** – it is truly amazing how many issues, disputes, misunderstandings and conflicts can be successfully resolved by a simple yet genuine and sincere apology
- **Take steps to make sure you don't repeat any actions or statements that gave rise to the issue** – this should apply even where you believe you were genuinely not „at fault“. The crux of the decision to change your actions or words should not be whether you are, in fact right or wrong in what you said or did, but whether or not it actually gave offence or upset someone.

c. Being told by another person that you have upset someone

It may be a staff member who tells you that you have upset another staff member or annoyed a customer, a supervisor resulting from a personal observation or complaint or another person within the group to

which a person belongs. Where you are informed by a third party that you have upset someone, it may be best to be guided by their perception regarding the situation about what you should do in response.

In many cases they will simply want to let you know about what you have done. They often do not want any action to be taken, or even an apology to be given. If, however they indicate that an apology or some other action is appropriate, this must be followed up as you deem fitting for the circumstances that apply.

LO 2.2. Consideration of possible cultural differences while resolving difficulties or misunderstandings at workplace.

- **Topic 1: Settlement of misunderstandings**

Introduction

When faced with a misunderstanding in the workplace, we must be prepared to think about all cross-cultural factors likely to affect the situation. This requirement must apply to situations that involve both customers and colleagues. In many cases, it is only when cross-cultural factors are considered, that the matter can be truly resolved because it is these factors that may have caused the problem or which give the problem its true context.

When a cross-cultural misunderstanding occurs with a customer, it is necessary for service staff to take the appropriate steps to find a resolution. All talk should be honest, explained clearly, briefly and in simple unbiased terms.

Actions that can help resolve the situation

This may involve you in:

- **Discussing the issue in a courteous manner** – which will demonstrate a desire to fix the problem
- **Speaking directly with the person concerned in a respectful way**

- **Apologising for offence or misunderstanding that may have been caused** – even where there is a belief that you personally did not say or do anything that genuinely merits an apology
- **Taking time to talk with the person concerned** – to truly identify the relevant aspects of the situation and determine the facts and feelings involved in the situations
- **Asking for advice from the other party** – to work out how similar future problems may be avoided or to determine what action to take in the future when a similar problem arises
- Seeking advice from a supervisor or manager about the issue to gain the benefit of their experience with similar circumstances
- **Attending mediation** – where there is a dispute between staff this provides an opportunity for both parties to air their views in front of an independent third person. This third party acts as a mediator and may have the final decision on the course of action to be taken. This action may include further training or education, or implementing in-house team building programs
- **Enrolling in a language class** - to improve first or second language skills that will help avert language-based problems
- Enrolling in other courses that may assist in improving cultural awareness or interpersonal skills.

Being aware that other cultures have different value systems, beliefs and priorities, enables us to view the personal actions of others from a more balanced and informed perspective. It moves us from the stance of “we are right, they are wrong”, and allows us to accept that something different is not necessarily wrong – it’s just different: no more, no less!

❖ key phrases

From time to time we all have to deal with conflicts. Some of them take place at work, and others affect our love life. Conflict is a normal part of any social environment, but it's better if you know how to handle the problem.

Here below is a couple of useful phrases that will help you get out of any conflict the best way possible

16. I'm with you on that...

If you have to go through a difficult conversation, start it with this particular phrase. Even if the blame is on you, your readiness to fix the situation and give a helping hand can work magic. Explain to your opponent that you're on the same team, and this will help you avoid confrontation.

17. Yes, you're right...

Try to agree on something with your opponent, and wait for amazing results. If you work in sales and one of your customers isn't satisfied with some product or service, start the conversation with this phrase. When people realize that they're heard, it's more likely that they will conduct a constructive dialogue.

18. Tell me what it is about me that irritates you.

If you see that a colleague doesn't like you, the best thing you can do is find out what exactly irritates them. Even if you aren't able to (or you don't want to) change this thing about yourself, you'll show that you're a reasonable and mature person.

19. How can I fix this?

For example, if your boss didn't like your report, all you have to do is ask for new instructions to fix the situation. Try to get as much information as you can about exactly what needs to be done. This will help you end the conflict and avoid them in the future.

20. No need to take that tone of voice with me.

If a situation gradually turns into a confrontation, avoid conflict by all means. Don't get emotional. Maybe try leaving the building. All you need is some time alone. Cool down, and then resolve the problem without playing the blame game.

21. It's been worse than this. We'll get through it!

If you and your partner experienced far more difficult problems in the past, you 2 can overcome this one as well. It's just another fight that won't ruin your relationship. Use this phrase to remind yourselves that you're a great team and there isn't anything you can't do. Together, you can work it out!

22. What can I do to change the situation?

If you're ready to compromise, this phrase can help you avoid a bigger fight. Your partner might want you to take some action, so it's a perfect way to express your readiness and get detailed instructions. It's always good to know what your partner expects from you, even if you can't do exactly what he or she wants.

23. Help me understand. / Please, explain what you mean.

When 2 people are having a fight, it's hard to think clearly. Take a moment, and ask your partner to explain their position. Maybe it's not as unacceptable as you thought at the beginning of the argument.

24. Let's look at this from a different perspective.

Being able to see a problem from different angles is one of the characteristics of a mature personality. 2 partners have at least 2 different points of view, which means it's twice as easy to find a compromise.

25. I understand.

A real lifesaver when you need to break a vicious circle of misunderstanding. Usually, none of the opponents are willing to listen and to hear, which is why one of you has to pronounce this phrase. It'll be the first step to resolving the conflict without arguing and yelling.

26. We should stop fighting.

It's a simple yet very effective phrase. If you feel that the conflict has gone too far, the best thing to do is stop where you are. There's no reason to fight over who is right because when it comes to relationships there should be no such thing as winning.

27. You're so pretty when you're angry!

A compliment, even during a fight, goes a long way. Plus, after receiving a compliment, your body releases the hormones of happiness. The result: your opponent smiles, and the conflict is settled.

28. Let's work on this problem together!

Remember that this phrase can save your relationship only if you can listen and accept someone else's opinion. It shows that you care about this person and that you're ready to hear his or her reasons.

29. I understand why you're upset...

If your partner appeals to emotions rather than uses arguments, just take his or her side. It won't help you avoid the conflict but it will make your conversation much more constructive.

30. Let's take a break, think it through, and then make the decision.

Sometimes in order to stop all the finger-pointing and blaming each other, you simply need to press the "pause" button. Take a 5-second break, and try to remember why the fight started in the first place. Maybe it had no reason, and the 2 of you were just in a bad mood. If so, breathe in, breathe out, and the argument will end naturally.

❖ The Collaborating

is when the concern is to satisfy both sides. It is highly assertive and highly cooperative; the goal is to find a "win/win" solution. Appropriate uses for the collaborating style include integrating solutions, learning, merging perspectives, gaining commitment, and improving relationships. Using this style can support open discussion of issues, task proficiency, equal distribution of work amongst the team members, better brainstorming, and development of creative problem solving. This style is appropriate to use frequently in a team environment. Collaborating skills include the ability to use active or effective listening, confront situations in a non-threatening way, analyze input, and identify underlying concerns. Overuse of the collaborating style can lead to spending too much time on trivial matters, diffusion of responsibility, being taken advantage of, and being overloaded with work. Under use can result in using quick fix solutions, lack of commitment by other team members, disempowerment,

❖ Avoidance to compromise own values

The Avoiding Style is when you do not satisfy your concerns or the concerns of the other person. This style is low assertiveness and low cooperativeness. The goal is to delay. It is appropriate to use this style when there are issues of low importance, to reduce tensions, or to buy time. Avoidance is also appropriate when

you are in a low power position and have little control over the situation, when you need to allow others to deal with the conflict, or when the problem is symptomatic of a much larger issue and you need to work on the core issue. To develop skills in this style use foresight in knowing when to withdraw, learn to sidestep loaded questions or sensitive areas by using diplomacy, become skillful at creating a sense of timing, and practice leaving things unresolved. Overuse of the avoidance style can result in a low level of input, decision making by default, and allowing issues to fester, which can produce a breakdown in communication between team members. This can inhibit brainstorming sessions from being productive and can prevent the team from functioning. People who overuse avoidance feel they cannot speak frankly without fear of repercussions. The overuse of conflict avoidance can often be a result of childhood experiences, past work-related incidents, and negative experiences with conflict resolution. Behaviours associated with the overuse of avoidance include being silent, sullen, and untruthful when asked if something is wrong being. A milder form of avoidance behavior is when the team member procrastinates about getting work done and deliberately takes an opposing point of view inappropriately during a decision-making situation, or is timid, withdrawn, or shy. Extreme behaviours can occur when avoidance is overused. A person begins to be negative, critical and sarcastic. Other extreme avoidance behaviours include becoming passive aggressive by being late and not paying attention at meetings. It also lends a greater importance to this style as compared to the other styles because you have devoted such a disproportionate amount of time to the style.) Under use of the avoidance style results in hostility and hurt feelings. In addition, work can become overwhelming because too many issues are taken on at once, resulting in an inability to prioritize and delegate. When avoidance is underused a team member may deny that there is a problem and allow their hurt feelings to prevent communication.

❖ **being accommodating**

The Accommodating Style is foregoing your concerns in order to satisfy the concerns of others. This style is low assertiveness and high cooperativeness; the goal is to yield. The accommodating style is appropriate to use in situations when you want to show that you are reasonable, develop performance, create good will, keep peace, retreat, or for issues of low importance. Accommodating skills include the ability to sacrifice, the ability to be selfless, the ability to obey orders, and the ability to yield. Overuse of the accommodating style results in ideas getting little attention, restricted influence, loss of contribution, and anarchy. People who overuse the accommodating style exhibit a lack of desire to change and usually demonstrate anxiety over future uncertainties. One of their main desires may be to keep everything the same. When accommodating is overused certain behaviours emerge. Some of these emergent behaviours include giving

up personal space, making "me" or other victim statements, being overly helpful and then holding a grudge, and speaking in an extremely quiet almost unintelligible voice. Under use of the accommodating style can result in lack of rapport, low morale, and an inability to yield. When the accommodating style is underused a person may display apathy as a way of not addressing the anger or hurt, and make statements full of innuendo and double meanings.

Six Fundamental Patterns of Cultural Differences

In a world as complex as ours, each of us is shaped by many factors, and culture is one of the powerful forces that acts on us. Anthropologists Kevin Avruch and Peter Black explain the importance of culture this way:

...One's own culture provides the "lens" through which we view the world; the "logic" ... by which we order it; the "grammar" ... by which it makes sense. In other words, culture is central to what we see, how we make sense of what we see, and how we express ourselves.

As people from different cultural groups take on the exciting challenge of working together, cultural values sometimes conflict. We can misunderstand each other, and react in ways that can hinder what are otherwise promising partnerships. Oftentimes, we aren't aware that culture is acting upon us. Sometimes, we are not even aware that we have cultural values or assumptions that are different from others'.

Six fundamental patterns of cultural differences -- ways in which cultures, as a whole, tend to vary from one another -- are described below. The descriptions point out some of the recurring causes of cross-cultural communication difficulties. As you enter into multicultural dialogue or collaboration, keep these generalized differences in mind. Next time you find yourself in a confusing situation, and you suspect that cross-cultural differences are at play, try reviewing this list. Ask yourself how culture may be shaping your own reactions, and try to see the world from others' points of view.

7. Different Communication Styles

The way people communicate varies widely between, and even within, cultures. One aspect of communication style is language usage. Across cultures, some words and phrases are used in different ways. For example, even in countries that share the English language, the meaning of "yes" varies from "maybe, I'll consider it" to "definitely so," with many shades in between.

Another major aspect of communication style is the degree of importance given to non-verbal communication. Non-verbal communication includes not only facial expressions and gestures; it also involves seating arrangements, personal distance, and sense of time. In addition, different norms regarding the appropriate degree of assertiveness in communicating can add to cultural misunderstandings. For instance, some white Americans typically consider raised voices to be a sign that a fight has begun, while some black, Jewish and Italian Americans often feel that an increase in volume is a sign of an exciting conversation among friends. Thus, some white Americans may react with greater alarm to a loud discussion than would members of some American ethnic or non-white racial groups.

8. Different Attitudes Toward Conflict

Some cultures view conflict as a positive thing, while others view it as something to be avoided. In the U.S., conflict is not usually desirable; but people often are encouraged to deal directly with conflicts that do arise. In fact, face-to-face meetings customarily are recommended as the way to work through whatever problems exist. In contrast, in many Eastern countries, open conflict is experienced as embarrassing or demeaning; as a rule, differences are best worked out quietly. A written exchange might be the favored means to address the conflict.

9. Different Approaches to Completing Tasks

From culture to culture, there are different ways that people move toward completing tasks. Some reasons include different access to resources, different judgments of the rewards associated with task completion, different notions of time, and varied ideas about how relationship-building and task-oriented work should go together.

When it comes to working together effectively on a task, cultures differ with respect to the importance placed on establishing relationships early on in the collaboration. A case in point, Asian and Hispanic cultures tend to attach more value to developing relationships at the beginning of a shared project and more emphasis on task completion toward the end as compared with European-Americans. European-Americans tend to focus immediately on the task at hand, and let relationships develop as they work on the task. This does not mean that people from any one of these cultural backgrounds are more or less committed to accomplishing the task, or value relationships more or less; it means they may pursue them differently.

10. Different Decision-Making Styles

The roles individuals play in decision-making vary widely from culture to culture. For example, in the U.S., decisions are frequently delegated -- that is, an official assigns responsibility for a particular matter to a subordinate. In many Southern European and Latin American countries, there is a strong value placed on holding decision-making responsibilities oneself. When decisions are made by groups of people, majority rule is a common approach in the U.S.; in Japan consensus is the preferred mode. Be aware that individuals' expectations about their own roles in shaping a decision may be influenced by their cultural frame of reference.

11. Different Attitudes Toward Disclosure

In some cultures, it is not appropriate to be frank about emotions, about the reasons behind a conflict or a misunderstanding, or about personal information. Keep this in mind when you are in a dialogue or when you are working with others. When you are dealing with a conflict, be mindful that people may differ in what they feel comfortable revealing. Questions that may seem natural to you -- What was the conflict about? What was your role in the conflict? What was the sequence of events? -- may seem intrusive to others. The variation among cultures in attitudes toward disclosure is also something to consider before you conclude that you have an accurate reading of the views, experiences, and goals of the people with whom you are working.

12. Different Approaches to Knowing

Notable differences occur among cultural groups when it comes to epistemologies -- that is, the ways people come to know things. European cultures tend to consider information acquired through cognitive means, such as counting and measuring, more valid than other ways of coming to know things. Compare that to African cultures' preference for affective ways of knowing, including symbolic imagery and rhythm. Asian cultures' epistemologies tend to emphasize the validity of knowledge gained through striving toward transcendence.

Recent popular works demonstrate that our own society is paying more attention to previously overlooked ways of knowing. Indeed, these different approaches to knowing could affect ways of analyzing a community problem or finding ways to resolve it. Some members of your group may want to do library research to understand a shared problem better and identify possible solutions.

Others may prefer to visit places and people who have experienced challenges like the ones you are facing, and get a feeling for what has worked elsewhere.

LO 2.3. Referring problems and unresolved issues to the appropriate team leader or supervisor for follow-up.

- **Topic 1: Raising issue to the appropriate level at Workplace**

Introduction

There may be a need in your workplace to refer any issues relating to cross-cultural issues to management. This can be to help them ensure they discharge their responsibilities in relation to Equal Opportunity legislation. In other situations, there may only be a need to refer unresolved issues to management, so that they can assist in finding an acceptable and effective solution that accommodates, to the best extent possible, everyone's culturally based needs.

Note that management are often faced with a difficult situation in relation to this as they are often required to accommodate the needs, wants and preferences of a customer or staff member from another culture while still at the same time respecting the needs, wants and preferences of local employees.

In fact, all these can be done through:

- ❖ **Informal communication** - you can informally communicate to someone especially verbal reporting.
- ❖ **Informal meeting** where you need to meet informally the responsible person.
- ❖ **Mediation**: this is to mediate two concerned parties.
- ❖ **Formal communication**: people can also be communicated formally either by email or through a letter
- ❖ **Formal writing**: this may refer to the written document either a formal report or a written letter.
- ❖ **Formal meetings**: this kind of meeting should produce a written report.

Work ethics: this is to refer to the codes of conduct based on the working environment. Generally speaking, guests expect us as staff to have an appropriate work ethic. They expect us to be polite, to offer excellent levels of service, to meet their needs and to be helpful.

When they see us ignoring their presence or not attending to their needs they can become disappointed and disgruntled. The danger is that they misinterpret this lack of professionalism as some sort of deliberate negative action aimed specifically at them because of their culture or background. A similar problem can exist in relation to other staff with whom you work.

Staff from another country may have a work ethic that demands they are focused and professional at all times. These people may find it difficult to accept a lesser standard of commitment from local workers and this can lead to negative feelings from both sides. It is to be expected that everyone's attitude to work is different and some people may work harder than we do, while others may work less hard.

Central to this discussion is the impression that these working hard or less hard images send to other people. A person who works hard may be regarded as just trying to please the boss by someone else, and avoided or even ridiculed for that reason.

Another person may regard that high level of work as normal, while another may see it as being slack and regard the person as lazy and to be avoided, while another person acknowledges it for what it is - hard work.

- **Topic 2: Referring problems and unresolved issues to the appropriate team leader or supervisor for follow-up**

There may be a need in your workplace to refer any issues relating to cross-cultural issues to management. This can be to help them ensure they discharge their responsibilities in relation to Equal Opportunity legislation. In other situations, there may only be a need to refer unresolved issues to management, so that they can assist in finding an acceptable and effective solution that accommodates, to the best extent possible, everyone's culturally based needs.

Note that management are often faced with a difficult situation in relation to this as they are often required to accommodate the needs, wants and preferences of a customer or staff member from

another culture while still at the same time respecting the needs, wants and preferences of local employees.

1. Know when to refer issues to management

It is always important to know when and where to draw the line in relation to any cross-cultural misunderstanding. In this context there are two things to consider:

a. Notify the appropriate person when you don't seem to be making any headway in reaching a resolution

This commonly occurs where no positive progress seems to be occurring and things are just getting worse.

This general involves situations where emotions are becoming more obvious. This might include crying, threats, swearing, aggressive behaviour, excessive gestures. Those involved appear to be adopting an entrenched position that doesn't appear to hold any room for compromise or movement towards a genuine solution.

b. Notify the appropriate person after you believe you have come to a solution. This should be done so that any necessary follow-up and debriefing can be arranged.

This follow-up action can include:

- Revisions to standard operating procedure within the establishment – such as changes to policies, procedures, training manuals or operational checklists
- Inclusion of the issues at staff meetings and briefing sessions – so that other staff can learn from whatever was the cause of the problem or issue
- Making contact with those involved in order to:
 - Demonstrate their concern in relation to the matter
 - Ensure that the agreed solution has, in fact, genuinely resolved the situation.

2. Who should problems be referred to?

Depending on the establishment, and its organisational structure, the appropriate person could be:

- Your team leader

- Your supervisor
- The manager
- The business owner.

Reference(s):

1. Axtell, R. E., & Parker Pen Company. (1993). *Do's and taboos around the world*; New York: Wiley.
2. House, R. J., & Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness Research Program. (2004). *Culture, leadership, and organizations: The GLOBE study of 62 societies*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
3. Meyer, E. (2014). *The culture map: Breaking through the invisible boundaries of global business*. Public Affairs.
4. Schwartz, S. (2006). A theory of cultural value orientations: Explication and applications. *Comparative Sociology*, 5, 137-182.
5. ASEAN 2012 Trainee Manual Work in a socially diverse environment, TM_Work_in_a_socially_diverse_environment_310812.docx

Further reading recommendation

- <http://www2.andrews.edu/~tidwell/bsad560/NonVerbal.html>
- <http://www.csupomona.edu/~tassi/gestures.htm>
- <http://www.ling.gu.se/~biljana/gestures2.html>
- <http://www.spanishprograms.com/spanish-culture.htm>
- http://stephan.dahl.at/nonverbal/culture_and_nonverbal.html

- <http://www.ialf.edu/kipbipa/papers/MuhamadHandiGunawan.doc>
- <http://www.cba.uni.edu/buscomm/nonverbal/Culture.htm>
- http://www.beyondintractability.org/essay/cross-cultural_communication/
- <http://www.bettercommunicationresults.com.au/nonverbal-communication.html>.
- <http://www.orvillejenkins.com/whatisculture/greetingscul.html> in order to gain more information about the way different cultures greet each other.
- <http://www.courses.vcu.edu/ENG-652/tbuchanan/levels.htm>. For further information about levels of formality and informality.

For further information about appropriate non-verbal communication go to <http://www.multicultural.qld.gov.au/>. Click on “Training” and then “Cross-cultural communication”

- Visit: [http://www.up.ac.za/dspace/bitstream/2263/3873/1/Mafunisa_Positive_\(2000\).pdf](http://www.up.ac.za/dspace/bitstream/2263/3873/1/Mafunisa_Positive_(2000).pdf) for interesting information on work ethic and multi-culturalism.

The following websites provide more information on the point of customs, beliefs and values:

- <http://internationaleye.wordpress.com/culture04/>
- <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Meal>
- <http://iml.jou.ufl.edu/projects/Fall02/Capulong/customs.html>