



## METHODS TO OVERCOME LANGUAGE BARRIERS

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### Abstract

Any linguistic impediment that causes confusion or restricts comprehension is referred to as a language barrier. National or foreign language may be a barrier, but so may specialize knowledge or speaking issues. Common examples of linguistic obstacles include people from various countries engaging with one another, people from different countries greeting one another differently, and people speaking the same language speaking in distinct dialects. Linguistic barriers are greatly influenced by culture. Conversation that is formal, basic, and easy breaks down language and boundary barriers. Language barriers arise when persons or groups speak different languages or dialects. Dialectical differences can cause communication difficulties, as well as misconceptions and gaps.

**Key Words:** barriers, communication, country, culture, knowledge, language, translation

### METHODOLOGIES

#### 1. Know the Basics

It's always a good idea to know a few basic words ahead of arriving in another country – even in areas where English is generally widely understood or spoken. Knowing how to say words like 'hello', 'goodbye', 'thank you' are obvious, however, other phrases such as 'where is the toilet', 'do you speak English', 'please repeat that slowly' and 'I'm allergic to...' are also important.

Ahead of traveling to your destination, think about whether you have any friends, family, or acquaintances who are from that country or have been and can give you some tips on phrases. There are also plenty of apps nowadays that can help you practice and pronounce basic words – Duolingo is a free app that tests your knowledge in a variety of languages such as French and Spanish. At the same time, Word Lens immediately translates a foreign word when you hover over it with your smartphone. If you are flying to your destination, some planes' entertainment systems have language programs, so that you can also learn a few phrases ahead of arriving.

#### 2. Listen and Learn

Just as it's best to observe how people interact to understand the culture, it's also a good idea to listen to how people communicate to identify the words and phrases of a country.

In Japan, for example, people will say 'Daijooibu' often, which translates to 'ok' or 'alright' in a variety of situations – whether it's in response to someone genuinely asking about your welfare/safety to someone accidentally bumping into you on the street.

Even in English-speaking countries, there can be a disconnect between words and phrases. In Australia, for example, 'how are you?' translates into a quick 'how's it goin'?', which can baffle many native English travelers (particularly compounded with the broad Aussie accent).

As you observe people communicate and also get involved in conversations, don't be afraid to clarify the words, to help with building your own vocabulary. The more you know, the easier communicating will become as the days go by.

Find language classes in your area or practice the language online. The process of learning a new language helps you build vocabulary, improve grammar, and learn words and phrases to begin your journey to mastery.



### **3. Speak Slowly and Use Visual Cues**

Patience is a big part of overcoming the language barrier. It can certainly be easy to feel confused, disgruntled and frustrated when you feel that you are not being understood by someone or vice versa. Sometimes to overcome this, people tend to talk loudly and use more descriptions, which can be more confusing to the person on the receiving end of the conversation, who is looking out for one-off words and phrases that they recognize to be able to piece the conversation together. Articulating each syllable or letter of the word and playing charades to support your points can be more effective – for example, pretending to take a photo with your invisible camera in your hands, or motioning with your camera can easily translate into your request to someone on whether you can snap a shot of them.

Another good idea is to carry a pen and paper with you, besides a trusty foreign language dictionary.

### **4. Sketch it**

It is a good idea to carry a pen and paper with you at all times. A crude drawing of a landmark, a sketch of a map and your surroundings, or spelling words to watch out for can break down any misunderstandings.

Time to start working on your Pictionary skills!

Or, if you realize your drawing skills are a bit lacking, you could load up a few photos of the main things you want to see and then show them to the locals; they should be able to recognize what's in the pictures and point you in the right direction. You can either bring the photos with you or save them on your phone.

### **5. Use a Foreign Language Dictionary, or an App**

Will you have an extended stay in a destination that speaks a single language? (e.g. South America – Spanish) If so, it might be a good idea to buy a foreign language dictionary.

When you find yourself stuck trying to communicate, you can search for what you want to say in your local language and point out the translation to the other person using the book.

If you have an iPhone or Android smartphone, you can use the Google Translate app. The app supports over 50 languages and lets you type in entire phrases, not only single words. And it's got a really cool audio feature, so if you're not sure how to pronounce a word, you can touch the volume icon and listen to the pronunciation.

If it sounds too difficult to say, then you could ask someone to listen to the audio so they know what you are asking about. Keep in mind that it might not always be a perfect translation, but it should at least give you a general idea of what you want to say.

### **6. Keep it Simple**

Think about the main words that you are conveying when you are communicating with someone – they are looking just as much for the clues as you string together the sentence. To get your point across, you may want to take shortcuts in how you communicate, such as saying “photo?” rather than “can I take a photo of you and your store?” which may suffice. Let's say you are traveling to China so you can learn some basic Chinese vocabulary and phrases to introduce yourself or ask for directions.

Also, get rid of any slang from your vocabulary. “It's raining cats and dogs” could simply be translated into “it's raining very heavily”, for example. Even more simply put, think about what words are typically used – *restroom/bathroom* doesn't always translate as easily as *toilet*, which is more direct, straightforward and understood.

### **7. Don't expect to Understand all of the Answers**

Let's say you have gotten pretty comfortable with asking basic questions to help you get around. You are getting more confident on your trip and suddenly realize you need to ask something a bit more complicated than just asking for directions and pointing. Some locals may not realize that you don't



know their language well enough to understand their answers and might just ramble on about where to get the best food or how to find that really cool monument that most tourists miss out on because it's not in the guidebooks.

In the same way that you should keep your comments simple, it's a good idea to try to elicit answers that are limited to one- or two-word responses, or gestures. Let's say you heard about a restaurant and want to know what the locals think. You could say something like "Restaurant good?" and then wait for the local version of "Yes", "No", "So-so", etc. Typically, the person you are asking won't go into a detailed description of how the restaurant's owner's son got into an argument with the dad and then left to open up a better version 3 miles away in a completely different neighborhood and now serves much better food. And if they do, then consider it a free language lesson.

### **8. Know a Related Language**

Many of us have taken intro classes in one or two of the main foreign languages (Spanish, French, German, Italian, etc). And while you may not have paid much attention way back then or have forgotten much of what you learned, some of it will likely come back when you try using it when you are on vacation. And using the tricks in this guide will certainly help.

But what happens if you are in Italy and only know basic French or Spanish? Since these are all related languages, you can give your Spanish a try. Chances are you, your basic phrases and vocabulary will be of help. And if you are in more touristy cities, then the locals will be used to people from all kinds of different places trying to make themselves understood. Both you and the locals may end up speaking a confusing mix of languages and even invented words, but for the most part, you should be able to communicate.

Depending on where you are from, you may be able to use your native language or a second language in countries that you might not expect. For example, you can use French in many African countries, German in many places in Eastern Europe, and Turkish in Central Asia.

Check out this cool infographic from Business Insider showing the major second languages spoken in different parts of the world.

### **9. Have Fun and take it in your Stride**

While communicating in foreign lands can be challenging, the main thing is not to take yourself too seriously. Being "lost in translation" is not necessarily a bad thing – learning new words and phrases can go hand in hand with uncovering new sights to learn more about another country.

Don't be afraid to take the plunge and try to learn a few phrases, and keep building upon this as you travel. A smile, a kind and patient approach, and a little practice each day can go a long way – and many locals appreciate the effort you put in learning some words. Your pronunciation may be far from perfect, but some of your fondest and most unforgettable memories may be a humorous exchange with a local, breaking down the language barriers one word at a time.

### **Methods to Overcome Language Barriers:**

Language barriers prevent people from sharing their ideas, thoughts, and feelings, experience, information, and expectations, give feedback or communicate effectively. Here are some of the main solutions to reduce or eliminate them (Drury & Ma: 2002):

1. Choose familiar words and language to the receiver to avoid miscommunication.
2. Avoid using vague, ambiguous, or confusing words, terms, jargon, and phrases, idiomatic expressions, or slang.
3. Avoid using difficult words, complex sentences, unnecessary information. Use short, simple sentences.



4. Check meanings. When communicating across cultures, never assume that the other person has understood.
5. Think in terms of your receiver.
6. Use your receiver's language.
7. Keep your message simple to promote effective communication.
8. Use simple, clear, accurate, and correct and familiar language.
9. Avoid slang or use of culturally or technically specific expressions or terminology.
10. Select your words carefully. Choose simple words, phrases, and short sentences.
11. Use language appropriate to the level of understanding of the receiver.
12. Use familiar language to the receivers.
13. Ask for clarification.
14. Frequently check for understanding by asking for feedback.
15. Politely ask for clarification and avoid any assumptions.
16. Avoid idioms, technical terms or jargon.
17. Use plain language where possible.
18. Hire qualified interpreters and translators.
19. Hire bilingual employees.
20. Use repetition because people need to hear things more than once to understand and remember it.
21. Use verbal and non-verbal messages appropriately.
22. Be respectful: Language barriers can be frustrating. They require patience, understanding, and consciousness.
23. Used visual methods of communication to explain complicated concepts such as pictures, diagrams, photos, graphics, charts to help the receiver understand what the sender is trying to convey. "A picture is worth a thousand words."
24. Individual linguistic ability is important to train your people.

Communication is the process of exchanging ideas, feeling, information, knowledge, facts, opinions, and emotions between a sender and a receiver. Effective communication is sending the right message to the right receiver at the right time via the right channel in order to change the receiver's knowledge, attitude, and behavior. Language barriers are things that prevent people from understanding each other. They are a common challenge to individuals, groups, international companies, governments, nations, and the whole world. The study concluded that language barriers are factors that block or significantly distort effective communication. They arise from different meanings and uses of words, symbols, images, gesture, languages, dialects, accents, linguistic ability, technical terminology or jargon, volume of voice, ambiguous words, mispronunciation of words, faulty translation, wrong interpretation of messages, misunderstanding of messages, complicated messages and different individual linguistic ability of the sender and the receiver, poorly understood and poorly explained words and messages.

### **Conclusion**

Language barriers can create problems of miscommunication such as misunderstanding, misinterpretation of messages, distorted messages, misinformation, confusion, mistrust, uncertainty, frustration, weak and wrong feedback, aviation and marine accidents and disasters, deaths, tension, conflict, violence among people. They can Leads to Factors that hindering effective communication. The best strategy to promote effective communication and get messages across is to bridge the language barriers by: using simple, clear, concrete, accurate, familiar and meaningful words, avoiding grammatical and spelling mistakes, giving and receiving feedback, hiring bilingual workers and qualified and licensed translators, minimizing the use of jargons, avoiding ambiguous words, regional dialect and, confirming understanding, using translation machines, avoiding shouting and sarcasm and



mimicry, explaining confusing messages to people. The future of individuals, groups, societies, and nations depends mostly on their ability to communicate effectively with others in a globalization and communication era.

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