

TIPS FOR COMMUNICATING ACROSS LANGUAGE BARRIERS

SPEAKING

- ✓ **CLEAR, SLOW SPEECH.** Clearly say each word, do not “run words together”. Do not use slang and expressions that are not in the dictionary even if you hear them sometimes. They may offend.
- ✓ **REPETITION.** Repeat each important idea using different words to explain the same concept/ idea.
- ✓ **SIMPLE SENTENCES.** Avoid long sentences.
- ✓ **VOLUME.** Don't raise your voice or shout.

BODY LANGUAGE

- ✓ **VISUAL ILLUSTRATIONS.** Use as many visual aids as possible, such as pictures, graphs, tables and slides.
- ✓ **GESTURES.** Use facial and hand gestures to emphasize the meaning of words in a way that is culturally acceptable for you. Ask people to tell you if any of your gestures are not acceptable in a their culture and do not be offended if this is the case.
- ✓ **DEMONSTRATION.** Act out as many ideas as possible if necessary.
- ✓ **PAUSES.** Pause more frequently.

HOW DO I INTERPRET THEIR MANNER?

- ✓ **SILENCE.** When there is a silence, wait. Do not jump in to fill the silence. The other person is probably just thinking more slowly than usual while they become accustomed to a different accent. They may need time to translate.
- ✓ **INTELLIGENCE.** Do not interpret their difficulty in understanding you quickly with lack of intelligence, it is usually a sign of hearing an accent that is not familiar.
- ✓ **DIFFERENCES.** If unsure, assume difference, not similarity.

HOW DO I KNOW IF THEY HAVE UNDERSTOOD?

- ✓ **UNDERSTANDING.** Do not just assume they understand, assume that they do not understand.
- ✓ **CHECKING UNDERSTANDING.** Have people repeat their understanding of the material back to you. Do not simply ask whether they understand or not. Let them explain what they understand to you.
- ✓ **IF YOU ARE MAKING ARRANGEMENTS.** Tell them you will confirm the details by email or a written message and do it as soon as possible. You might ask them to do the same if they are making verbal arrangements with you. Give out a card with your email address and phone contacts. Keep a diary of daily activities and check that the details are correct.

ASSISTING OTHERS TO UNDERSTAND ME BETTER

- ✓ **ENCOURAGEMENT.** Look directly at people when speaking to them A friendly expression on your face encourages others to listen and speak with you.
- ✓ **DRAWING OUT.** Politely ask for the information to be repeated a little more slowly.
- ✓ **DO NOT BE EMBARRASSED** to be asked to repeat the message. It is better to get the understanding correct now than have a bigger problem later.

