ProTalk

Discussion Files



C1. Cultural differences in the office

afaq Language Center

Afaq Language Center

www. afaq-lc.com 021-5148 afaq.lc



Learning outcomes

- I can maintain a more detailed discussion on managing cultural differences at work.

- I can give advice and share my personal opinions on cultural workplaces.

Warm-up

What are the benefits and drawbacks of working in an international team?

Share your ideas with the rest of the class!



Challenges of a culturally diverse workplace

1. Read about the challenges of a culturally diverse workplace below.

2. Reflect on your own experiences. Can you **think** of any examples related to these challenges?

3. Which of the challenges below do you think is the most difficult to overcome? Why?

Negative stereotypes can interfere in integration of multicultural teams

Communication can be misunderstood or misinterpreted across cultures and languages

Professional etiquette can vary across cultures

Conflicting working styles across teams



Giving advice

Cindy and Kent lead multi-cultural teams.

1. **Read** the two texts below and summarize them.
2. Do you have any **advice** for Cindy or Kent?



Cindy

Recently, I received some anonymous feedback from my team. I was surprised to learn that most people in my team felt that their opinions weren't being heard in meetings. There were also some comments mentioning that several team members didn't like speaking up because they felt their English wasn't up to par.



Kent

My team is made up of people living on three different continents, so we have a videoconference once a week. Despite this, I feel like I've been having a difficult time connecting with everyone. These chats are usually uncomfortable, and most people don't even turn on their cameras. I'm not sure what to do.





Many people in my team feel that their English is not up to par.

Up to par means *good enough*.

Have you ever felt that you weren't **up to par** with something at work?

Managing cultural differences

1. Read the text and summarize it.

2. Match the titles to the text.

1 Challenges in communication	2 Time to disagree	3 The gap in fluency	4 Don't make assumptions

A

Encourage disagreements about your team's tasks and the processes by which these tasks get done. Frame meetings as brainstorming sessions. This will help lower the risk of people feeling pressured into choosing between sides and encourage them to contribute their ideas. Solicit each team member's views on the topics discussed!

B

Varying levels of fluency with the organisation's lingua franca (usually English) are inevitable. Strong speakers should agree to slow down and use fewer idioms. Less fluent speakers should routinely ask if others have understood them and, when listening, feel empowered to say when they have not understood something.

C

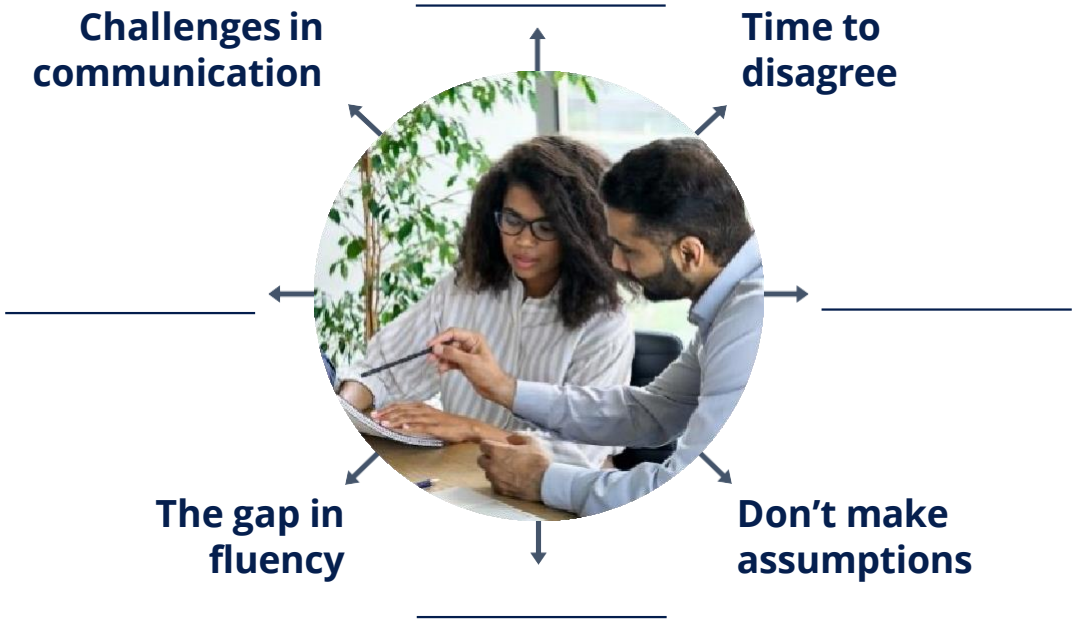
Avoid making assumptions about what behaviours mean. Try and take a step back, watch, and listen. Before drawing conclusions, ask questions. Establish a two-way communication between you and your team members.

D

Modes of communication must be carefully considered. Technologies can both reduce and increase social distance. If you are team leader, ask yourself if your chosen mode of communication should be instant, if you need to reinforce the message, and if you are leading by example.

Reflect on the text

1. Which point mentioned in the text do you think is **most important**? Why?
2. Can you think of any other points to consider when managing cultural differences?



Match

Match the words and phrases to their definition. Discuss the meanings with your teacher and use each in a sentence.

1	**to solicit**	a	unavoidable
2	**lingua franca**	b	to make someone stronger and more confident
3	**inevitable**	c	to make a judgement
4	**to empower**	d	to ask for something from someone
5	**to draw conclusions**	e	A language that is adopted as the common language between people whose native languages are different

Discuss

Answer the questions below.

What is communication like at your workplace?





What are the pros and cons of digital communication?

Do you agree or disagree?

1. Read the statements below.
2. Do you **agree** or **disagree** with them?
3. Explain your answers.

1	E-mail is the best way to share information with a global team.
2	Flexibility and appreciation for diversity are at the heart of managing a global team.
3	Disagreements are just as important as agreements in meetings.
4	A good leader acts like a student, regularly soliciting input from their team members.
5	Small talk is a powerful way to promote trust among employees.

Discuss

In breakout rooms or together as a class, **answer one yellow** and **one pink** question.

Is good teamwork important to the kind of work you do?

What role do you normally play in a team?

Are you very active in group discussions or do you prefer to listen?

Have you ever been part of a team that failed to achieve its objective? What went wrong?

Idiom

to touch base

Meaning: to get in contact or meet up with someone, usually to discuss progress

Example: Let's touch base at the end of the week to see how the project is coming along.

Complete the sentences

Complete the sentences with your own ideas.

1	If there is a disagreement during a meeting at work...	›	*...my team leader solicits the views from each team member.*
2	If I am uncertain about a task I have to complete at work, I ...	›	
3	If I have to communicate something important at work, I...	›	
4	Before I draw conclusions about something or someone, I...	›	
5	One of the most challenging things about working in an international team must be...	›	
6	One of the most rewarding things about working in an international team must be...	›	

Discuss

Answer the questions below.

What is your working style like? Describe it to your classmates.





What language is spoken at your workplace?

Answer key

P.9: 1.) d 2.) e 3.) a 4.) b 5.) c

Presentation

Think about the pros and cons of working in an international team.
Prepare a two-minute presentation about. Include several reasons to support your point of view.
Give your presentation to the class. Answer questions and get feedback.

