Tips for Successful Cross Cultural Communication

Do you want to be an exchange student but the fear of not being able to communicate and understand people in another country is stopping you from realizing your dream? The tips below can help you communicate with people from other cultures in a way that minimizes misunderstandings and maximizes your potential to create strong cross-cultural relationships and understanding.

**Slow Down**
Even when your foreign language skills are good or English is the common language, in a cross-cultural situation, this does not mean you should speak at normal speed. Slow down, speak clearly and ensure your pronunciation is intelligible.

**Take Turns**
Cross-cultural communication is enhanced through taking turns to talk, making a point and then listening to the response.

**Write it Down**
If you are unsure whether something has been understood write it down and check. This can be useful when using large figures. For example, a billion in the USA is 1,000,000,000 while in the UK it is 1,000,000,000,000.

**Be an Active Listener**
When communicating across cultures never assume the other party has understood. Summarize what has been said in order to verify it.

**Be aware of Slang and Idioms**
It is very difficult for a non-native speaker to have complete knowledge of slang, idioms and sayings. If it doesn’t make sense - clarify. If you are using slang or idioms - make sure the listener understands you. The danger is that the words will be understood but the meaning missed.

**Be Careful with Humor**
When using humor think whether it will be understood in the other culture. Some jokes can be offensive or hurt someone’s feelings.

**Maintain Etiquette**
Many cultures have certain etiquette when communicating. It is always a good idea to do some research on the culture and observe others around you.

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