

# Speech Communication

## Chapter 1 - Introductory notes

- Speech communication = "the use of the oral medium of passing information, whether face-to-face or through a medium, by a speaker to an audience" BUT this definition is too simplistic
  - Communication should not be reduced to mere transmission of data
    - the word itself has two meanings:
      - the process of sharing a good or a gift
      - the result of that process = the shared meaning or good itself
    - it's dynamic because when you communicate you create something new → words shared between people are not the same as to what you hear or read, they're keys to a world of knowledge that you can discover and interpret messages
  - Communication always involves 2 dimensions:
    - an interpersonal dimension: the relationship between interlocutors
    - a cognitive dimension: the meaning shared between people
- these two are interdependent: the way you communicate depends on who you're speaking to



The relationship shapes the message, not just its wording but its entire meaning.

- Communication only works if interlocutors have a common ground = shared assumptions and mutual recognition
  - a lot of things are taken for granted because people are expected to have a certain knowledge of the context in which something takes place



Before speaking, ensure your listener is the right person and shares the background knowledge needed to understand you. Otherwise, miscommunication occurs

- Communication operates on two levels:
  - explicit: what is actually said
  - implicit: what is communicated but not expressed → often carries more weight



being implicit doesn't mean that you aren't clear → you can be very clear in an implicit way

- you can use indirectness for:
  - polite requests: requests are often smoothed / softened
    - instead of directly asking, the speaker may state the reason for the request  
ex. instead of "close the window" he might say "there's a draft" → it translates a shared problem and a shared solution
    - framing the request as a personal need ("i need") → this is more relational cooperation rather than imposing obedience



- In rigid hierarchical societies (past / traditional structures), people interact without justification.
- Modern communication moves toward explanation + empathy, aligning respect rather than command-based interaction.

- wishes: ("happy new year") is said to reinforce the relationship with your interlocutor



Politeness and indirectness are inefficient and uneconomical, but they are so because they ensure relational stability

- Communication is:
  - Universal: everything we do communicates something (even silence or inaction).
  - Dynamic: an ongoing, ever-changing process.
  - Irreversible: once something is said, it becomes part of shared history.
  - Proactive: communicators actively select and shape what they share.
  - Contextual: meaning depends on situation, prior knowledge, emotions, and intentions
- Communication always occurs within a noisy environment → "noise" = distractions, emotions, assumptions, or competing agendas → communication isn't objective: it is situated and a

## Chapter 2 - Communication as Dialogue

- Communication (both oral and written) is not a monologue or a one-way process but it involves both interlocutors → it's relational and social
- Communication is not static transmission but co-construction = a shared creation of meaning
  - the speaker formulates the message
  - the listener interprets, reacts and provides feedback

- Organizing speech or writing appropriately.
- Speaking clearly and fluently



BUT remember: people are not interested in mistakes but in meanings

- Writing correctly and using the right tone.



- you can be technically excellent and still fail if you cannot communicate value
- in finance, you must convince, explain and justify an investment
- no trust → no persuasion → no investment decision
- trust is fragile and easily damaged

- Effective communication at the interpersonal level:

- feedback is essential:

- it shows you interlocutor perceives and understands you (via interruption, comment)
- it reinforces shared meaning and reinforces common ground → it develops the success of communication
- it's essential to share as much meaning as possible to make communication easier to understand better and faster and the atmosphere of collaboration is serene

→ cultural norms shape feedback:

- Northern European cultures value turn-taking and less interruption.
- Mediterranean and African cultures are more comfortable with overlap and interruption



Interruption is a sign of involvement in the dialogue, it can have a positive evaluation

- silence also communicates and is culturally relative:

- Finnish and Northern European cultures tolerate long pauses as a sign of reflection
- Southern cultures often interpret long silences as discomfort, disengagement, or disinterest
- Similarly, tolerance for loudness varies: high volume is enthusiasm in some cultures, while it is perceived as aggression in others (France)

- other key factors:

- non-verbal elements (gestures, eye contact, proximity) → they are also culture-dependent and can be perceived as intimidating

- Verbal signals: short words ("yeah", "I see", "oh really?", "mmh"), or even silence culturally — Finns tolerate long pauses).
- Non-verbal signals: gestures, facial expressions, eye contact, body distance
- cognitive feedback: involves verbal contributions that show comprehension and thought. Includes questions, statements, claims, or arguments. These moves advance the dialogue and show understanding or disagreement.



- move = one's contribution to discourse
- discourse = speech flow

- questions: to require more information, to repeat or to start a critical move
- statements: give new information / recall old information → report something that is true in the world
- claims: express a personal viewpoint against or in accordance with the interlocutor
  - opinions: light claims, often unreasoned and easily shared without any effort
  - standpoints: people feel committed to them and they have the burden of proof. They are supported by other moves called "reasons" (=contents that can explain why you are committed to something) → standpoint + reason = argument



An argument constitutes the core of argumentation, which is a hallmark of a serious discussion

- arguments: for or against a claim
- expressions which indicate agreement or disagreement (+reasons)
- recommendations for handling feedback:
  - accept criticism constructively: your viewpoint is not the only one
  - respect others' perspectives and apply reason to evaluate feedback → be tolerant! Remember you are right to have their own viewpoint
  - avoid interpreting disagreement as hostility: it's part of dialogue and improvement
- Communication styles vary across cultures:
  - In some cultures (e.g., many Western contexts), people go straight to business ("do your job")
  - In others, personal relationships come first — discussing family or personal life builds trust. In some societies emphasize individualism, while many others emphasize social belonging. → one culture may feel invasive in another.

- Culture is:
  - made up of maps to understand the world around us → individuals rely on them to build their view of reality (=schemes of pieces of reality) and scripts (=procedures that describe processes)
  - learned and transmitted from one generation to another
  - structured through symbols that are consciously or unconsciously shared by people in a community
- Layers:
  1. **Universal human needs:** language, thought, the process of enculturation, myth frameworks, social norms, sociability, institutions necessary for survival of human societies (ex. economics, education, religion, etc.) → our ability to learn and grow
  2. **National or societal values** (the largest cultural unit that people identify as their own) → own "rule book" for how to meet universal human needs → worldview, religion, social norms, etc. → values decision making rules → these elements determine how people see and understand the world
  3. **Subcultural layer:** within a national culture, there are subcultures → much intercultural research focuses on how subcultures interact, since they have distinct norms and customs
  4. **Individual layer:** individuals remain unique, as each person
    - chooses how strictly to follow cultural rules
    - has a unique mix of skills, knowledge, personality, relationship and history→ some cultures value individuality and idiosyncrasy while others emphasize harmony and conformity → not everyone acts according to their culture's stereotypes (even in collective cultures) → different personalities and personal history → this freedom to be your own person for some cultures (which is essential for culture)



Idiosyncrasy means a personal peculiarity or unique way of behaving, thinking, or feeling that distinguishes one individual from others.  
→ at the individual level, people show personal differences even if they belong to the same culture

- Two dimensions are most relevant in messages:
  - **interaction:** how people act and behave with each other
  - **meaning:** how people represent the world (which depends on culture) → languages s
    - ex. English differentiates *partnership / company / corporation* vs other languages use the same term like *società, société, sociedad, Gesellschaft...*
    - ex. in Switzerland you have *società a garanzia limitata* and *società anonima* vs in Italy you have *società a responsabilità limitata* and *società per azioni*→ these differences can lead to misunderstanding among speakers of different languages



### Examples of misunderstandings:

- "How are you?" – often used as a greeting, not a genuine inquiry about health  
→ Non-native speakers might misinterpret it literally.
- Promises: In Western cultures, a promise = a firm commitment vs in West Africa a polite promise may not have binding value.
- Greetings in Chinese culture: Greetings are for acquaintances (shuren), not strangers (shengren). With strangers, you speak directly to the point without greetings.  
→ These examples show that language and culture are inseparable. Even when using a common language (like English), deep cultural premises can lead to communication breakdowns.



### Culture influences the way people perceive and express concepts:

- time:
  - In Western cultures, we say the future is ahead and the past is behind, because we think of time as moving forward.
  - In Quechua (Bolivia), the opposite is true: the past is in front (because it is known) and the future is behind (because it is unknown).
- repetition:
  - In English, repeating a word (e.g., "truly, truly") adds emphasis.
  - In Hiligaynon (Philippines), repetition can weaken meaning: "truly, truly" may mean "maybe".
- viewpoint:
  - In many European languages, actions are described from the agent's perspective (e.g., "John went to town").
  - But in some Nilotic languages (Sudan), it is more natural to describe the action from the place's perspective:  
→ "The town was gone to by him."
- passive:
  - In English, "John baked that cake" and "That cake was baked by John" mean the same.
  - In many Asian languages, the passive structure suggests the subject is a victim. In a passive version could imply John did a bad job.
- culture-bound expressions: "he beat his breast"
  - Bible: repentance

- **communal common ground:** what is shared by a whole community
- **Activity type** = the kind of situation or social activity people are involved in; language is a part of activity
  - ex. "At what time does it start?" → In a cinema, it refers to the movie; in a meeting, it refers to the meeting. Context tells you what "it" means
- Culture shapes both common ground and activity types; scripts (mental expectation about how things are done) are culturally specific
  - ex. In some East Asian restaurants, animals are kept alive and chosen by the customer to be cooked. This fits into a different restaurant "script" than in Western culture vs In Western culture, an animal in front of a customer would usually be considered shocking
- Context can help you infer what you mean with your words by "filling in the gaps" based on background knowledge
  - ex. "I'm in the phone book": you must know what a phone book is and that names were listed in it
  - ex. "Margaret heard the piano": you must infer that she heard the sound of a piano and that there was a piano in the room playing it
  - ex. "John has not been in prison yet": John is the kind of person likely to commit a crime and that prison is his usual occupation
  - the process of deriving extra meaning is called **conversational inference** or "reading between the lines"
- Culture also affects non-verbal communication → **Edward Hall:**
  - **Context**
    - **High-context cultures:** much is left unsaid/implicit (ex. you might make allusions, the meaning comes from situation, relationship, tone and body language → words are few but carry a lot of meaning) (Japan, China, Spain, Italy, Latin America, Africa)
    - **Low-context cultures:** communication is explicit and direct → words say almost everything, context matters less, speakers feel obligated to give the other person precise information (USA, UK, Germany, Scandinavia, Netherlands)
  - **Information speed:**
    - **High information speed:** quick, short headings that are less meaningful (ex. Biden announces resignation)
    - **Low information speed:** slower, more detailed and meaningful (ex. Despite concerns about the economy and health, President Biden rules out resignation)
  - **Proxemics:** different cultures use space differently during interaction



This can even influence the layout of towns and buildings

→ there are 4 spatial zones

- **Time:**

- **Monochronic time:** do one thing at a time, value punctuality, strict scheduling → more important than maintaining personal relationships (USA, Germany, Switzerland)
  - **Polychronic time:** do several things at once, flexible schedules → people prioritize relationships over tasks (Latin America, Middle East, Africa)
- This influences business, negotiation, and diplomacy: ex. arriving "late" might be in Germany but normal in Mexico.

## Politeness and Culture:

- Politeness = a form of self-control used to preserve dialogue BECAUSE no self-control causes misunderstanding and a conversational collapse → politeness protects the relationship, the message
- Politeness is universal (exists in every culture) and culture-dependent (expressed differently) it protects human relationships, which are essential in social interaction
- Communication is not just about exchanging information; it is also about preserving relationships. People speak indirectly (e.g., "Would you close the door?" instead of "Close the door") to avoid hurting the other's self-image and to show respect.



This shows that communication does not always follow efficiency or rationality (it is more rooted in human social nature).

- Goffman's Face model:

- every person has 2 needs:
  - Positive face: the desire to be appreciated / liked
  - Negative face: the desire to be autonomous / not imposed upon



These needs are universal but culturally weighted differently:

- Northern European + American cultures stress negative face
- Asian and Latin cultures stress positive face

- in social interaction, participants are striving for stability (=avoid face violation) in their relationships with others, so they try not to violate one another's face
- Face-Threatening Act (FTA) = anything that risks damaging one of the two needs (rejection, disagreements and even questions)

→ the weight of the FTA is determined by a formula by Brown and Levinson:

## Chaper 6 - On intercultural communication in financial communication

- **Financial communication** = the set of strategies, messages and tools that organizations engage their financial stakeholders about their financial health, performance and prospects at the intersection of finance, public relations and corporate strategy + it focuses on:
    - Transparency and accuracy:
      - providing clear, reliable and timely information (statements, reports, disclosures)
      - ensuring compliance with accounting standards and regulations
    - Investor relations: communication with current and potential investors, explaining financial business models, risks and growth opportunities
    - Corporate reputation & trust: it aims at building credibility in the markets and managing crises (poor earnings, scandals, M&A)
    - Strategic description: it goes beyond raw numbers and tries to explain the company's long-term value creation
    - Engagement with multiple audiences: shareholders, analysts, rating agencies, financial institutions (internal financial communication), regulators and policymakers
- financial communication is focused on credibility, clarity, and trust. It aims to translate performance into a coherent description which represents the starting point for decisions and sustains corporate reputation
- Tools of financial communication:
    - **Annual reports and Financial statements:** legally required; include balance sheet, income flows and notes + integrate with non-financial reporting
    - **Quarterly reports and Earnings calls:** give regular updates on results
      - QRs are unaudited updates on financial and operational performance (vs ARs are audited)
      - ECs: management discusses results with analysts, often via interactive online meetings where information is presented to viewers
    - **Investor presentations and Capital markets days:** consist of slide decks or live events in financial markets and forecasts
    - **Press releases** (financial PR): announcements regarding earnings, M&A, leadership changes. They have to be accurate, timely and compliant with market regulations
    - **Regulatory filings:** legal documents that become part of the public record → submitted to ESMA
    - **Websites & Digital Channels:** investor relations sections on corporate websites which provide interactive data, archived reports and governance documents. Social media are increasingly used for financial communication

- US, Northern Europe: expect direct, numbers-driven communication
  - US investors want forward-looking guidance and confident presentation
  - German/Swiss investors value technical detail, compliance and precise reporting, avoid promotional tone
- East Asia, Southern Europe: value context, relationship-building and careful wording
  - Japanese investors prefer cautious language, long-term stability and less aggressive projections
- Investment decisions: individual and quick (US, UK) vs collective and slower (Japan, Germany)
- Language issues: English is common but financial jargon and idioms don't translate, some concepts may be understood differently in IFRS or US GAAP contexts
- Nonverbal and interactional styles: direct vs indirect Q&A styles in investor calls and roadshows



Roadshows = meeting organized before an IPO to generate interest and facilitate the sale of shares

- Regulatory environments: disclosures rules differ across jurisdictions
- Perception of transparency: in some markets extreme openness is expected, in others it is seen as unprofessional
- Perception of risk: there are cultures with high uncertainty avoidance where investors expect detailed risk disclosures (Japan, Germany) vs in other cultures with lower uncertainty avoidance they may tolerate more aggressive projections (US, UK)
- Intercultural communication helps companies:
  - shape investor relations strategies for diverse audience
  - adapt tone and format of financial reports and press releases
  - training executives who present in earnings calls or roadshows to adjust style
  - ensuring consistent corporate identity across languages and regions
  - avoid miscommunication in crises, when speed and clarity are crucial but cultural misperceptions are common

→ it ensures that the same financial message is understood, trusted and respected across linguistic boundaries, not just by translating but by adapting style, expectations and regulatory requirements. Stakeholders in different cultures perceive the company as transparent, reliable and credible.

Examples:

1. Siemens AG (Germany) is listed in the Frankfurt Stock Exchange and in the NYSE as an American Depositary Receipt):

- In Japan → reports are formal, cautious, avoiding bold projections.
- In the U.S. → Toyota adds growth forecasts, competitive benchmarks, and charts Street expectations.
- These examples show that:
  - The same data can be framed differently depending on cultural norms.
  - Without intercultural sensitivity, a company might appear "too vague" to U.S. investors to Japanese or German ones.
  - Intercultural financial communication ensures global credibility and trust, aligning with while maintaining a consistent corporate message.

## Addressing people in an indian AG;

The extract comes from the 76th AGM of BASF India Ltd. (2020), held online. After the technical the Company Secretary (neutral, impersonal, no politeness strategies required), the tone shifts when people are addressed.

Feature	Indian AGM style	European (Western) style
<b>Forms of address</b>	Very respectful, with repeated honorifics: "Respected Chairman", "Madam", "Sir", "our lady director", "fellow shareholders"	Usually simpler and more direct: "Chairman", or just "G everyone"
<b>Length of greetings</b>	Long, ceremonial introductions before questions (ritual)	Short or omitted
<b>Tone</b>	Highly appreciative, praising the company before asking questions	More neutral or business-like
<b>Gratitude</b>	Thanks are expressed multiple times (even before speaking about actual content)	Usually expressed at the end, not excessively
<b>Indirectness</b>	Softening before any critical or financial question	More direct and concise

Structure of the intervention:

- First part = thanking + appreciation (positive face work).
  - Only later → the actual content / questions.
  - Final part again → thanking + support ("I support the resolution").
- Up to two thirds of the time = appreciation, not content.

Why is this done? The priority is the relationship, not the information

- the speaker must affirm the bond before raising questions
- this creates relational safety = face protection for both sides



In Europe/US the shareholders expect documents so there's no need to thank (they are waiting time and to be emotional)

The page explains why intercultural competence (IC) is crucial in investor relations and financial communication. Even if numbers are universal, their interpretation, tone, and style vary across cultures. Cultural differences influence how investors perceive information and make decisions.

- Ensures trust, clarity, and credibility across borders.
- Investors from different countries expect different styles, levels of transparency, and emotional appeal.
- Regulatory cultures differ (SEC – U.S., ESMA – EU, FSA – Japan), which influences communication practices.

Aspect	Invesco (UK/Europe)	Eastspring (Japan/Asia)
Communication style	Pragmatic, assertive, direct	Analytical, process-oriented,
Tone	Performance-driven ("this is our edge")	Discipline & patience (long-term)
View of risk	Normal part of investing, contained by experience	Ethical, tightly managed via process
Trust-building method	Data + clear results	Transparency of method + process
Cultural influence	Anglo-European efficiency	East-Asian collectivism & harmony

Cultural logic behind the difference:

Europe (Invesco)	Japan/Asia (Eastspring)
Investor trust built through performance metrics	Investor trust built through stability and disciplined governance
Individual / assertive	Collective / risk-aware
Linear reasoning	Shared, gradual reasoning

Although both are financial investor playbooks, they reflect very different cultural expectations and communication styles.

- Invesco reflects *European/Anglo-American finance culture*: performance, opportunity, and rational argumentation.
- Eastspring reflects *East-Asian finance culture*: prudence, ethics, process stability, patient reasoning.



#### Invesco (UK/European style)

- Direct, assertive, and performance-focused.
- Uses short statements and clear claims ("This is our edge").
- Trust is created through data and measurable results.
- Risk is treated as normal and managed through pragmatic reassurance.

#### Eastspring (East Asian style)

- Indirect, process-oriented, and analytical.
- Emphasizes discipline, patience, and collective reasoning.
- Trust is built through stability, procedure, and ethical transparency.

Cultural Factor	French Approach	German Approach
Identity vs Proof	Stronger emphasis on <i>who they are</i>	Strong emphasis on <i>what they can demonstrate</i>
Relation to uncertainty	Greater optimism, comfort with strategic projection	Risk aversion; prefers certainty, even
Investor expectations	Broader international appeal, more "marketing layer"	Conservative investor base, expect measured claims
Language style	More aspirational vocabulary	More precise, unemotional vocabulary

### Key Takeaways:

- French playbooks lean toward branding + vision → "We are part of a large, innovative, global company."
- German playbooks lean toward precision + solidity → "We pick undervalued companies with strong fundamentals."
- Cultural attitudes toward risk, persuasion, and credibility shape financial discourse just as much as data do.
- Understanding these differences is essential for IR professionals communicating with cross-cultural stakeholders.

## Practice

Financial communication often relies on implicit meanings. A phrase like "the year has been tough" warns of risk, while "we believe" implicitly asks for trust and confidence.

Experienced investors understand that a turbulent context may actually signal opportunity with undervalued. These meanings are not stated explicitly, but they are socially "shared" among investors.

Communication in finance therefore requires:

- awareness of risk attitudes,
- awareness that advice is often implied, not spelled out,
- and sensitivity to how much context the reader already knows.

Why misunderstandings happen (Intercultural)

Different cultures signal agreement, disagreement, risk or refusal in different ways.

Example	Source of misunderstanding
Italian vs Japanese dialogue	Italian expects verbal turn-taking; Japanese waits respectfully → Italian thinks "he never speaks", Japanese thinks "he never stops talking".
British manager hearing Polish phone call	Different <b>intonation conventions</b> → ordinary Polish discussion <i>sounds like a row</i> to British ears.
Japanese to Norwegian ("This deal will be a success")	Japanese indirect <b>polite refusal</b> , Norwegian direct "no".

