



# HOW MISCOMMUNICATION HAPPENS



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Expemo code:  
1CSQ-Q1L9-AKLX



## 1 Warm up

Answer these questions:

1. Have you ever had a problem understanding someone in English? What happened?
2. Has anyone ever had a problem understanding you? What happened?

## 2 Synonyms in context

Look at the following words and underline the synonym in the sentence next to it.

1. *utter*: When the fire alarm went off, there was **total/some/no** panic amongst the staff.
2. *complexity*: Tim found Chinese Mandarin hard to learn due to the **weirdness/difficulty/way** of writing the many characters involved.
3. *transaction*: The business **trip/contract/deal** meant that Ella's company would get an additional 10% share of the French market which delighted her.
4. *ethnicity*: Irma's artwork used aspects of her **accent/homeland/culture**, giving it a strong sense of personal identity.
5. *mush*: Unfortunately, the delivery van crashed on the way to the factory. The bananas we ordered have been turned to **slop/mess/nothing**.
6. *passive*: I didn't feel able to contribute to the meeting, I was just a **quiet/an inactive/a bored** observer.
7. *facilitate*: Attending the conference should give you a greater understanding of our business and **require/encourage/help** networking opportunities.
8. *elements*: Dealing with rude customers is one of the **aspects/lessons/skills** of this job that I don't enjoy.



Now discuss the following questions.

1. In what situation have you felt **utter** panic?
2. What parts of your **ethnicity** do you like the most?
3. In what situations do you enjoy being a **passive** observer?
4. What are the different **elements** of your job? What do you like/dislike about them?
5. What happened in the last personal or business **transaction** that you made?
6. What do you **facilitate** in your job?

### 3

## Prediction



You are going to watch a video about miscommunication by Katherine Hampsten. First, say why you think the following things are mentioned.

1. confusion
2. a game of catch
3. a lump of clay
4. culture, community and family

Now watch the video. Were your predictions correct?

### 4

## Understanding vocabulary

Part A: Match the words you have heard in the video to their definitions.

- |                         |  |
|-------------------------|--|
| 1. semantics (n)        | a. a situation, number or quantity that can change                       |
| 2. stimuli (pl.)        | b. a strong negative feeling towards someone or something                |
| 3. connotation (n)      | c. from your own point of view, not necessarily factual                  |
| 4. subjective (adj.)    | d. growing or increasing faster and faster                               |
| 5. variable (n)         | e. the idea connected to a word's meaning                                |
| 6. animosity (n)        | f. the study of the meaning of words                                     |
| 7. exponentially (adv.) | g. things which people react to  |
| 8. perceptual (adj.)    | h. understanding or thinking about something or someone in a certain way |



**Part B: Now underline the correct form of the word from Part A in the following sentences.**

1. Over the last five years, our business has seen **exponent** / **exponential** growth in Asian markets.
2. The start-up failed due to a number of personal **animosities** / **animosity** between several members of the group.
3. The investment in the company **stimulated** / **stimulus** growth and over the next two years it saw profits double.
4. We believe that, due to the unique nature of our product, we can steadily increase profits for the **perception** / **perceivable** future.
5. We can't make the mistake of assessing our competitors **subjectively** / **subjectivity**. We must see them as the market sees them.
6. I think it's important that we sign the contract. All we are doing here is arguing over **semantics** / **semantically** when the relationship between the companies is what really matters.
7. Sales **vary** / **invariably** fall during the summer months when many people are on holiday. But they begin to rise again around September.
8. We decided to use the word 'group' in our sales brochure. 'Gang' was suggested, but we felt that it had negative **connotations** / **connotation**.

**Now in pairs, answer these questions.**

1. Has anyone ever shown **animosity** towards you? What happened?
2. What subject **stimulates** your interest?
3. How did you **perceive** your company before you joined?
4. In what situations can a **subjective** viewpoint be useful?
5. What products do you think are going to see **exponential** growth in the future?





## 5 Accessing the topic

Number these sentences about a serious consequence of miscommunication in the correct order.

- a. This resulted in the loss of the \$125 million-space craft. \_
- b. The problem arose when the team building the probe, Lockheed Martin, used inches, feet and pounds in their measurements. \_
- c. 'It is ironic that we can co-operate in space with the Russians and the Japanese and the French, but we have trouble co-operating across parts of the United States.' \_
- d. In November 1999, NASA lost a space probe, the Mars Climate Orbiter, when it entered too far into the atmosphere on Mars and was destroyed. 1
- e. John Logsdon, Director of the Space Policy Institute at George Washington University said, \_
- f. However, the Jet Propulsion Laboratory, who created the navigation software, used millimetres and metres. \_

**Discuss:**

1. What can you learn from this example of miscommunication?
2. How would you feel if you and your team were responsible for this kind of mistake? What would you do about it?





## 6

**Understanding the video**

Now read and answer the following questions about the video. Watch again to check if you were correct.

1. What does the speaker say about miscommunication?
  - a. We have all done it in some way.
  - b. We have all experienced it in some way.
  - c. We are all guilty of it in some way.
2. What does the speaker say about speaking with another person in the same language in the same room?
  - a. It's the best way to avoid miscommunication.
  - b. It rarely happens in the modern world.
  - c. Even in this situation, communication can still be difficult.
3. What does the speaker say about the 'transmission model' of communication?
  - a. It doesn't really describe how complicated communication is.
  - b. That it's like two people playing catch with a ball.
  - c. It's a great model for how communication really works.
4. What does the speaker say about the transactional model?
  - a. It's like throwing a ball to someone and walking away.
  - b. It takes into account how challenging communication really is.
  - c. It's not as accurate as the transmission model.
5. What is the first rule that the speaker gives?
  - a. Focus more on the non-verbal communication than the verbal.
  - b. Try to be both passive and active in your communication.
  - c. Be an active listener and change your message when speaking if needed.
6. What is the second rule that the speaker gives?
  - a. Listen, watch, and use your feelings to understand the other person.
  - b. Communication is just words so don't be afraid of it.
  - c. Look into someone's eyes to really understand what they mean.
7. What is the third rule that the speaker gives?
  - a. Take the time to listen to what the other person has to say in a conversation.
  - b. Give your message as quickly as you can, then make sure the other person has understood it.
  - c. Make sure the other person has finished speaking before you reply.
8. What is the fourth rule that the speaker gives?
  - a. Try to see the conversation from the other person's point of view.
  - b. Ask the other person to repeat their point if you don't understand.
  - c. Be aware that your point of view isn't the only truth.



## 7

**Talking point**

**In pairs, discuss the following questions.**

1. Have you had any experience in your career, or in your personal life, of miscommunication causing a problem? What happened?
2. What is the main way you communicate with other people in your company? What dangers of miscommunication are there? What personal 'perceptual filters' do you have that affect the way you communicate? How could someone misunderstand you?
3. What can you do to improve the way you communicate at the moment and reduce the possibility for miscommunication in the future?
4. Which of the rules that were given in the video did you think were most useful and why? How can you use that idea in your day-to-day life?
5. What advice would you give to someone who was joining your company for the first time about communication?
6. Think about the ways your company communicates with its employees. What does it do well? What could be improved?