

MIB1302 | Week 3

Audience Analysis for International Business Presentations

English Communication Skills for International Business

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Lesson Overview



CLO1 (40%): Understand presentation practices and strategies

CLO4 (20%): Professional communication ethics & cultural sensitivity

Why Audience Analysis Matters

Think about this: A global tech company is launching the same software product to three audiences in the same week.

Executive Board (HQ)

Senior leadership
High power distance
Formal, hierarchical

International Corporate Clients

Data-driven, direct
Low context culture
Expect precision

Overseas Investors

Fast-paced, direct
ROI-focused
Different cultural norms

The SAME product. THREE completely different presentations required.

Part 2: The AUDIENCE Framework

A

Age & Demographics

Background, seniority, roles

U

Understanding

Prior knowledge and expertise

D

Decision Makers

Who has the authority to act?

I

Interests

Priorities, values, what they care about

E

Expectations

Format, length, formality style

N

Needs

What they must accomplish after your talk

C

Cultural Background

Norms shaping communication preferences

E

Emotional State

Supportive, neutral, or resistant?

U - Understanding: Calibrating to Audience Knowledge Level

NOVICE

Avoid jargon entirely.
Use analogies and concrete examples.
Build from basics progressively.
Patient, clear tone.

Example:

“Exchange rate risk means that the price of something you buy from another country can change before you pay, because the value of your currency goes up or down—just like how the cost of an imported item in your online cart might suddenly become more expensive the next day.”

INFORMED

Use some technical terms.
Define the most specialized ones.
Professional but accessible tone.
Assume basic domain knowledge.

Example:

“Exchange rate risk is the possibility that the currency value changes between the time you place an online order for an imported product and the time the payment is processed, which can cause your final cost to be slightly higher or lower than expected.”

EXPERT

Use technical terminology freely.
Skip foundational explanations.
Focus on advanced insights and nuance.
Peer-to-peer tone.

Example:

“Exchange rate risk refers to the exposure arising from currency fluctuations between the transaction initiation and settlement; for instance, when purchasing imported goods online, the FX rate applied at payment may differ from the rate at order placement, creating a price variance driven by short-term exchange movements.”

Activity (5 min): An international company is pitching its e-commerce platform. How would you explain 'cross-border payment risk' to a novice, informed, and expert audience? One sentence each.

Cultural Dimensions for International Business

Geert Hofstede's research on 50+ countries reveals how culture shapes business communication expectations.

- Should you open with small talk or get straight to business?
- Should you state your recommendation first — or build to it?
- Is direct eye contact confidence or aggression?
- Does 'yes' always mean 'I agree'?
- Should you project strong confidence or show humility?

Hofstede: Power Distance (PDI)

The degree to which less powerful members accept unequal power distribution

HIGH Power Distance

China 80 | Malaysia 100 | Russia 93

Respect formal titles and hierarchy strictly

Decisions rarely made during the meeting

Questioning presenter may be seen as disrespectful

Presenter's status and credentials matter greatly

LOW Power Distance

Germany 35 | Australia 36 | Netherlands 38

First-name basis is comfortable and common

Collaborative decisions can happen immediately

Active questioning = positive engagement

Content quality matters more than your status

Cultural Self-Awareness: Know Your Own Baseline First

Before you can adapt for others, you must understand the cultural assumptions you carry into every presentation.

Every presenter has a cultural default setting. It shapes what feels 'natural' — but natural to YOU may not be natural to your audience.

How do I open a presentation?

Small talk first? Straight to business? This preference is often cultural.

How directly do I state my opinion?

Some cultures expect directness. Others expect suggestions framed as questions.

How do I show respect to senior people?

Formal titles? Eye contact? Silence? Deference? This varies enormously.

How do I handle disagreement?

Openly debate? Nod politely and resolve privately later? Culture shapes this.

What does silence mean to me?

Thinking? Disagreement? Respect? The meaning of silence differs by culture.

Do I expect the audience to ask questions freely?

In some cultures, questioning a presenter is respectful. In others, it can seem challenging.

Reflection: Think about your own cultural background. Which of these questions would you answer differently from someone raised in a different country?

Hofstede: Individualism vs. Collectivism (IDV)

COLLECTIVIST

China 20 | South Korea 18 | Japan 46 | Vietnam 20

Emphasize GROUP harmony and collective benefit

Use WE framing: 'Our team has found...'

Build relationship BEFORE business content

'Yes' may mean 'I understand', not 'I agree'

Avoid singling out individuals in public

INDIVIDUALIST

USA 91 | Australia 90 | UK 89 | Netherlands 80

Emphasize INDIVIDUAL achievement and personal gain

Use I framing: 'I recommend...'

Get to business content quickly

'Yes' = commitment to action

Direct credit and recognition is positive

High-Context vs. Low-Context Communication (Edward T. Hall)

HIGH-CONTEXT

China | Japan | South Korea | Middle East

Meaning is in **CONTEXT**, tone, and non-verbal cues

Indirect language — what is unsaid matters

Relationship and rapport come **BEFORE** business

Written agreements less important than trust

Silence = respect and thoughtful consideration

LOW-CONTEXT

USA | Germany | Australia | Scandinavia

Meaning is **EXPLICIT** in the words spoken

Direct language — clarity is paramount

Business content first; rapport is built alongside

Written contracts and documentation are essential

Silence may signal confusion or disagreement

Part 4: Practical Adaptations for International Presentations

1

Language Pace

Speak 20-30% slower for non-native English audiences. Give processing time.

2

Vocabulary

Replace idioms with plain English. 'Knock it out of the park' = 'achieve outstanding results'.

3

Humor

Humor is culture-specific. When uncertain, keep a professional, neutral tone.

4

Silence

In many Asian cultures, silence after a question = respect and thoughtful consideration.

5

Eye Contact

Direct eye contact = confidence in Western cultures. May be perceived as aggressive elsewhere.

6

Visual Support

Use MORE visuals for international audiences. Images and diagrams transcend language barriers.

Key rule: Always err on the side of GREATER FORMALITY when uncertain about cultural norms.

Three Areas of Presentation Adaptation

Content Adaptation

- Adjust depth and complexity for the audience
- Use geographically relevant case studies
- Balance data vs. narrative by audience type
- Opening argument vs. extensive background first

Language Adaptation

- Match vocabulary to English proficiency level
- Formal vs. informal register selection
- Active voice is clearer for all audiences
- Use explicit signposting throughout the talk

Delivery Adaptation

- Pace: slower for non-native speakers
- More visual slides for international audiences
- Gauge participation vs. observation preference
- Research cultural norms for body language

Week 3 Key Takeaways

1

Audience analysis is the **FIRST** step — not an afterthought — in every effective business presentation

2

The **AUDIENCE** framework covers 8 key dimensions from demographics to emotional state

3

Hofstede's cultural dimensions directly shape international business communication expectations

4

High-context vs. Low-context communication requires fundamentally different presentation approaches

5

Content, Language, **AND** Delivery must all be adapted — analysis without adaptation provides zero benefit

Next Week: Visual Design & Slide Creation for International Business Presentations

Week 3 Assignment

Audience Analysis Profile

Individual Assignment | Due: Week 4 class | CLO1 (12 pts) + CLO4 (8 pts) = 20 pts

Step 1

Choose a real business scenario

A presentation you might give: product pitch, project update, or market entry proposal

Step 2

Identify TWO audience groups

One familiar audience + one international audience from a different cultural background

Step 3

Complete the AUDIENCE Framework

Analyze all 8 dimensions for BOTH audience groups using the provided template

Step 4

List your adaptations

Identify at least 5 specific adaptations you would make for the international audience

Submit as a Word document (1-2 pages) using the template provided in DLP