

ACADEMIC ENGLISH SUPPORT DESK NEWSLETTER

Osaka University - Multilingual Expert Program



TOP-DOWN COMMUNICATION TIPS

Communication in Asia is different to communication in the West (in general). If you want to speak so people will listen, the following techniques will be essential and our Academic English Support Desk is the place to practice!

Confirm, confirm, confirm!

It's perfectly natural and even encouraged, to confirm frequently when speaking to colleagues or fellow students from the US or Europe. This shows 1) That you've been listening and is 2) a chance for your partner to correct any misunderstandings (and therefore build trust). How can we confirm? Try some of the phrases below:

- Do you mean...?
- Could I confirm what you said? Did you say...?
- Am I right in thinking you said...?

Use these phrases in both spoken and written communication to build trust and better relationships!

Practice top-down communication

One of the main differences between Asian and non-Asian communication is the so-called "top-down" style. In Asia, the main point normally comes last, while in the US, Europe and elsewhere, people are encouraged to make their main point quickly and efficiently. If you want to improve this, try beginning or framing your communication with one of the following phrases:

- The point I want to make is...
- What I really want to say is...
- The thing I want to point out most is...

Try one of these phrases out the next time you're talking to a non-Asian communicator.

Check understanding

While in Japan and elsewhere in Asia, it might be considered rude to constantly check if someone understands what you are saying, in non-Asian countries, it is considered good communication etiquette. The following two phrases are most useful:

- Does that make sense?
- How does that sound to you?

Try these out the next time you want to check someone's understanding!



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