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UNICATiON

Unify Communication by International Projects
in Cambodia and Philippines

Multiplier Training Workshop

Training Workshop 3: Communication Strategies across Culture

National University of Management

Phnom Penh, Cambodia

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Agenda

- Why communication
- The Global Project Landscape and UNICATION Context
- Case studies
- Conclusion
- Recommendation

Why Intercultural Communication Matters

Essential competency

Effective communication is not just a skill but a necessity in international collaborations; it solves the confusions.



Sustainable partnerships

Focus on building long-term relationships and impacts of global collaborations; ensuring lasting success.

Practical Application: Erasmus+ Projects

International Research Projects

Task students work together on addressing global issues; it exposes them to different academic practices.



Virtual Exchange Platforms

Tools like Slack and Zoom encourage continuous interaction, fostering academic knowledge, and cultural awareness.

The Global Project Landscape

- Over 70% of international projects now involve multicultural teams (PMI, 2023).
- Europe and Asia are leading hubs for cross-border academic collaboration.
- The number of EU-funded international HEI projects has doubled in the past decade.
- Communication is cited as the top challenge in 60% of global partnerships.

Context: The UNICATION Project

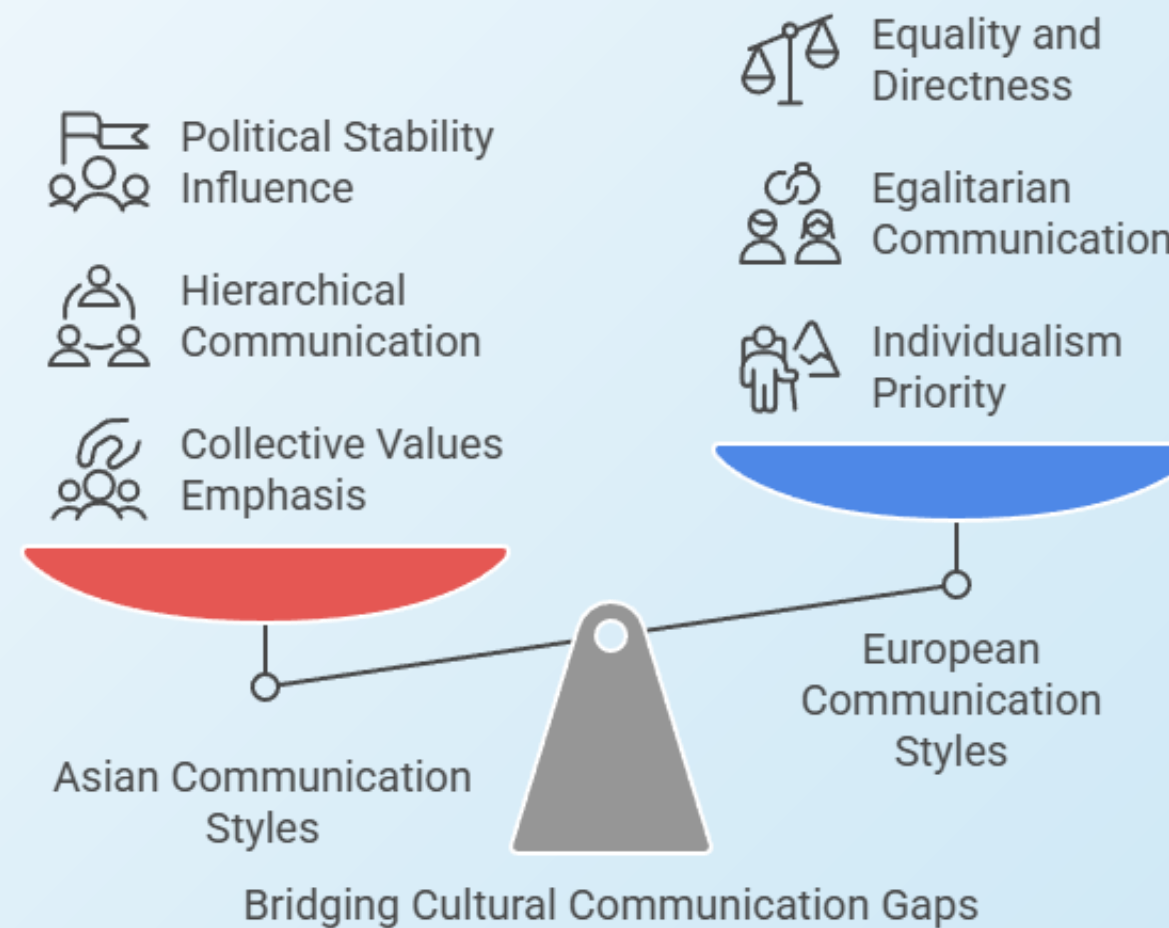
- Capacity-building initiative between EU and Asian partners.
- Goals: Enhance staff training, internationalization, and intercultural communication.
- Target: Equitable project collaboration through inclusive communication strategies.

Understanding Culture in Academia

Definition (Trompenaars, 2012):

'Culture is the way a group solves problems and reconciles dilemmas.'

Relevance in HEI Projects:



Global Collaboration Challenges

Cross-cultural differences

Language barriers and culture diversity hinder the collaboration in international projects; understanding these dynamics is crucial.



Varying organizational practices

Different educational systems and norms create project management challenges; clear communication is vital.



Comparative Table – EU vs. Cambodian Academic Norms

Dimension	European HEIs	Cambodian HEIs
Communication Style	Low-context, direct	High-context, indirect
Hierarchy & Decision-Making	Flat, decentralized	Hierarchical, centralized
Feedback Approach	Critical, individual-focused	Polite, group-sensitive
Time Orientation	Monochronic (schedule-focused)	Polychronic (relationship-focused)
Conflict Handling	Open discussion	Avoidance, harmony-seeking

SMART Communication Goals

Specific	Develop clear cross-cultural training for all HEI staff
Measurable	Minimum 80% of project teams trained by mid-year
Achievable	Use local case studies and bilingual materials
Relevant	Align with project goals on internationalization
Time-bound	Completion before the second project cycle (Q4 2025)

Adapting Styles to Cultural Context

Vital ability

Adjust communication to cultural contexts is vital; miscommunication costs delays and inefficiencies.



Cultural sensitivity

Being aware of behaviors viewed as assertive or aggressive in diverse cultures avoid unnecessary tensions

Cultural Intelligence (CQ) Framework

- **Cognitive CQ:** Understanding Cambodian academic culture (history, policies).
- **Motivational CQ:** Openness and respect for different pedagogical styles.
- **Behavioral CQ:** Adapting communication—tone, timing, and gestures.

Case Studies

Cultural Intelligence

Culture plays a crucial role in the harmonious functioning of any workplace. Here are some of the Khmer cultural considerations that they highlighted:

- **Saving faces:** Maintaining personal dignity and avoiding public embarrassment is crucial. Criticism should be delivered privately and indirectly, and emotional outbursts should be avoided.
- **Avoidance of conflict:** employees can sometimes prefer to keep silent when there is a problem rather than openly communicating to resolve it
- **The role of women:** Khmer women are often less likely to take on leadership roles and have harder times asserting their decisions in front of their male colleague and/or foreigners.
- **Strong family unit:** family is paramount and a great deal of importance is placed on having a strong family unit. In the workplace, this means employees seek a “sense of family”, which is measured in “trust, respect, and loyalty” towards colleagues.
- **Respect for elders:** employees can sometimes not value opinions of those who are younger and less experienced



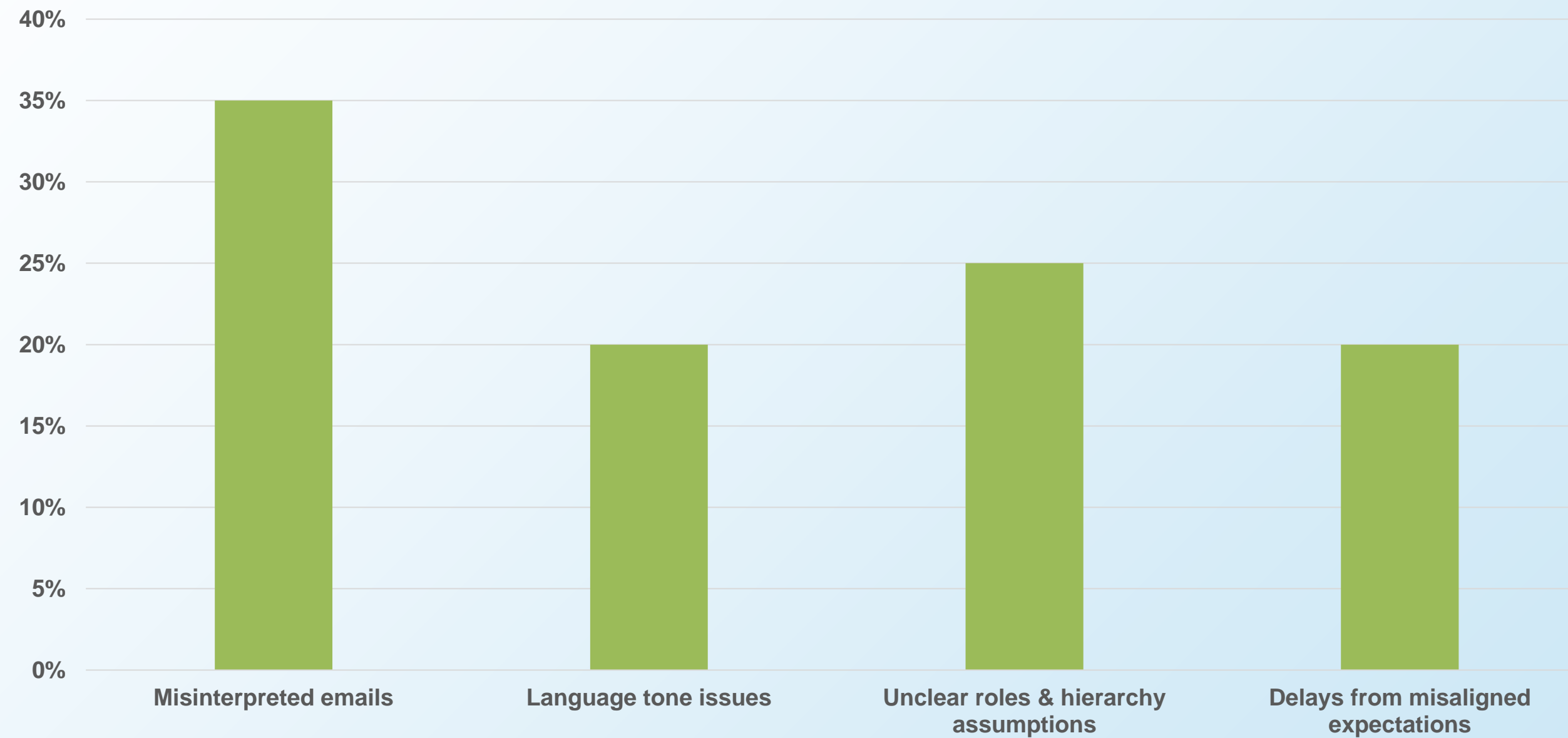
Case Studies

Cultural Intelligence

- **Hierarchy:** Cambodians are taught to respect elders and people in a more senior position. Parents are superior to children, teachers are superior to students, bosses are superior to subordinates, and so on.
- **Collectivism:** the concerns of the group are more valued than those of the individuals. the employees will look for a place where they feel like they're part of a family, where everybody contributes and cares for one another.
- **Gender Roles:** While Cambodia has made strides in recent years, traditional gender roles still exist. Be mindful of this when interacting with Cambodian colleagues and clients
- **Language:** learning basic Khmer phrases and using a translation app can demonstrate respect and enhance communication with Cambodians
- **Dress code:** it is best to dress in US standard professional attire. Men should plan on a sports jacket, and tie, women should wear smart pantsuits, Knee-length skirts and professional dresses.

Infographic – Communication Breakdown in Projects

Top failure reasons:



C.A.R.E. Model for Inclusive Communication

C: Clarity – Visual aids, plain English

A: Access – Khmer and English materials

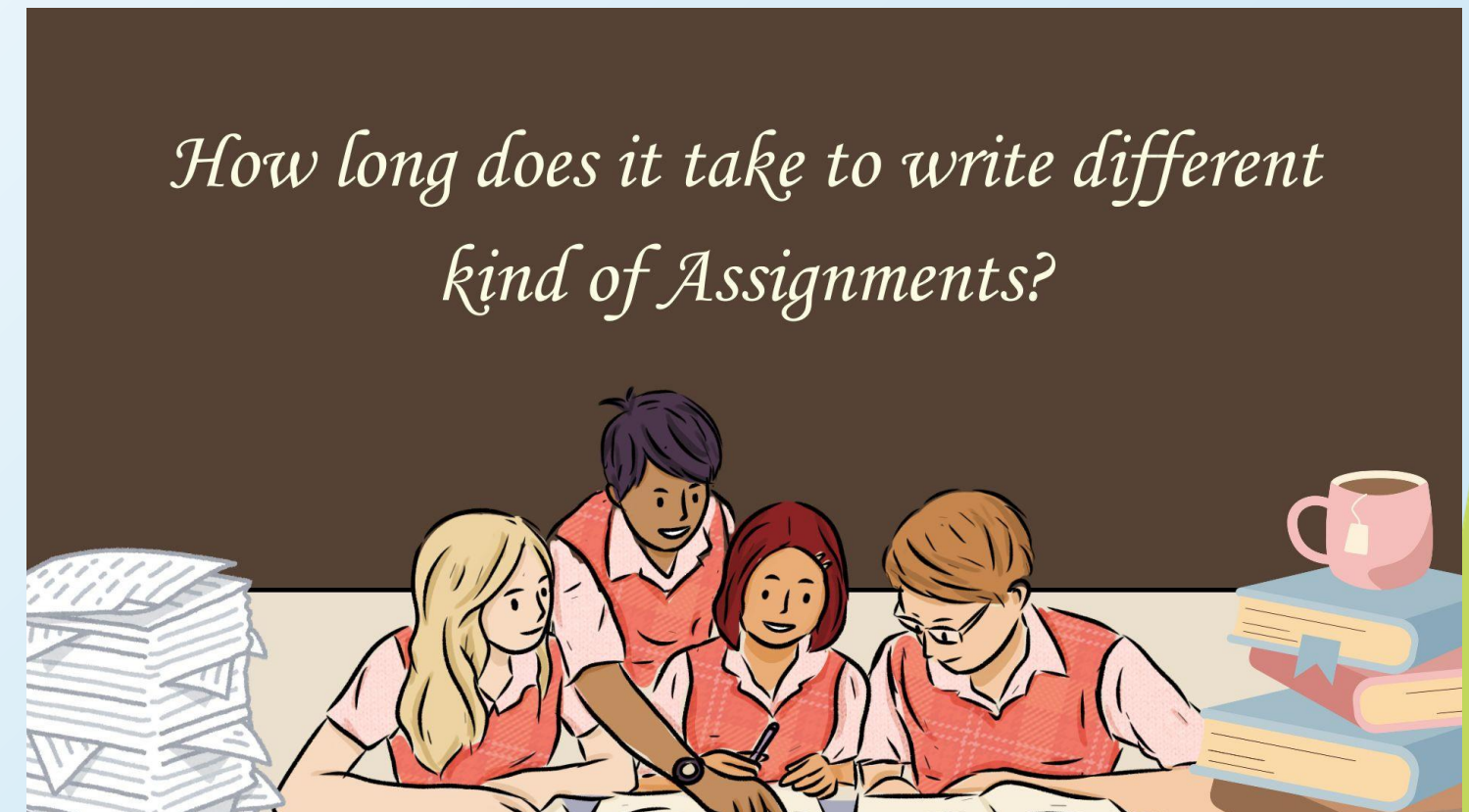
R: Respect – Honor cultural differences

E: Empathy – Non-blaming tone

Case Studies: Care Model

Examples of C.A.R.E. Model in practice:

- Explaining the assignment in a way that students can easily understand.
- Encouraging students to ask questions and providing clear answers.
- Acknowledge and validate student's feelings and concerns.
- Using non-verbal cues to show empathy and support.
- Respecting student's preferences and choices



Establishing Clear Communication Protocols

Setting Expectations

Agree on specific tools (email, messaging apps, video calls) and regular meeting schedules at the start.

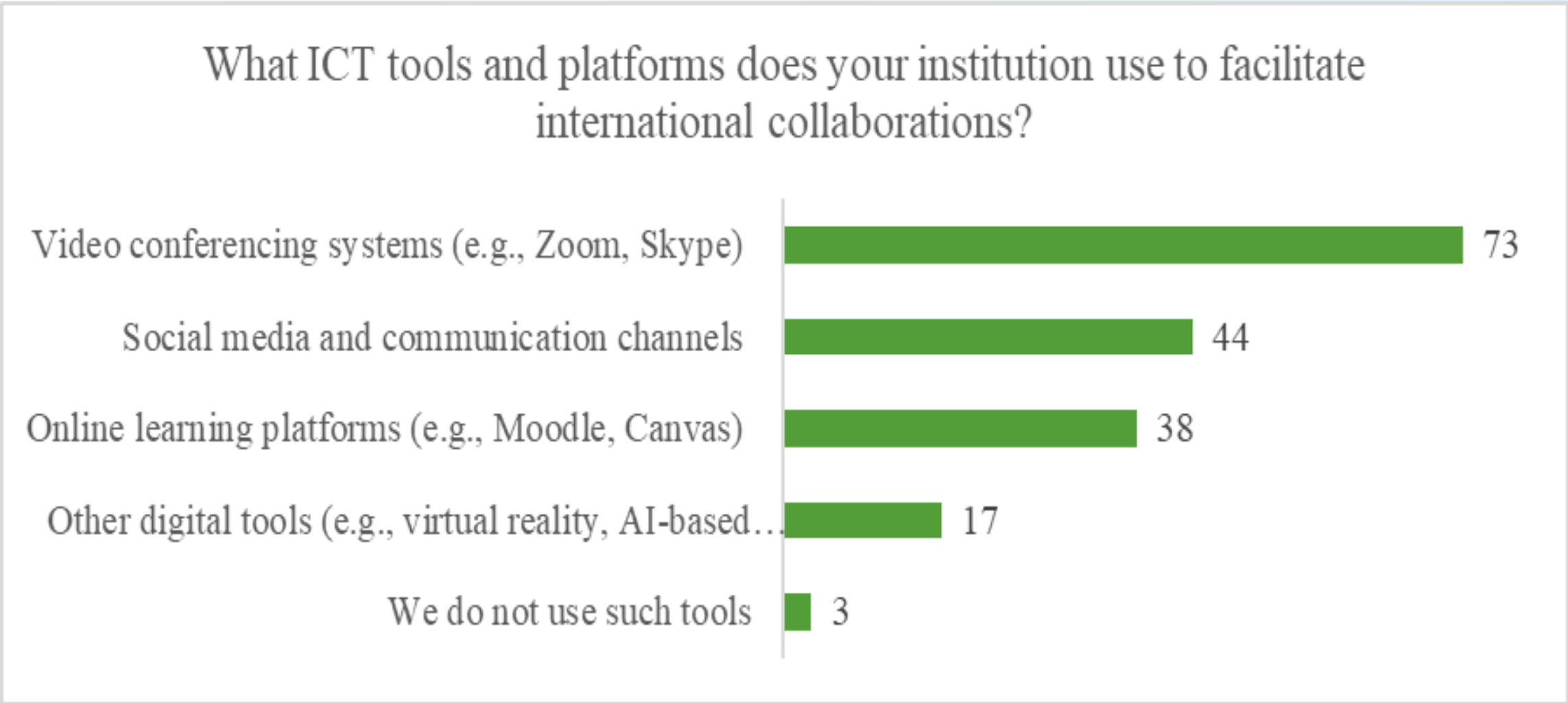
Centralized Platforms

Having a centralized platform for sharing documents (Trello, Microsoft Teams) maintains transparency.



Best Practice Table – Communication Tools

Tool	Use Case	Risk Mitigation
Zoom/MS Teams	Virtual meetings, interpretation	Schedule cross-timezone
WhatsApp/Telegram	Informal check-ins	Avoid overuse
Shared Drives	Document collaboration	Use bilingual labels



Results from UNICATION project

Case Studies (UHST)

Communication Tools

Social media platform	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Website-Social networking (Facebook, LinkedIn, telegram,-Microblogging (Twitter)-Photo sharing (Instagram)-Video sharing (YouTube, Facebook live)
Electronic material	Teaching and learning material (template for PPT, report) Newsletter Logos
Events	Exhibition Study Fair Training Conference
Promotion material	Poster, Roll-ups, Banner, leaflet, booklet, case studies

Training Structure for HEI Staff

1. Pre-departure briefings
2. Cultural sensitivity workshops
3. Communication manual
4. Feedback loops

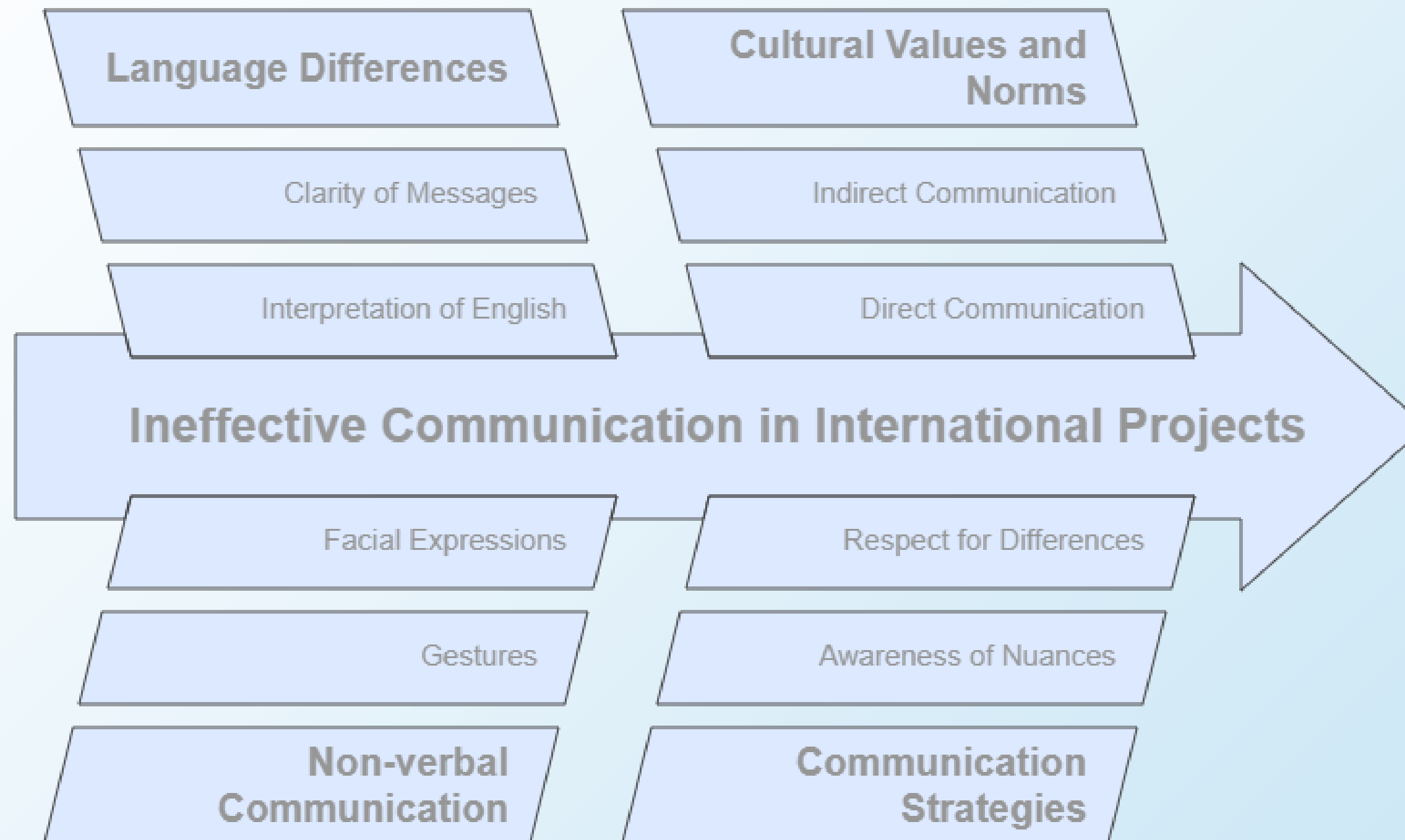
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Training Workshops



Enhancing Communication in International Projects



Intercultural Project Lifecycle

- **Initiation** → Shared understanding
- **Planning** → Role clarity
- **Execution** → Cultural holidays respect
- **Monitoring** → Lessons from misunderstandings
- **Closure** → Celebrate EU–KH traditions



Case Studies/ Exercise (UHST)

Role of Student Involvement

Case Studies (UHST)

Role of Student Involvement

- Peer translators
- Organize EU–KH cultural clubs and fairs
- UHST Student Speaking Clubs
- Workshop participation



Recommendations (UHST)

1. Frequent and Transparent Interaction

Informal check-ins

Weekly virtual coffee breaks allow team members to connect beyond professional; building trust.

Timelines and Processes

Open communication about timelines, processes, and conflict resolution increases trust and reduces misunderstandings.

2. Active Listening and Empathy



Understanding Emotions

Active listening involves understanding the cultural context and emotions behind words; being sensitive.



Encouraging Paraphrasing

During discussions, encourage summarizing to ensure mutual understanding; this builds mutual trust.



3. Sustaining Long-Term Collaboration



Alumni Network

Creating an alumni network offers a platform for collaboration and exchange of ideas; sustaining partnerships.

Follow-up meetings

Organize follow-up meetings to assess the project's long-term impact; continuing the dialogue.

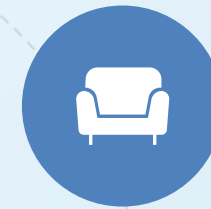


4. Mitigating Cultural Insensitivity

Polite Gestures

What is considered polite in one culture might be offensive in another; raising cultural awareness can help.

01



02

Cultural Training

Educate team members on cultural norms of other coworkers; cultural insensitivity can easily damage relationships.

5. Managing Time Differences

Flexible Schedules

Adopt flexible meeting schedules and deadlines accommodating global teams; time management skills are useful.



Project Management Tools

Leverage project management tools that track progress across different time zones; ensuring a smooth workflow.



6. Training in Negotiation and Conflict



Positive Dialogue

Training will help facilitate positive dialogue and finding mutually satisfying solutions to conflicts together.

Handling Disagreements

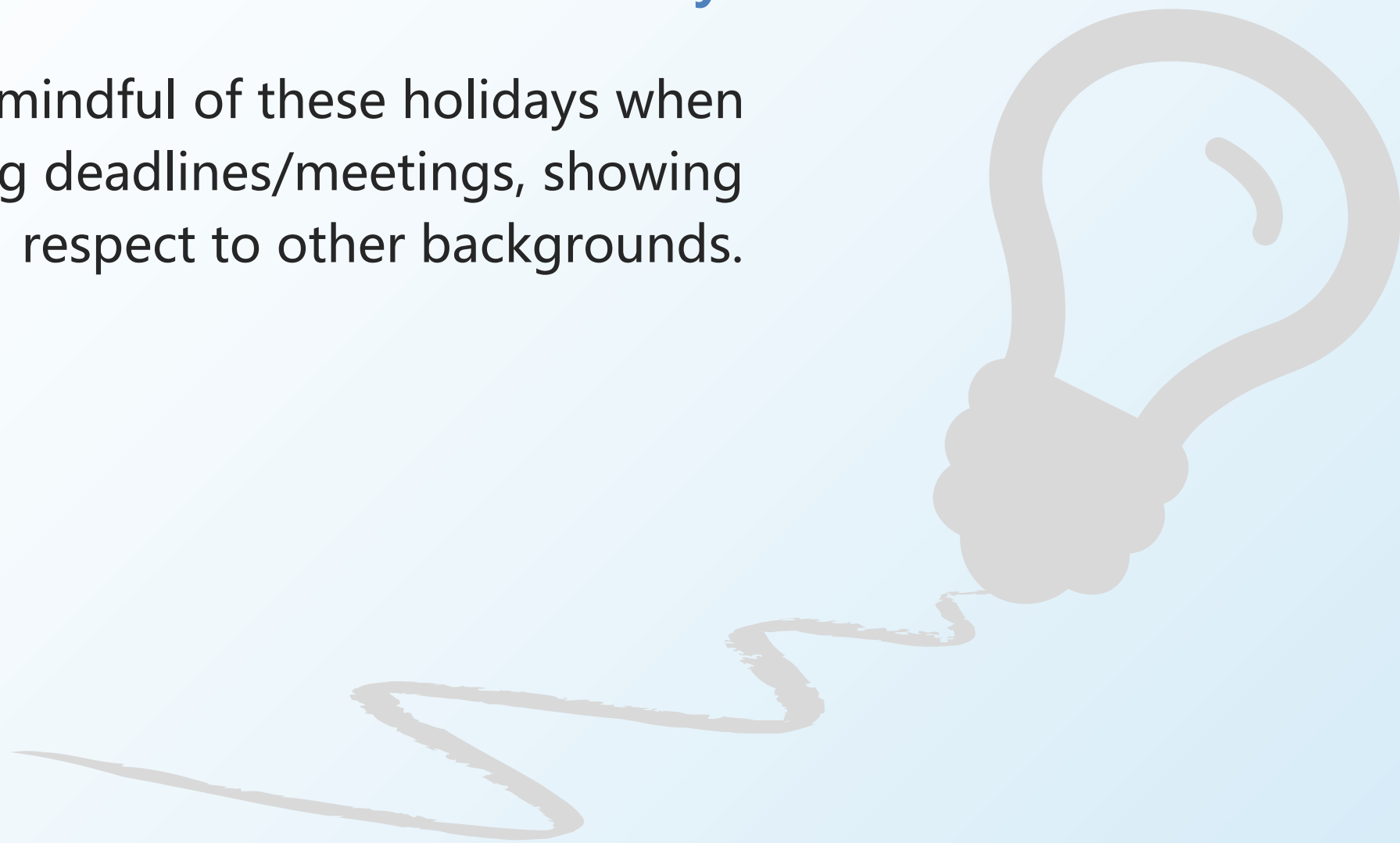
Provide team members with conflict resolution skills; managing emotions when handling conflicts is important.



7. Recognizing Customs and Holidays

National Holidays

Be mindful of these holidays when planning deadlines/meetings, showing respect to other backgrounds.

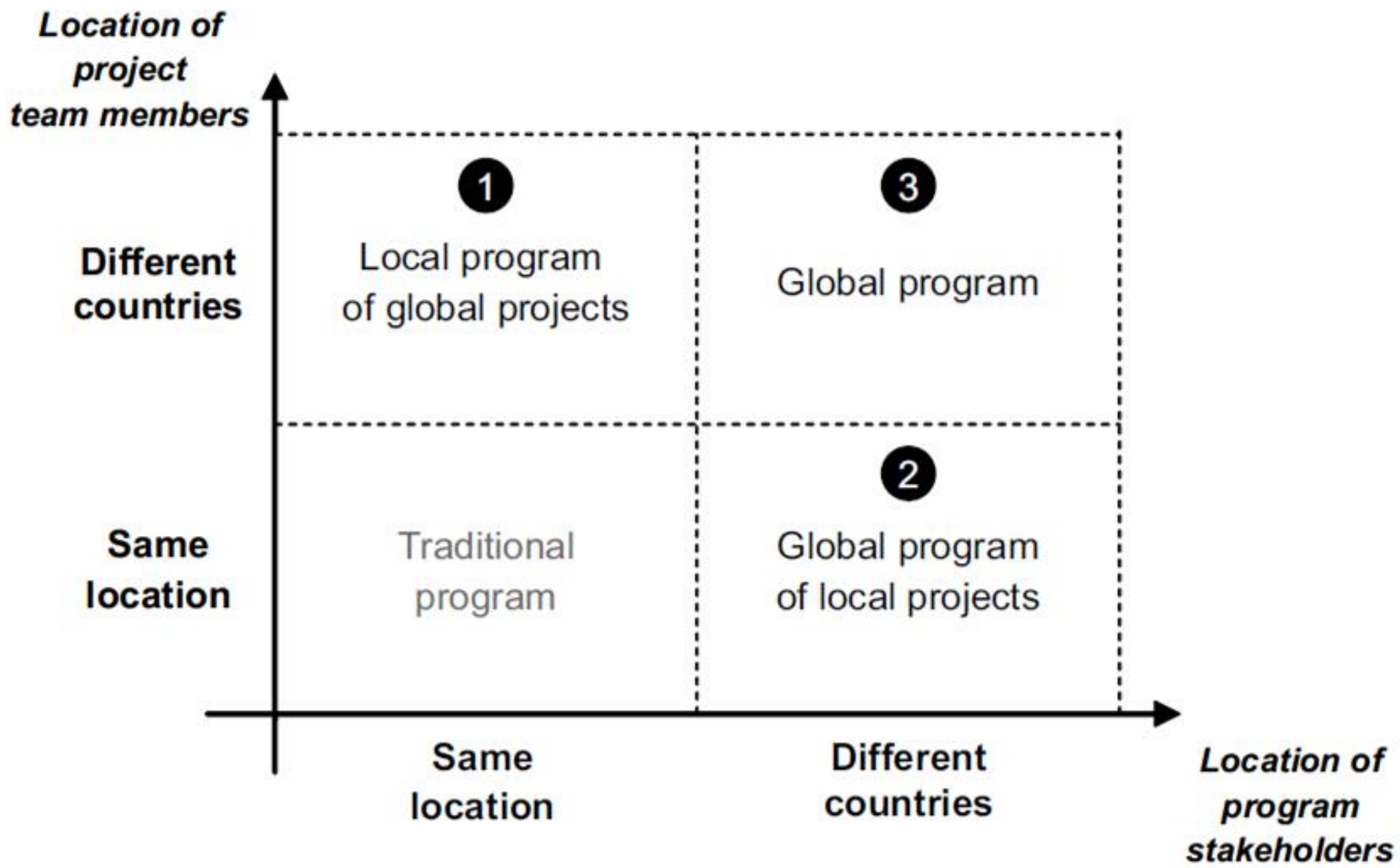


Enhance Feelings

Enhancing feelings of inclusion and belonging can increase one's productivity and self-esteem.

Conclusions (UHST)

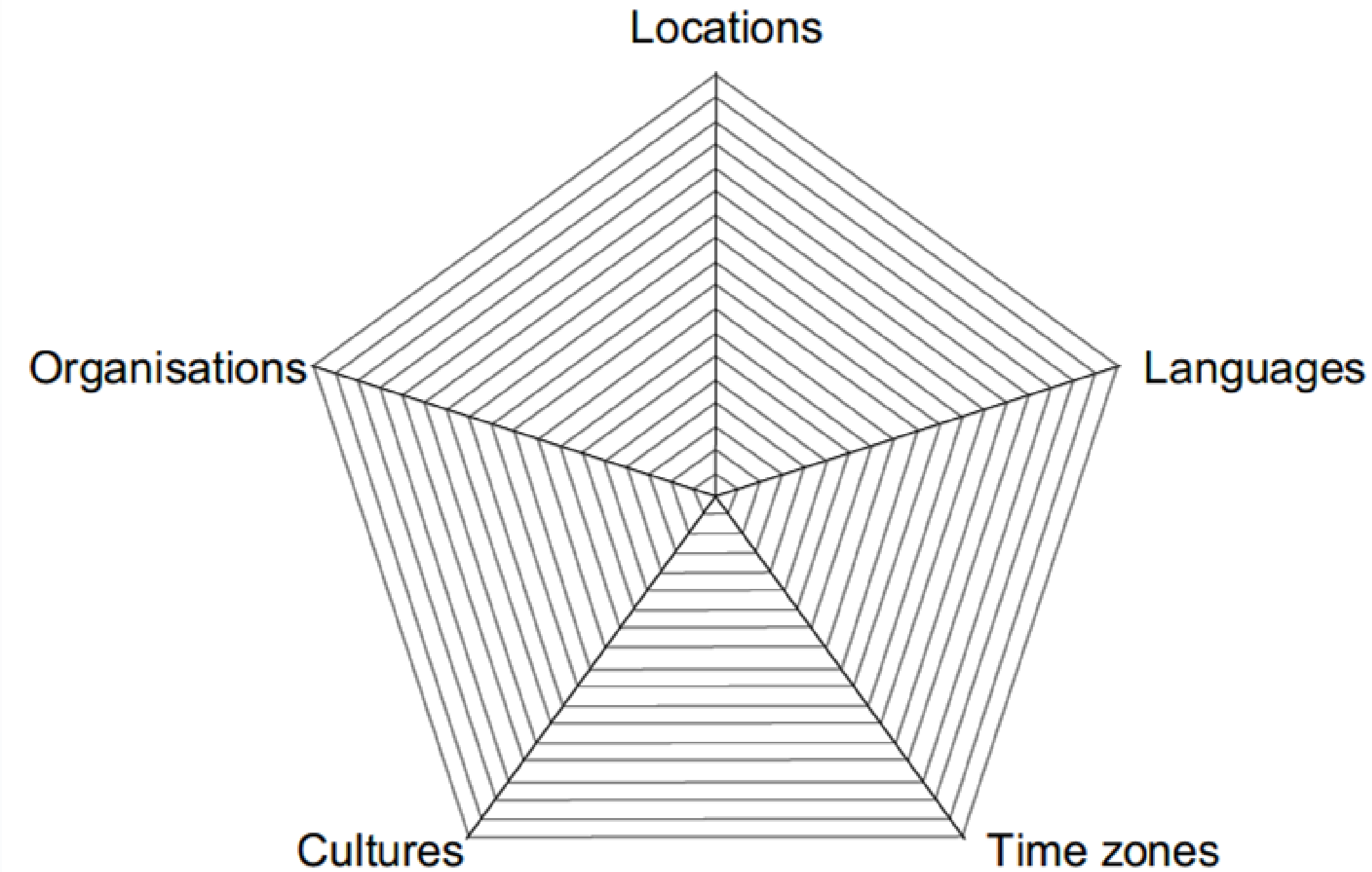
Categories of international communication (project) contexts



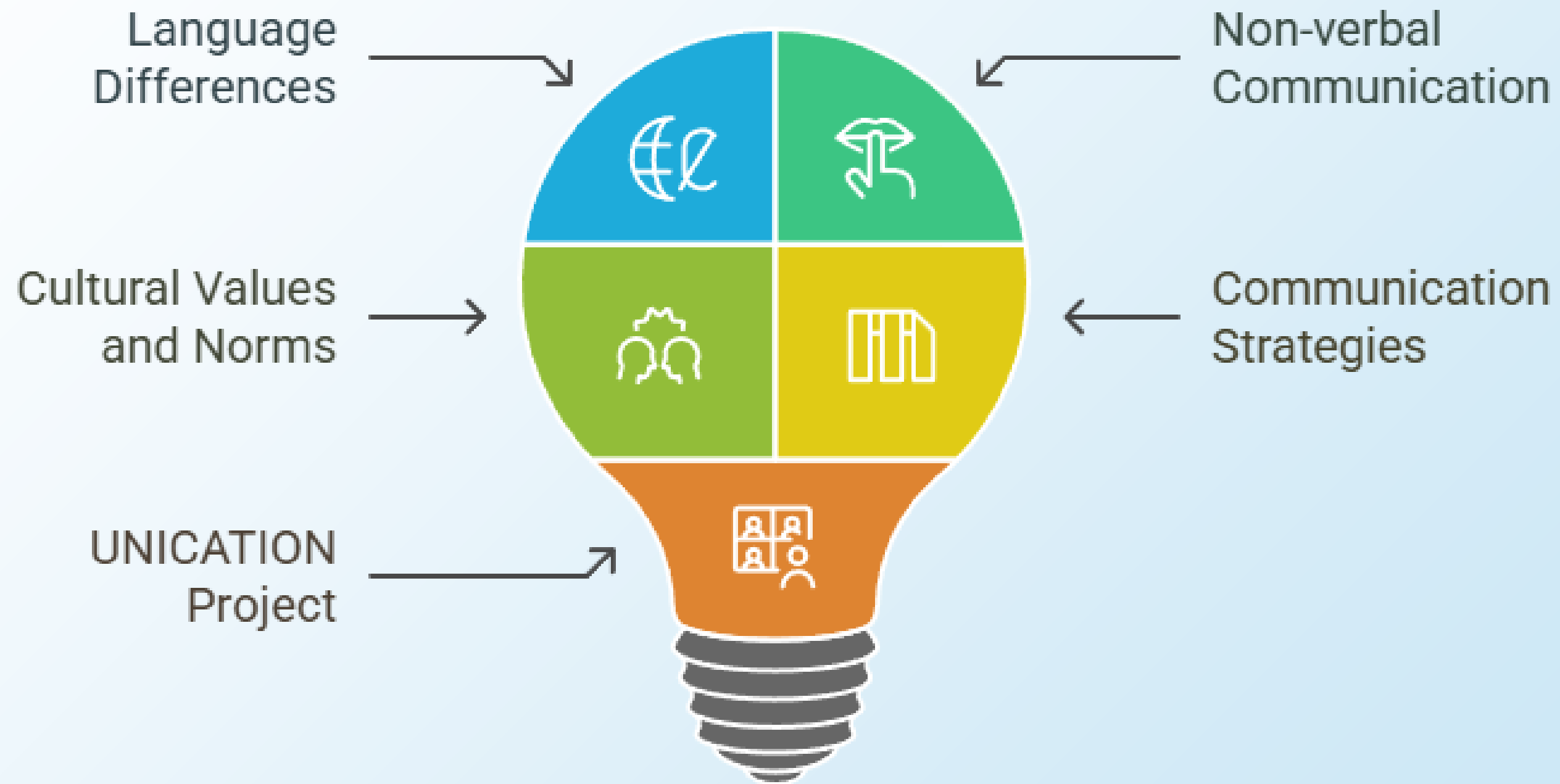
Source: Binder, 2007



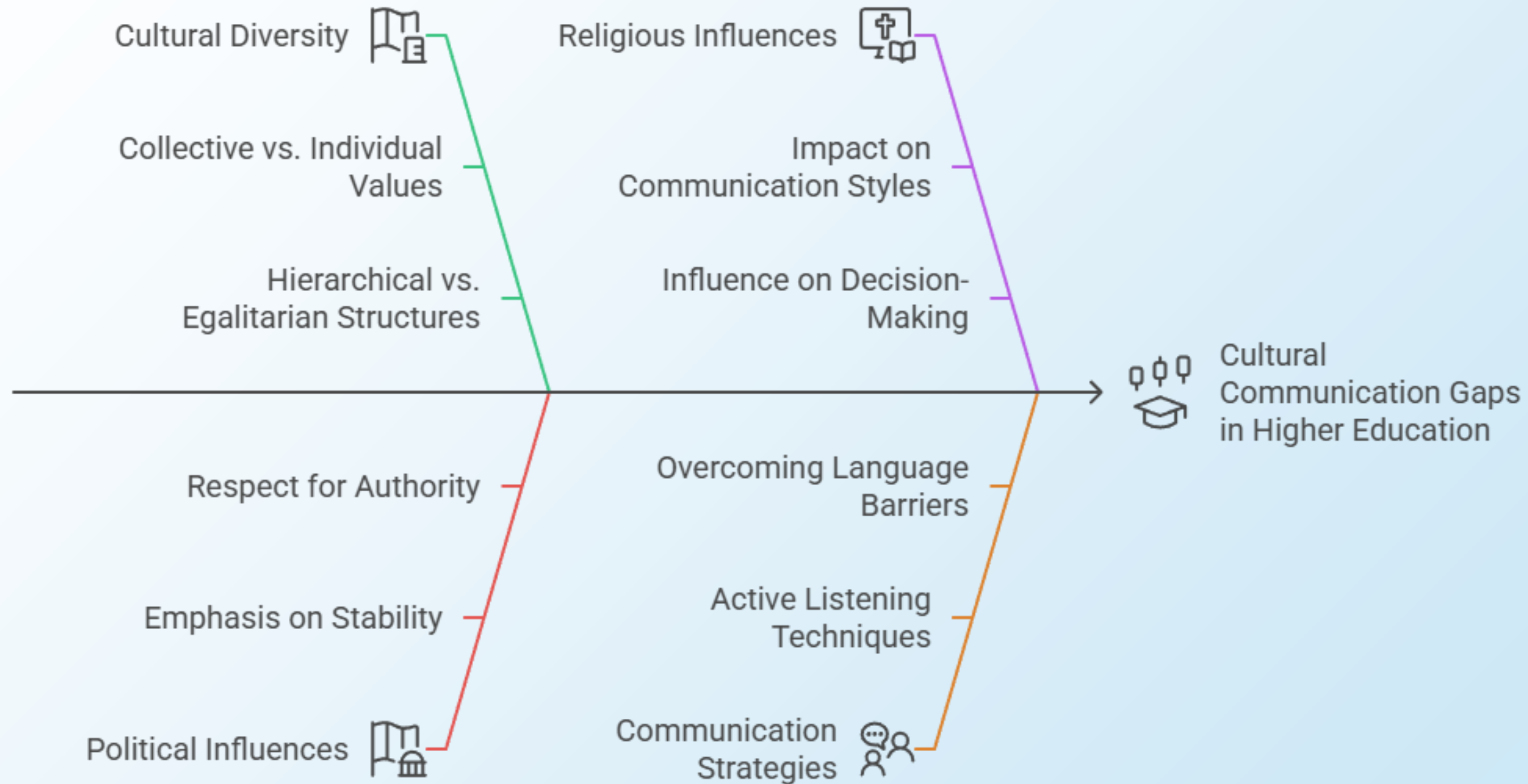
Dimensions of international communication (project) contexts



Enhancing International Communication Skills



Bridging Cultural Communication Gaps in Higher Education



Q&A

1. Let's share your experiences. How can we tailor strategies to local realities?
2. Let's discuss and share your perspectives.

Institutional levels	Key challenges (identify 2-3 key challenges)	Solutions	Lesson learned
Management (Rector, vice-rector)			
Faculty/Institute (dean, director, head of department)			
Relevant Offices (staff, Registrar, Office Administrator)			
Academic staff (Prof. lecturer, researcher)			

Thank you.