



Low-context communicators, prevalent in the U.S., tend to focus on concise, straightforward messages conducive to the fast-paced lives many Americans lead. Yet this style of communicating can work against us when interacting with high-context communication styles, prevalent in most cultures around the world. TING is a great example of how high context communicators use multiple channels when giving and receiving messages. Below are some tips for enhancing communication and listening skills.

- Focus on the person(s) with whom you're communicating. The more you are distracted by your Smartphone or other environmental factors (especially during a conference call), the more you will miss what is being said.
- Beware of different meanings of non-verbal cues. For example, somebody nodding their head may not necessarily be agreeing with what you're saying but rather demonstrating his or her attentiveness.
- Consider non-verbal communication from another person's cultural norms instead of applying your own culture's interpretation of the message. For example, indirect eye contact may be a sign of respect or deference as opposed to inattentiveness or boredom.
- Be aware of your personal filters, biases, and assumptions and acknowledge how they may distort what you hear.
- Be sure to reflect back by paraphrasing what you heard, asking clarifying questions and summarizing the speaker's comments based on your interpretation.
- Avoid making quick judgments or assumptions and allow the speaker to finish what s/he was saying without interruption
- Respond to what you hear by demonstrating curiosity, candidness and respect for the speaker's opinions.
- Validate what you heard. This will encourage the speaker to be more open and confident about conveying his/her message, particularly if limited language ability or heavy accents are an issue.

While cross-cultural communication involves patience and resourcefulness, being mindful of how well you are listening is an important tactic to enhance it in any environment.