GVERN TA' MALTA

eupa

FONDI.eu

MODULE 2

SMART VET
Erasmus+ K210-VET Small scale

Effective Communication

Improve verbal and non-verbal communication skills for professional and intercultural settings.

Erasmus+ KA210-VET | SMART-VET Project

Funded by the European Union

Erasmus+
Enriching lives, opening minds.

Learning Outcomes

OVERALL OBJECTIVE

Communication is far more than conveying information — it is connecting, understanding and building empathy through words, gestures and silence. This module builds the listening and adapting skills mobility placements demand.

BY THE END, LEARNERS WILL BE ABLE TO

1. Distinguish verbal from non-verbal communication and explain how both shape clarity in intercultural settings.
2. Apply active-listening techniques to improve understanding and empathy in interactions.
3. Use practical strategies to overcome linguistic and cultural barriers.
4. Adapt communication style (direct vs. indirect, gestures, eye contact) to the cultural context.
5. Develop intercultural competence through observation, research and self-reflection.

Verbal vs. Non-Verbal Communication

Both channels are essential and usually complement each other.

	Verbal Communication	Non-Verbal Communication
Transmission	Spoken or written words	Gestures, facial expressions, posture, tone, eye contact
Code	Linguistic (language, grammar, syntax)	Non-linguistic signals; interpretation depends on context
Accuracy	More precise and explicit meanings	More ambiguous, subjective and contextual
Effectiveness	Best for abstract ideas and concepts	Best for conveying emotions and attitudes
Main Function	Convey facts, thoughts and opinions	Complement, clarify or contradict the verbal message

5 Techniques for Active Listening

Active listening is a two-way skill that requires empathy, attention and conscious effort.

1 Avoid Interruptions

Give the speaker your full attention and energy; set your own ideas aside until they finish.

2 Listen Without Judgement

Suppress internal reactions, positive or negative, so the speaker feels heard, not judged.

3 Paraphrase

Repeat what you understood in your own words to confirm accuracy and invite correction.

4 Show Positive Non-Verbals

Eye contact, nodding and an open posture confirm engagement without interrupting.

5 Ask Open Questions

“Tell me more about that” invites detail; avoid questions that sound accusatory.

Overcoming Language Barriers

A proactive, combined approach works best in multicultural settings.

1 Use a Common Language + Tools

Combine a shared language with translation tools, simplified wording and visual aids.

2 Adapt & Clarify Messages

Structure communication for easy understanding: explain, repeat, and check comprehension.

3 Put It in Writing

Send official messages in writing to avoid misunderstandings and keep a lasting record.

4 Ask for Institutional Support

Use mentors, peer programmes and language-support courses offered before and during mobility.

Adapting Across Cultures

Direct vs. indirect communication styles shape how messages should be sent and read.

1 Direct Cultures (e.g. USA, Germany)

Clarity and frankness are valued; messages are explicit and meant to be taken at face value.

2 Indirect Cultures (e.g. Japan, Mexico)

Diplomacy and harmony are preferred; hints and subtle gestures avoid direct confrontation.

3 Research First

Learn your interlocutor's cultural norms in advance, and observe how colleagues interact.

4 Adapt & Respect

Adjust candour, body language and tone to the culture — without judging it against your own.

Email & Messaging at Work

Your mentor often judges your professionalism from how you write, not just what you say.

1 Direct Subject Lines

Never send an email with no subject — e.g. “Question about tomorrow's task – [Your Name].”

2 Structure & Respect

Open with a greeting, close professionally, and use separate paragraphs — not one text block.

3 Review Before Sending

Reread for clarity and tone; don't write emails like quick text messages.

4 Respect Instant-Messaging Hours

Group questions into one complete message and avoid writing outside working hours unless urgent.

Building the Mentor Relationship

Success in mobility depends on proactivity — don't wait for your mentor to guess what you need.

1

First Impressions

Introduce yourself actively: “Hello, I am [Name], the new intern…” and clarify your first tasks.

2

Daily Habits

Double-check instructions, report progress proactively, and take feedback without taking it personally.

3

Mentorship Success

Be punctual, observe hierarchy and “unwritten codes,” and request a mid-term check-in meeting.

Practical Exercises for This Module

1 Role-Play: Professional vs. Casual

Groups of 4–6 act out one professional and one informal scenario, switching register, then reflect on what changed.

2 “Lost in Translation”

Pass a phrase through the group like ‘Chinese whispers,’ then compare the original and final message.

3 Sentence Starters

Build a personal phrase bank for clarifying instructions, showing initiative, and giving/receiving feedback.

4 Peer Reflection

Share an intercultural misunderstanding with a partner and discuss together how it was resolved.

Key Takeaways

- Active listening means paying full attention, understanding, responding with empathy, and remembering — not just hearing.
- Avoid interrupting, listen without judging, paraphrase to confirm understanding, and ask open-ended questions.
- Verbal communication is best for facts and abstract ideas; non-verbal communication conveys emotion and attitude more effectively.
- Proactivity drives mobility success: don't wait to be asked — double-check instructions and report your own progress.
- Treat email as an official channel with a clear structure; group instant messages and respect your mentor's working hours.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Say It Clearly. Listen Fully. Adapt Always.

Next: Module 3 — Interpersonal & Teamwork Skills, turning communication into trust and collaboration.