



UNIT

7

IT'S HOW WE SAY IT

IN THIS UNIT

- ▶ Consider the relationship between language and thought
- ▶ Evaluate ideas about language and thought
- ▶ Analyze potential areas of difficulty in communication
- ▶ Examine reasons for communication breakdowns
- ▶ Write a compare-contrast essay about communication

SKILLS

READING

Annotate a text

WRITING

Compare and/or contrast

GRAMMAR

Articles to refer to groups

CRITICAL THINKING

Consider the limitations of research claims

CONNECT TO THE TOPIC

1. How do you and your friends greet each other? How do you greet people you've never met before?
2. Apart from language, what are other differences in how people from different cultures communicate?

Two Emirati friends greet each other in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates.

WATCH



HOW DO YOU PREFER TO COMMUNICATE?

A singing group in Edinburgh, Scotland

A Watch the video and complete the table. ▶ 7:1

	How do they prefer to communicate?	What challenges do they face when using this form of communication?	What would they say to people about this form of communication?
Alishia			
Cate			
Tim			

B PERSONALIZE Discuss these questions with a partner.

- Which of the three speakers interests you the most?
- What would you like to ask that person about their method of communication?

PREPARE TO READ

A VOCABULARY Complete the sentences with the correct form of the words.

assign (v)	gender (n)	inherent (adj)	notion (n)	status (n)
controversial (adj)	hypothesis (n)	linguistic (adj)	provoke (v)	superficial (adj)

- In many societies, people of higher _____ use different words and expressions than people in lower social positions.
- There are some _____ differences between the articles, but when you read them more closely, you see that they make similar arguments.
- Many people believe in the _____ that some languages are naturally more beautiful than others. In reality, this idea is not true.
- In some languages, nouns are masculine or feminine. The _____ of a word is not related to its meaning; for example, in French, a book is masculine, but a table is feminine.
- Before designing the experiment, the researcher formulated a(n) _____. She predicted that most bilingual speakers communicate in one language at home and the other at work.
- The human world is known for its _____ diversity—but do you know how many different languages there are?
- The school's recent tuition increase _____ a strong reaction.
- What is the best age to learn a new language? That's a(n) _____ topic!
- The teacher divided the class into teams and _____ a color to each team.
- A need to communicate with others is _____ in all humans. Children grow up using language naturally without being taught.

B PERSONALIZE Discuss these questions with a partner.

- Does your first language have **gender**? Is gender in language useful? Explain.
- Do you think some people have an **inherent** ability to communicate well? To what extent can communication skills be learned?

REFLECT Consider the relationship between language and thought.

Before you read about language and thought, discuss these questions in a small group.

- Some languages have words that cannot easily be translated. For example, the Inuit language has a word, *iktsuarpok*, which refers to the excitement you feel when someone is coming to your home. Why do you think there is no equivalent word in English?
- Does your first language have any words that have no equivalent word in English? What does this tell us about the relationship between language, culture, and thought?

THE LANGUAGE-THOUGHT CONNECTION

A PREVIEW Answer the questions.

1. Look at the animals in the photo. What are they called in English?
2. English has a small number of words for these animals, whereas the people who live in this region have many. What can you infer from this difference?

A Dinka herder, Sudan

7.1 *Is there a connection between the language we speak and the way we see the world? Some linguists who study the science and structure of language think so. Others are not so sure.*

1 Imagine you are walking across a flat landscape in East Africa. You come across a large creature that you correctly identify as a cow. You see several more of these creatures, and you **assign** them all the same name: “cow.” However, for the Dinka people of Sudan, cows are fundamental to their economic and cultural lives. Cows are traditionally used to produce food, medicine, and clothing; they are a sign of wealth and are used as a form of payment. It is no surprise, then, that the Dinka have over 400 words to describe the varieties, colors, actions, and diseases of cows.

2 Many miles away, in the Solomon Islands in the South Pacific, where coconuts are a key commodity, locals have nine different words for “coconut.” Do the Solomon Islanders view coconuts differently because they have more words to describe them? Do the Dinka of Sudan see differences in cows not noticeable to those who do not speak their language? In short, what is the relationship between **linguistic** differences and thought processes?

3 This was the question asked in the 1930s and 1940s by linguists Edward Sapir and Benjamin Lee Whorf. The resulting theory, the Sapir-Whorf **hypothesis**, suggests that an individual’s view of the world is determined or influenced by the language that the individual speaks. Language is not simply a list of grammar rules or vocabulary items; it plays a key role in how we process and interpret experiences and information.

4 Let’s look at a few examples. Some languages do not use terms such as “left” and “right” when describing location or giving directions. They use the directions found on a compass¹. A speaker of Guugu Yimithirr, a minority language spoken in Australia, would not give directions to his house by telling you to turn right. He would also not say that he has hurt his left leg. Instead, he might tell you to “travel north-west” to visit him, and he might refer to the injured limb as his “south-south-east leg.” Frequent use of this type of phrasing has benefits. Speakers of Guugu Yimithirr have been shown to have a much stronger sense of direction than speakers of languages that do not describe direction in this way.

¹**compass** (n) a small tool that shows direction: north, south, east, and west

5 Psychologist Lera Boroditsky has explored the influence of **gender** on the words used to describe objects. In many languages, everyday objects such as tables, chairs, pens, and pencils can be masculine or feminine. Boroditsky asked speakers of German and Spanish to describe a bridge. The word “bridge” is feminine in German (*die Brücke*), while in Spanish, it is masculine (*el puente*). The German speakers in the study described the bridge with adjectives that are commonly used to describe females, such as “beautiful” and “elegant,” while the Spanish speakers used adjectives often used to describe males, such as “strong” and “powerful.” Boroditsky found similar results when participants were asked to describe other everyday objects. Her study suggests that the grammatical gender of an object influences how that object is seen.

6 While the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis has received a lot of attention, it is not accepted as truth by all linguists; in fact, it is **controversial**. Many linguists argue that differences such as the number of words for coconuts or cows are only **superficial** and do not play a significant role in shaping thought processes. Cultures create words to respond to needs, and speakers of different languages simply have different needs. To them, these differences in grammar and vocabulary do not prove that language alone controls a whole culture’s thoughts.

7 Another concern is that relating cognitive processing to language differences is problematic: Could the hypothesis be a form of **inherent** discrimination, an outdated **notion**? Specifically, does this theory assume that speakers of certain languages are incapable of certain thoughts? In Whorf’s early writings, for example, he described how the Hopi people of the southwestern United States did not express verb tenses in the same way as English speakers. This should in no way suggest an inability to understand time among the Hopi.

8 Today, the “strong” version of the hypothesis, that language *determines* how we see the world, has few followers. There is, however, still support for the “weak” version, that language *influences* worldview. There are several implications of this. Let’s think about two key questions.

9 Firstly, do bilingual or multilingual people see the world differently depending on which language they are speaking? In a study of over 1,000 bilingual individuals, over two-thirds reported feeling “like a different person” when changing languages. Think about someone who is bilingual in English and Korean. Korean has a complex system of levels of politeness and formality: The language forms a Korean speaker uses will change according to the age or **status** of the listener.



There are nine different words for “coconut” in the Solomon Islands.

Bilingual speakers need to be more aware of the age and status of the listener when speaking Korean than when speaking English.

10 Secondly, what is the implication of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis for the world’s minority languages? There are around 6,500 languages in the world, and almost half of them are in danger of disappearing. If language is more than a system of sounds, words, and structures, and if we acknowledge its connection to the worldview of its speakers, this means that when a language is lost, we lose more than just a set of grammar and vocabulary. We potentially lose a way of looking at the world that is unique to speakers of that language. This point of view is shared by many linguists, who are working to preserve minority languages.

11 As you have seen, a language is much more than a system of sounds, words, and grammatical structures. It affects how speakers see and interpret the world. This is a controversial topic that **provokes** strong reactions, but it is one that offers rich potential for further research and discussion.

B MAIN IDEAS Choose the correct answers.

1. What is the main idea of this article?
 - a. Some languages are more complex and have richer vocabularies than others.
 - b. Languages around the world have different systems of grammar.
 - c. The way we think is dependent on the structure of our language.
 - d. More research is needed to fully understand how language influences the way people see the world.
2. What is the current status of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis?
 - a. No one is currently researching this topic; interest in it died out in the 1930s and 1940s.
 - b. It is considered interesting, but many linguists are not convinced about it.
 - c. The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis has been shown to be incorrect; no one takes it seriously.
 - d. The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis is considered valuable as it explains much about cognition.

C DETAILS Choose the correct ending for each sentence.

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. _____ The Dinka . . . | a. should be protected, as they provide insight into the unique way of thinking of their speakers. |
| 2. _____ Edward Sapir and Benjamin Lee Whorf . . . | b. sometimes say that they feel like two different people when speaking different languages. |
| 3. _____ Speakers of languages that have gender . . . | c. are concerned that relating language to cognitive processes can lead to false assumptions. |
| 4. _____ Critics of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis . . . | d. see differences between cows that are not usually noticed by casual observers. |
| 5. _____ Bilingual and multilingual people . . . | e. suggested there might be a relationship between language and thought. |
| 6. _____ The world's minority languages . . . | f. might view masculine and feminine nouns differently. |

D DETAILS What can you infer from the article? Write **Y** for **Yes** or **N** for **No**. Explain your answers to a partner.

- _____ People whose lives depend on animals or plants often have more words for them.
- _____ If an English speaker asks a speaker of Guugu Yimithirr for directions, the response might be confusing.
- _____ German bridges are more beautiful than Spanish bridges.
- _____ The role played by gender in a language may be more than just grammatical.
- _____ Koreans are not concerned about the age of a person they meet.
- _____ It is important to protect the endangered languages of the world.

READING SKILL Annotate a text

As you saw in Unit 1, you need to be an active reader. You need to react to the text, not just passively get information from it. One way to do this is to read with a pen in your hand. As you read, annotate the text. (If you don't want to write in your book, you can also take notes on a separate piece of paper.) Specifically, each time you read a key detail, write a comment, such as an example to illustrate it, or your reaction to it. This serves three purposes:

- ▶ It allows you to check that you have understood the main ideas of the reading.
- ▶ It allows you to go beyond what is written in the text and to apply it to other situations you have heard about.
- ▶ It helps you review the text before a quiz or test.

E APPLY Read the statements from the reading and the sample questions. Then think of your own experiences and make annotations that respond to the questions.

Statement	Your annotation
It is no surprise, then, that the Dinka have over 400 words to describe the varieties, colors, actions, and diseases of cows. (par. 1) (What aspect of life in my culture has a lot of words to describe it?)	Similar to . . .
Cultures create words to respond to needs, and speakers of different languages simply have different needs. (par. 6) (Which new words have appeared in my first language in the last 20 years? Why?)	
In a study of over 1,000 bilingual individuals, over two-thirds reported feeling "like a different person" when changing languages. (par. 9) (Do I ever feel this way? When?)	
There are around 6,500 languages in the world, and almost half of them are in danger of disappearing. (par. 10) (Which minority languages in my country are in danger of disappearing? What would be lost if these languages were lost?)	

LEARNING TIP

As you develop your vocabulary, be aware of 'false friends.' These are words that look the same as a word in your first language but that have a different meaning. For example, Spanish speakers must learn that the English word *realize* does not mean *to do* or *to perform*; it means *to understand*.

REFLECT Evaluate ideas about language and thought.

In your notebook, respond to each of the following statements. Then, in a small group, share your responses and decide which one you all agree or disagree with most.

- ▶ Bilingual and multilingual people see the world differently depending on which language they are speaking.
- ▶ It is wrong to say that certain people cannot formulate a specific idea just because their language does not currently have a single word for it.

PREPARE TO READ

A VOCABULARY Choose the word or phrase that shows the meaning of the word in bold.

- In your culture, is it important to have respect for **authority**?
 - people with power
 - people with money
- Is it important in your culture to follow established **conventions**?
 - ways of acting
 - meetings
- Since she grew up in poverty, Emily has **empathy** for people in difficult circumstances.
 - a disconnection from
 - an understanding of the feelings of
- It is illegal to park on First Street, but the law is rarely **enforced**.
 - acted upon
 - ignored
- It is dangerous to **generalize** about people from different cultures.
 - make big assumptions
 - learn everything
- When someone is arrested, are the police **inclined to** believe the suspect's story?
 - likely to
 - reluctant to
- In his presentation, Jack gave an **overview** of the findings of his research project.
 - the main points
 - the details
- Do all Americans wear cowboy hats? No, that's a **stereotype**.
 - an accurate cultural description
 - an overly simple cultural description
- Kevin is a nice guy, but I can't **tolerate** his habit of interrupting every time I speak.
 - allow; put up with
 - change something
- Christina was invited to her friend's wedding on the same day as her brother's graduation. Of course, her family **took precedence**.
 - was less important
 - was more important

B PERSONALIZE Discuss these questions with a partner.

- If you were asked to give a brief **overview** of your culture's values, what would you say?
- Which rules are **enforced** in your school or workplace? Which are not enforced?
- What **stereotypes** exist about your own country? Is there any truth in them?

REFLECT Analyze potential areas of difficulty in communication.

Before you read about cross-cultural communication, discuss these questions in a small group.

- Are children in your culture taught to speak with respect to (a) older people and/or (b) those in positions of power?
- You have an opinion that is very different from those of your classmates and teacher. Do you feel comfortable expressing this opinion to your classmates? To your teacher?
- You have a disagreement with a coworker or classmate. What steps will you take to resolve the problem?

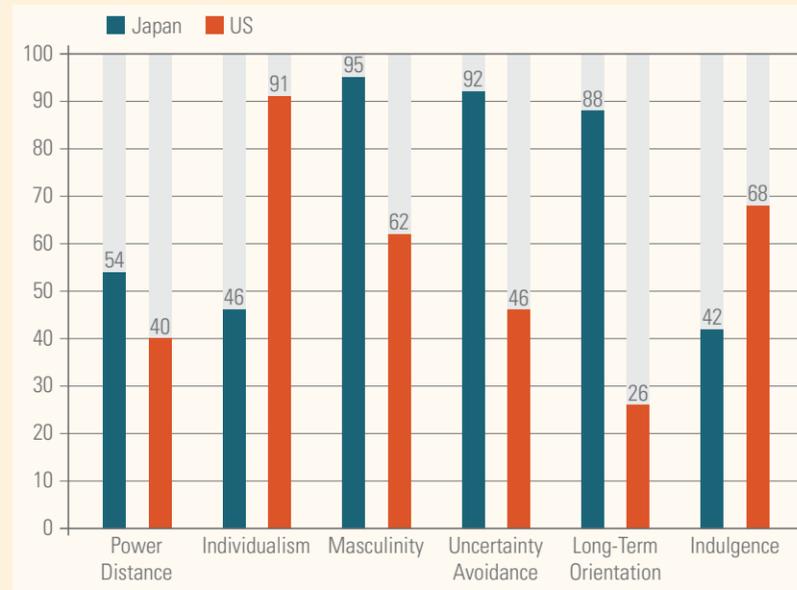
READ

A woman in Tokyo, Japan, demonstrates her own style. Some cultures embrace individuality more than others.

COMMUNICATION ACROSS CULTURES

A PREVIEW Look at the graph and answer the questions with a partner.

1. What do you think the characteristics being compared mean?
2. What cultural differences can you see between the citizens of the United States and those of Japan?



7.2 Sometimes, cultural differences in communication lead to misunderstandings at work or at school, even though there are no problems with language.

1 A large, multinational company has employees from many different countries. While they enjoy working together, they sometimes have a sense that something has been misunderstood, that they don't agree on the best approach to a task, or that a meeting has not gone as planned. Could their cultural backgrounds play a role in these communication difficulties?

2 Geert Hofstede (1928–2020) was a researcher in intercultural communications, who spent decades investigating how people around the world communicate in the workplace and in education. He came up with a number of “dimensions”—criteria by which the values of a culture are expressed. His research proposes an **overview** of the communication preferences of over 100 cultures around the world.

3 Dimension 1: Power distance index (PDI)

Do people accept inequality within their society? Some cultures have clear divisions between different levels; others are much more equal.

- ▶ In high-PDI cultures, it's more common to use family names and titles with those in higher-level positions. In low-PDI cultures, first names are common.
- ▶ In high-PDI cultures, decisions are often made by the person in charge; those in lower positions follow orders. In low-PDI cultures, the opinions of people lower down are taken into consideration.
- ▶ In high-PDI cultures, nonverbal forms of communication, such as bowing or standing up when a higher-status person enters the room, are more common.

4 Dimension 2: Individualism vs. collectivism (IDV)

Do people focus on themselves or on the group to which they belong? In an individualist culture, individual needs come first, while in a collectivist culture, loyalty to family or community **takes precedence**.

- ▶ Members of collectivist cultures are less **inclined to** disagree publicly with others. It's more important to maintain harmony within the group. Students, for example, may be reluctant to disagree with their classmates.
- ▶ In collectivist cultures, it's important not to embarrass others. A boss or teacher should not criticize someone publicly. The person will feel shame for disappointing his or her group.
- ▶ In individualist cultures, individual privacy is respected. It's understood that people may not want to share personal information with their colleagues.

5 Dimension 3: Masculinity vs. femininity (MAS)

Are historically masculine values, such as competition and **authority**, preferred? Are money and career success admired? Or does the culture embrace historically feminine values, such as **empathy** toward others?

- ▶ People in cultures that Hofstede describes as “feminine” may be more open to collaboration than those in Hofstede's “masculine” cultures, where competition is valued.
- ▶ Where a conflict arises, members of feminine cultures are often more willing to compromise and negotiate. Members of masculine cultures might be more eager to fight for what they want.
- ▶ In masculine countries, academic achievement is praised. In feminine cultures, weaker students are also celebrated. A school in a feminine culture may give a prize for the “kindest student” or the “student who made a contribution to school life.”

6 Dimension 4: Uncertainty avoidance index (UAI)

To what extent do people value predictability and control over their lives? In high-UAI cultures, laws are established and **enforced**. In low-UAI cultures, there is a more relaxed attitude to life. Different ideas and approaches to life are **tolerated**.

- ▶ In education, students from high-UAI cultures like to know exactly what they are going to study and how they will be evaluated. Those from low-UAI cultures don't mind when a course is changed to meet students' needs.
- ▶ Teachers in high-UAI cultures are reluctant to admit that they don't know something. In low-UAI cultures, teachers who say “I don't know” are more readily accepted.
- ▶ In the workplace, high-UAI cultures have many rules their employees should follow, whereas low-UAI cultures are more flexible.

7 Dimension 5: Long- vs. short-term orientation (LTO)

Does the culture value tradition, or is it open to change? Cultures with long-term orientation are less willing to look at new ideas than those with short-term orientation.

- ▶ Company managers in cultures with long-term orientation are more likely to expect profits 10 years in the future, whereas those in cultures with short-term orientation want to get rich tomorrow.

- ▶ Members of cultures with long-term orientation form long-term connections with other people. There is a commitment to helping each other over a period of many years.
- ▶ In cultures with short-term orientation, people are expected to adapt to change quickly.

8 Dimension 6: Indulgence¹ vs. restraint² (IVR)

How important is it to enjoy life? People in high-indulgence cultures want to have fun. In contrast, high-restraint cultures are more likely to put personal needs aside to get the job done. Following social **conventions** is more common in these cultures.

- ▶ Meetings in high-indulgence cultures can be fun, with laughter and jokes. On the other hand, it's often best not to bring humor into a meeting in a high-restraint culture, but to focus on the purpose of the meeting.
- ▶ In education, students from cultures that value indulgence like to play games and have fun in class. Those from cultures that value restraint may see these activities as a waste of time.
- ▶ Members of high-indulgence cultures value their leisure time when they are not at work or in school.

9 Criticisms of Hofstede's dimensions

While Hofstede's work has led to an increased awareness of cultural differences in communication, it hasn't escaped criticism. The main criticism of Hofstede's model is that it's overly simplified and reduces vastly different people to **stereotypes**. It's impossible to **generalize** and to say that all Chinese, Brazilians, Saudis, Germans, or Americans are completely the same or different when it comes to communication. It's important to remember that every culture is made up of individuals, all of whom have different ways of communicating. The theory also ignores the fact that people are mobile today: They travel, they marry partners from other parts of the world, and they identify with more than one culture.

10 What do you think? Do you think Hofstede's dimensions are oversimplified and represent stereotypes? Or do they shed light on common communication problems in multicultural settings?

¹**indulgence** (n) enjoying something that brings pleasure

²**restraint** (n) control over one's emotions and desires

B MAIN IDEAS Write the dimension addressed in each question.

- _____ Which is more important: the person or the group?
- _____ To what extent does the culture value tradition and growth over a long period of time?
- _____ Are there clear divisions between higher and lower levels in society?
- _____ Is having fun seen as important, or is it a waste of time?
- _____ Is it important to have control over one's life?
- _____ Does the culture value competition and success, or does it value kindness and collaboration?

C DETAILS Match each speaker to the Hofstede culture type they might come from.

- | | | |
|------------------------------|--------------------|-------------------------------|
| a. Individualist | c. High indulgence | e. High power distance |
| b. Low uncertainty avoidance | d. Femininity | f. High uncertainty avoidance |
- _____ "I told a joke in a meeting today. I thought it was funny, but no one laughed. They all looked annoyed."
 - _____ "I emailed my teacher and addressed her as 'Professor.' She told me to call her Annie. I was shocked. I don't think that's polite."
 - _____ "We don't always agree, but surely we can compromise and reach an agreement we're both happy with."
 - _____ "My professor admitted today that she didn't know the answer to a question. I don't think she's very good. Maybe I'll change to a different class."
 - _____ "My coworkers keep asking me about my income, my family, even whether I plan to get married! I don't want to share that kind of information."
 - _____ "I enjoy the relaxed environment at work. As long as I get my work done, it doesn't matter what I wear, or what time I eat lunch."

CRITICAL THINKING Consider the limitations of research claims

When you read research that makes bold conclusions, especially about human behavior, it is important to stop and think before generalizing. If someone says *X* happens because of *Y*, consider if there are other factors that can cause *Y*. For example, when you read about Hofstede's cultural dimensions, did you think, "This could be a cultural difference, but it might also happen because of the individual's personality, or because of the situation"?

REFLECT Examine reasons for communication breakdowns.

Work in a small group. Read the following situations. For each one, decide:

- ▶ How would Hofstede explain this breakdown in communication? What went wrong?
 - ▶ Could there be other reasons, such as personal or other noncultural factors, that explain why this situation happened?
1. Marta has been appointed director of her company's overseas branch, which is going through a difficult time. Marta arranges a meeting with everyone in the office to get their thoughts on how the company could be more successful. Her employees simply stare at her. No one says a word.
 2. Leo is teaching a class of students from various cultures. On the first day, he tells his students that he doesn't have a detailed plan; he wants to "see how it goes" and figure out what to do from there. Leo later learns that some of his students have requested a different teacher as they think he is disorganized.

WRITE

UNIT TASK Write a compare-contrast essay about communication.

You are going to write a short essay about either the similarities or the differences between two aspects of communication. Use the ideas, vocabulary, and skills from the unit.

A MODEL Read the essay. Underline the three similarities discussed in the essay.

Spoken Languages and Sign Languages: A Comparison

1 There are about 6,500 languages in the world, and each one has its own system of sounds, words, and sentence structure. However, one group of languages is unique in that users of these languages do not use sounds to express thoughts. These languages are sign languages. They rely mainly on hand gestures to transmit meaning and are used mostly by the deaf. While the lack of sounds has led some people to wonder whether these are “real” languages, it is now widely accepted that sign languages such as American Sign Language (ASL) are languages like any other. They share several features with spoken languages: They have clear grammar rules; they include regional and social variation; and they can be used to express creativity.

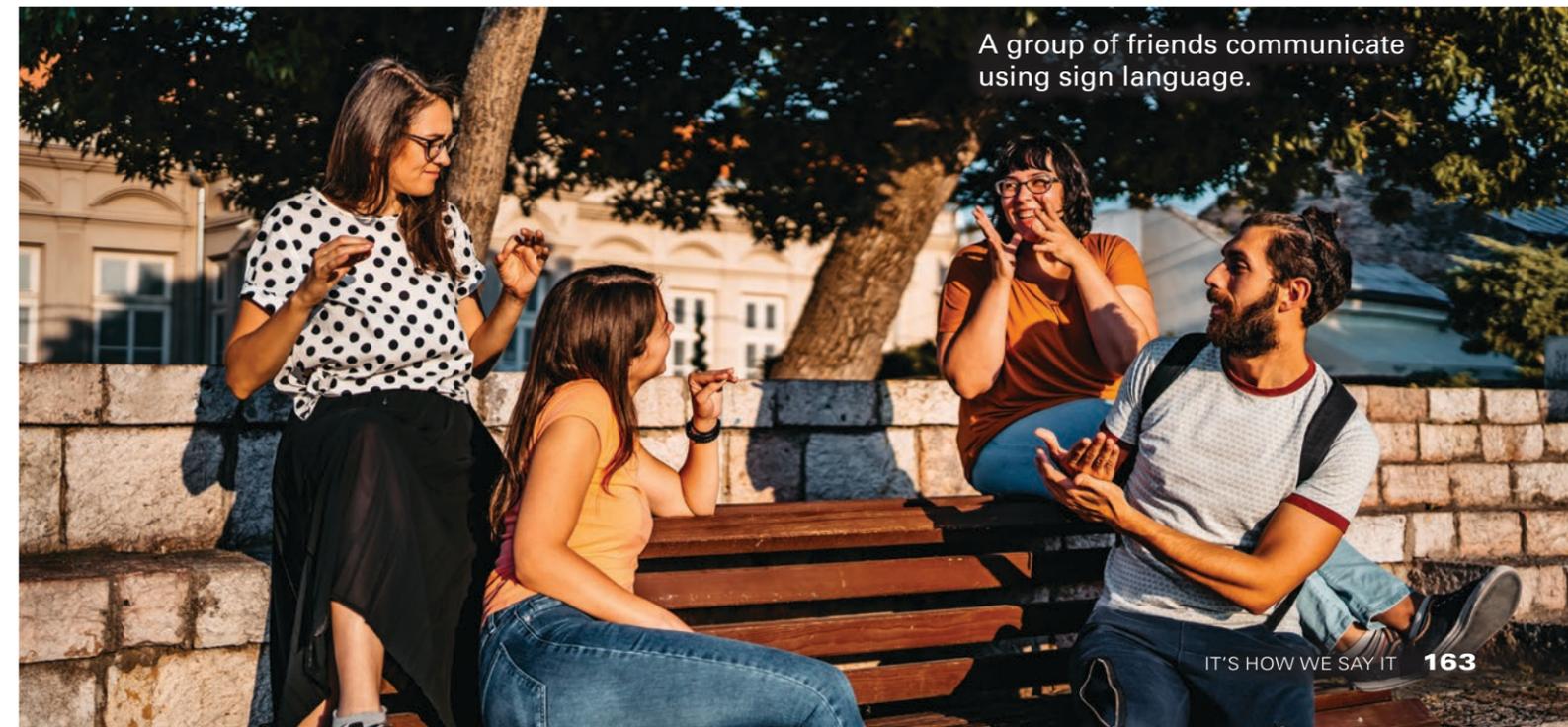
2 First, both spoken languages and sign languages have systems of grammar. Spoken languages have grammatical ways of forming plurals, verb tenses, and questions; in the same way, sign languages also make use of grammatical rules. For example, users of spoken English form plural nouns by adding -s to the word. Users of ASL have several ways to make a noun plural, including using a word like “many” or repeating the sign. Users of spoken English indicate time by changing the verb form. Users of ASL imagine a line from behind the body to the front of the body; the position of a sign along this line indicates the time of the event. Users of spoken English ask a *yes/no* question by adding a form of the verb “do” (“Do you like chocolate?”); users of ASL keep the word order the same and indicate a question by raising their eyebrows. From these examples, we can see that sign languages assign signs for specific grammatical purposes, just as spoken languages do with words and parts of words.

3 Second, both spoken languages and sign languages show regional and social variation. Anyone listening to spoken English will notice differences between the English spoken in England and the English spoken in Ireland, Australia, or India. Speakers from each of these places may have difficulty understanding each other. In the same way, there are over 140 different sign languages around the world, including those found in Japan, Spain, China, Brazil, Thailand,

and more. In the English-speaking world, along with ASL, there are Australian Sign Language (AUSLAN), New Zealand Sign Language (NZSL), and British Sign Language (BSL), and users of one sign language cannot necessarily understand the others. Like spoken languages, sign languages also have idioms and slang terms, which are used by specific groups in society, such as teenagers. A common example is the use of signs for “train-go-sorry,” which means “I’m not going to repeat what I just said.” A sign language user might also sign “think-disappear” to suggest that he forgot something.

4 Finally, both spoken languages and sign languages are used for creative works. The English language is full of creative works, ranging from Shakespeare’s plays to J. K. Rowling’s novels. Similarly, there is a growing interest in the use of sign languages to create works of literature, including poetry and plays. They are filmed and performed live at cultural festivals, and several deaf theater groups have been founded around the world. One common theme for deaf creators is the idea of being part of a minority group. Unlike creative works in spoken languages, the works produced by deaf artists are not written down as there is no written version of these languages. In this way, deaf artists are continuing a long tradition of oral storytelling around the world, with the difference that their stories are passed on with their hands rather than their voices.

5 It is clear, then, that sign languages are not just simplified ways of using the hands to convey basic thoughts. Like spoken languages, they are highly evolved, complex forms of communication that can be used for both functional and creative purposes. For these reasons, sign languages are certainly “real” languages in every way.



B ANALYZE THE MODEL Work with a partner to outline the essay.

Title		
Introduction	Background	
	Thesis statement	
First body paragraph	Topic sentence	
	Supporting ideas/Details	
Second body paragraph	Topic sentence	
	Supporting ideas/Details	
Third body paragraph	Topic sentence	
	Supporting ideas/Details	
Conclusion	Final thought	

WRITING SKILL Compare and/or contrast

When you compare and contrast two items, you are writing about their similarities and/or differences. Comparing and contrasting are common in academic writing. You might be asked, for example, to compare two historical events or two approaches to marketing. Here are some tips to keep in mind:

1. Focus mostly on either similarities or differences. Your thesis statement should briefly state what these are.
2. Each body paragraph should focus on only one specific similarity or difference with examples and analysis.
3. Support your points with statistics and other evidence. Avoid generalizations and stereotypes, especially if you are writing about groups of people.
4. Use signal words and phrases.

To show similarity:

A is . . . ; similarly, B is . . .
A is . . . ; In the same way, B is . . .
A is . . . ; B is also . . .

To show difference:

A is . . . ; on the other hand/in contrast, B is . . .
While/Whereas A is . . . , B is . . .

C NOTICE THE GRAMMAR Read the excerpt from the model and notice the underlined phrases. Work with a partner and note the reasons you think the article *the* is or is not used with these nouns and noun phrases.

There are about 6,500 languages in the world, and each one has its own system of sounds, words, and sentence structure. However, one group of languages is unique in that users of these languages do not use sounds to express thoughts. These languages are sign languages. They rely mainly on hand gestures to transmit meaning and are used mostly by the deaf.

1. the world _____
2. users of these languages _____
3. sign languages _____
4. hand gestures _____
5. the deaf _____

GRAMMAR Articles to refer to groups

You already know that you should use *a* the first time you mention an item, and you should use *the* for subsequent references to that item. When you refer to a general group, such as people from a specific country, or people in a specific profession, or any other general group of people, animals, or things, follow these rules.

If you use a plural noun to refer to a group *in general*, do *not* use an article:

- ▶ **Canadians** have a reputation for being welcoming to **people** from other countries.
- ▶ Research has shown that **women** often know more words for colors than **men** do.

If a noun phrase (e.g., adjective + noun) is for a general group or idea, do not use an article:

- ▶ **Masculine cultures** value authority and competition.
- ▶ **Bilingual people** sometimes feel that they have two personalities.

If a noun phrase refers to groups in a specific situation, you can use *the*, but it is not always required. Often there will be a piece of information that makes the situation specific:

- ▶ **The male participants** in the study responded differently from the female participants.
- ▶ **The Japanese students** at the university have established a social club.

If you only use an adjective to describe a general group or idea, use *the*:

- ▶ Many sign languages have been developed for use by **the deaf**.
- ▶ What can be done to help **the homeless**?

D GRAMMAR Choose the better option in these sentences. Explain your choice to a partner.

1. **Coach / The coach** of the university football team is at practice every day.
2. Mercedes wants to work with **elderly / the elderly** after she graduates.
3. **Feminine cultures / The feminine cultures** value collaboration in the workplace.
4. **Students / The students** need to be careful when emailing their professors.
5. Are **artists / the artists** and **poets / the poets** always emotional, or is that a stereotype?
6. **Women / The women** in my class work harder than **men / the men**.
7. Edward enjoys learning **foreign languages / the foreign languages**.
8. **Chinese / The Chinese** invented the first paper money.

E GRAMMAR Write sentences about your culture. Share them with a partner and explain your use of articles.

Write three sentences about general groups in your culture.

- ▶ _____
- ▶ _____
- ▶ _____

Now, write three sentences about specific groups in your culture or community.

- ▶ _____
- ▶ _____
- ▶ _____

F EDIT Read the paragraph. Find and correct five errors with articles.

English Writing and Chinese Writing: An Overview

It has often been said that writers from different cultures organize the essays in different ways. In 1966, researcher Robert Kaplan found that the speakers of English write in a very direct way. There is a thesis statement at the beginning, and everything in the essay supports the thesis statement. In contrast, the Chinese traditionally use a style that is less assertive and more indirect, with the main idea often stated at the end. Whereas English writers try to present an individual point of view, the Chinese writers are thought to prefer ideas that reflect the opinion of their group. Of course, Kaplan's ideas are now quite old, and the world has changed. Researchers have provided evidence to suggest that his ideas are the generalizations and are not true for all the writers.

PLAN & WRITE

G BRAINSTORM Work in a small group. Choose two topics to compare. They can be two different languages or dialects; the language spoken by two different generations; written and spoken language; language use by men and women; or another related topic. Identify the similarities and differences between the two.

Topic	Similarities	Differences

H RESEARCH Follow the steps.

- ▶ Choose one topic from activity G and research it. Which ideas can you analyze and support with evidence? Which ones might be difficult to discuss without using stereotypes?
- ▶ Decide whether your essay will emphasize similarities or differences.

I OUTLINE Complete the outline.

Title _____

Introduction

Background information _____

Thesis _____

Body paragraph 1

Main similarity or difference _____

Supporting ideas/Details _____

Body paragraph 2

Main similarity or difference _____

Supporting ideas/Details _____

Body paragraph 3

Main similarity or difference _____

Supporting ideas/Details _____

Conclusion

What can be learned from your analysis? _____

J FIRST DRAFT Use your outline to write a first draft of your essay.

K REVISE Use this list as you write your second draft.

- Did you give basic information about the two things you are comparing/contrasting?
- Did you make it clear whether you are focusing on similarities or differences?
- Did you include one specific idea supported with details in each paragraph?
- Did you avoid stereotypes and generalizations?
- Did you include only relevant information?

L EDIT Use this list as you write your final draft.

- Did you use the article *the* or no article correctly when referring to groups?
- Did you vary your use of words?
- Did you use different signal words for comparing and contrasting?

M FINAL DRAFT Reread your essay, expand on any unclear ideas, and correct any errors. Then submit it to your teacher.

REFLECT

A Check (✓) the Reflect activities you can do and the academic skills you can use.

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> consider the relationship between language and thought | <input type="checkbox"/> write a compare-contrast essay about communication |
| <input type="checkbox"/> evaluate ideas about language and thought | <input type="checkbox"/> annotate a text |
| <input type="checkbox"/> analyze potential areas of difficulty in communication | <input type="checkbox"/> compare and/or contrast |
| <input type="checkbox"/> examine reasons for communication breakdowns | <input type="checkbox"/> articles to refer to groups |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> consider the limitations of research claims |

B Write the vocabulary words from the unit in the correct column. Add any other words that you learned. Circle words you still need to practice.

NOUN	VERB	ADJECTIVE	ADVERB & OTHER

C Reflect on the ideas in the unit as you answer these questions.

1. What was the most important thing you learned in the unit?

2. What have you learned about your own culture's communication style?

3. Which communication style would you like to learn more about? Explain why.



A group of friends talking over breakfast.