



## O-CITY PROJECT

### MODULE IV.1 INTERPERSONAL SKILLS



Erasmus+

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## 1. Lesson Document

### Lesson 4 Topic 4 Communicate with others

#### **Basic tips for virtual communication with others**

##### Introduction

In a digitalized world, communication is every day more virtual. On site contacts are progressively replaced by virtual ones, changing the way we develop social interactions and exchanges, and allowing distance communication, with other people that are not physically present in front of us. Previous lessons showed that communication can be written or oral, verbal and nonverbal. It can also be virtual.

Virtual communication could be defined as a mode of communication that relies on the use of technologies, being audio (for instance the use of telephone) or audiovisual, for instance through videoconferences. The emergence of technological and digital devices is increasing the importance of this modality of communication, which is why several lessons will be dedicated to the specificities of distance – virtual interactions.

Once this lesson is completed and approved, learners will be able to:

1. Understand the specifics of virtual communication and the main differences between a face to face and a virtual conversation.
2. Adapt their communication to the virtual mode.

In this lesson, we will learn how to use the different elements of languages that increase the quality of our communication and enable us to deliver efficiently our messages despite the distance with our interlocutors.

#### **1. Specifics of a virtual communication**

We have seen in lesson 2 that body language might count for up to 65% of our communication. The tone of voice and environment is also important. So what happens when we turn onto virtual mode? We have seen advantages and disadvantages of virtual communication in Topic 1, lesson 2. Let's now review what makes this type of communication so different from the face-to-face mode.

a. Importance of the virtual environment

To start with, in a virtual modality, you can control your own environment, but you lose some control on the environment of your interlocutor. You might make sure, before starting a conversation, that you have a good internet connection, that you limit your surrounding distractions, and that you are adequately prepared. But it is more complicated to make sure that you get the same preparation from your interlocutor, and thus that you will benefit from their full attention. Especially if they are at home, they might easily be working on something else while listening to you or occupied with other issues.

b. Choice of virtual tools

If nonverbal communication is already part of communication, the choice of online application and device that you will use for the communication also has an importance. Either if you use a mobile phone from the street, or a computer in a desk, you are not sending the same message. Also, it is not the same to have an informal video call on WhatsApp or a formal meeting on Zoom.

c. Instantaneous vs deferred

Physical meetings are instantaneous. You are in the same place, and when someone asks you something, you need to answer. In the case of virtual communication, it depends. You can have an online direct conversation with someone where you will also need to respond in the moment. But there are also many channels, such as emails or chats, where you can send a message, wait for the answer, and answer yourself later, giving you time to mature your arguments. If you are having a direct conversation and that you do not know the answer, however, don't be ashamed to admit it and to postpone your answer, it will always be better than giving a wrong statement.



<https://unsplash.com/photos/smgTvepind4>

## 2. Online and social networks written communication.

One of the main characteristics of online communication is that it is fast, and fast changing. It started with the use of abbreviation in messages on the first mobile phones, where the number of characters was limited. It has now come into a new way of expressions. Main social networks still apply a limit in characters in the messages that you can publish, or length in the video. Also, the use of emoticons has become universal.

Emoticons is a programming language, based on characters meant to represent facial expressions, animals, or objects, that convey emotion or shorten the writing. In a virtual environment, the use of these little characters helps in providing information on one's feelings while not having visual contact. So, using a smiley will reflect that you are happy without needing to tell, as if your interlocutor was able to see you and could see your smiley face.

The appearance of those new characters is a revolution in the written language, as they change our way of expression, and allow us to introduce non-verbal elements and pictures even in the written language. They are in constant progress, with the emergence of stickers and gifs, and new characters every day.

Also, when you use those, you need to make sure that they are serving your purpose. This remains a quite informal way of expression that presents the huge advantage of being universal, but you need to make sure that your interlocutor will interpret it in the correct way.

### **3. Common tips to virtual communication**

Virtual communication is different from face to face one. Here come some recommendations to adapt your communication to this modality.

#### - Be professional

If you are in a professional meeting, on site or virtual, you should still behave professional, be on time, prepared, eventually have a presentation ready to be shared.

#### - Apply the basics of verbal communication

Expressing yourself with clarity, going to the point, having a good conversation start, remain as important if not more, as in a face-to-face context.

#### - Focus and avoid external distractions

We have seen before that multitasking is tempting while having an online conversation. Try to focus on what is being said and avoid getting distracted.

#### - Ask people to turn on their cameras

You can then see them and get a more direct contact, also it is a way to know that they are focused on you and not on other issues. However, it is also a good practice to turn off your microphone when you are not talking, so to avoid undesired background sounds.

#### - Take care about your environment

You can still take care about the light, make sure that you are not against the light so people can see you well, and take care about the background that the video will show. You might even use the virtual background offered by some applications. Then, you might evaluate your nonverbal appearance by testing the camera before starting.

#### - Take the maximum out of the technologies

New technologies enable you, in addition to talking, to share screen, record conversation, chat, and interact in multiple ways. Don't hesitate to use those tools that will support you in the delivering of messages.

### **Conclusion**

COVID 19 crisis is accelerating the digital transformation of our relationships with others, at both professional and private levels. Virtual communication is becoming the new norm, and it is too early to know yet if this is only a temporary trend linked to this crisis, or if it will lead to a long-term transformation of our ways of communicating.