



Focus: Building rapport, showing reliability through language, understanding directness/indirectness, and polite agreement/disagreement strategies

Building Trust in Cross-Cultural Teams



Objectives:

- By the end of this lesson, you will be able to:
- Use English language structures that communicate reliability and openness
- Understand how different cultures interpret trust
- Use polite expressions to show commitment and follow-through
- Manage tone when agreeing or disagreeing respectfully



Introduction & Warm-Up

Trust is not just about doing your job — it's also about how you communicate. In international teams, tone, timing, and clarity affect how trustworthy you seem. In this lesson, we'll learn the language of trust.

Warm-up Discussion:

- “How is trust built at work in your country?”
- “What makes someone ‘trustworthy’ in a business context?”



Vocabulary – Language That Builds Trust

Review the useful terms below with your tutor:

Phrase	Purpose
“I’ll get that to you by Thursday.”	Clear commitment
“You can count on me for that.”	Reliability
“Let me confirm that and get back to you.”	Accuracy
“I’ll make sure it’s done properly.”	Assurance
“Thanks for your patience.”	Acknowledging support

Task: Select the best phrase to use for the contexts below:

Context 1:

A client has asked for the updated project timeline, and you know you can finish it before the end of the week.

Context 2:

Your manager has given you a task but you need to double-check some details with another department before starting.

Context 3:

A colleague thanks you for helping them finish a big report on time.

Grammar: “Will” vs. “Going to” for Commitment

We use the word “**will**” for promises or quick decisions, and “**going to**” for planned intentions.

Examples:

- “I’ll send the report after lunch.” (promise)
- “I’m going to finalise the budget tomorrow.” (intention)

Task: Chooses whether to use “**will**” or “**going to**” in the scenarios below:

Scenario 1:

Your team has already planned to start reviewing the Q4 marketing strategy next Monday.

Scenario 2:

A colleague mentions they forgot to send the monthly report, and you decide on the spot to handle it for them.

Example:

You receive an urgent email from a client asking for a small change to the presentation slides before the meeting in one hour.

Quick decision → likely to use “will”. Example: “I will make the small changes to the slides by tomorrow”.



Activity – Clear or Vague?

Your tutor will read out the following statements:

A: “Maybe I can do it later.”

B. “I’ll start on it after the meeting.”

C. “I’ll try to take a look sometime.”

Discuss and Task:

Which of these statements builds trust and why?

Have a go at rephrasing the vague statements to clear versions.

Grammar – Modal Verbs for Reliability

We use the terms “**should**”, “**can**”, and “**must**” for varying levels of certainty.

Modal	Example	Level of Certainty
“Should”	“I should be able to finish by 5.”	Fairly certain
“Can”	“I can handle that for the team.”	Confident
“Must”	“We must finalise this by Friday.”	Strong obligation

Practise: Express your response to the following tasks using modal verbs:

Task 1:

A client asks if you’ll be able to deliver the final draft of a proposal by the end of the day.

Task 2:

Your team leader is looking for someone to coordinate next week’s product launch event.

Task 3:

The finance department says the annual budget submission deadline is in two days.

Cultural Comparison – What Builds Trust?

Discuss the following statement with your tutor:

In some cultures, trust is built through results. In others, it's through relationships.

Questions:

- Do you prefer clear deadlines or flexibility?
- Do you believe small talk is important before collaboration?



Listening – Politeness vs. Clarity

Your tutor will read out two emails:

Email A

Subject: Document Review Request

Hi team,
It would be great if this could be looked at when you have a chance. I understand everyone is busy, so no rush, just whenever it's convenient for you. Thanks so much for your time.

Email B – Direct Clarity Focus

Subject: Review Attached Document by Thursday

Hi,
Review the attached document and send feedback by Thursday at 3 p.m. We need your input to move to the next stage. Let me know if you have any questions.”

Task: Identify which email is more direct, and whether the tone is still polite.



Grammar: “Would appreciate if...” for Soft Requests

Using the term: “would appreciate if...” provides a structure that is polite and builds positive tone.

Examples:

- **“I’d appreciate it if you could send the numbers.”**
- **“We’d appreciate it if you’d share feedback by Friday.”**

Task: Convert the following direct requests into polite ones using this structure:

- “Share your feedback before Friday.”
- “Email the updated schedule to the team.”
- “Tell me the final budget.”



Vocabulary: Agreeing Without Sounding Dismissive

Review the following terms with your tutor:

Direct Response	Softer, Trust-Building Version
"I disagree."	"I see your point, but I have a concern."
"No, that won't work."	"I'm not sure that'll work, here's why."
"That's wrong."	"Can I suggest another way?"

Discuss:

What other forms of responses can you give, which are polite and professional?

Task: Have a go at building a sentence with the softer version sentences, relating to your current job.



Activity – Tone Check

Your tutor will read out the following phrases:

“Sure, whatever.”

“I’ll get back to you once it’s sorted.”

“Sure, let me handle that.”

“That’s not really my thing.”

Task: Decide which of these phrases sound trustworthy and which are too vague. Then, rephrase the vague sentences to make them professional and approachable.



Grammar – Past Perfect to Clarify Accountability

The **past perfect** is used to clarify who did what, and when.

Structure:

Subject + had + past participle

Examples:

- “I had already shared the report before the meeting.”
- “She had completed the task before I checked it.”

Task: Use the structure from above to explain the following task timelines:

- 1: The meeting started at 9 a.m. You sent the slides at 8:30 a.m.
2. The client called at 2 p.m. You finished the report at 1:45 p.m.

Example:

You checked the budget spreadsheet. Earlier that morning, finance had updated it.

Example: “Finance had updated the budget before I checked it.”



Listening – Clarifying Commitments

Your tutor will read out the following statements:

“We’ll finish testing by Friday.”

“We should probably be done by then.”

“We’re aiming for Friday, but not sure.”

Task: Rank these by level of trust/confidence. Discuss why tone matters.



Activity: “Own It or Share It?”

Your tutor will read 3 situations:

- A. You made a mistake
- B. A team task failed
- C. A client didn't get what they needed

Task: Practise using phrases to take responsibility without blaming:

Example starters:

“Let's discuss how we can resolve this...”

Grammar – “Used to” for Building Rapport

The term “used to” is used to connect over shared past experiences.

Examples:

- “I **used to** work in logistics too!”
- “We **used to** handle that differently at my old job.”

Task: Create 2 personal statements using “used to” in a professional context, or from your current job.



Activity – “Reliable or Not?” Quiz

Your tutor will read out the following actions. Then, **Discuss:**
Does this build or reduce trust? Why?

1. Delivers updates late but explains why.
2. Finishes early but doesn't inform anyone.
3. Checks before changing the plan.

Listening: Recognising Trust Language in Meetings

Your tutor will read out the following statements:

“That’s a fair point, let’s adjust the timeline.”

“We’ll flag that early next time.”

“I’ll take care of it.”

Task: Identify which phrases communicate **trust**, **flexibility**, or **accountability**.

Pronunciation: Emphasising Commitment Phrases

Practise reading the following phrases with your tutor, emphasising on tone and expression to improve pronunciation:

- “I will get it done.”
- “You can rely on me.”
- “I’ll follow through.”

Task: Then, build 2 of your own commitment line in a professional context.

