

Focus³



Case Study 1b

Building Skills Across Asia:

Virtual Communication Confidence

The Challenge:

Following breakthrough results in Japan—Case Study 1a, where employees struggled to voice opinions and influence outcomes in English meetings—the company decided to correct similar communication barriers across operations in China, India, Korea, Singapore, and Taiwan. Global decision makers were missing critical regional insights. As one executive explained:

“We need a way for all levels of employees to communicate well no matter their language proficiency—and do it virtually, as most of our meetings are held online.”

What Our Analysis Uncovered

Through our comprehensive Friction Point Analysis™ (FPA)—dual surveys and interviews across five countries—we revealed consistent patterns in this diverse region:

Top challenges identified across Asia:

- Disagreeing with someone's opinion or plan (ranked #1 across all countries)
- Influencing people and outcomes using English
- Leading global teams or projects

The communication spectrum revealed complexity:

- High English proficiency didn't guarantee confidence in challenging situations
- Some participants were naturally quiet, others came across as too direct
- Both groups struggled with adapting their style to

different cultural contexts

- Regional communication norms often conflicted with global expectations

The confidence gap was striking:

- 52.2% feel uncomfortable jumping into discussions
- 56.5% struggled to disagree in meetings.
- 92% struggle to disagree when executives were present

The Transformation

Rather than country-by-country training, this forward-thinking company partnered with us to adapt our workshop for virtual meetings through their existing

"Open University." We collaborated to ensure the program was accessible to all varying levels of English and cultures across Asia. Whether participants were naturally quiet or assertive, fluent or developing their English, all gained practical skills.

Participants built confidence to:

- Disagree diplomatically: "I appreciate that perspective, however I see some risks..."
- Jump into fast-moving discussions without hesitation
- Adapt their communication style—being soft-spoken or assertive as situations demand
- Influence outcomes using structured thinking frameworks
- Voice concerns before they become problems

The Results

Immediate Impact:



(98 participants across 5 workshops):

Program Growth:

- High demand with waiting lists of 10+ for the maximum 20 spots per session
- Started as quarterly sessions, scaled to six workshops per year due to overwhelming demand

Business Impact:

- Regional teams now proactively challenge global assumptions
- Technical insights from Asia consistently inform product development
- Faster identification of market-specific requirements
- Enhanced cross-cultural collaboration across all Asian operations

What Made This Work

Three Critical Success Factors:

- 1. Confidence-First Mindset:** Addressed hesitation across all proficiency levels. Participants learned to adapt their style—being assertive when leading, diplomatic when disagreeing—regardless of English fluency.
- 2. Cultural Intelligence:** Core techniques remained consistent while delivery adapted to diverse

communication styles and varying directness levels.

- 3. Virtual Accessibility:** Open enrollment removed geographical barriers, creating a pan-Asian learning community where participants could learn and apply the 5 skills in virtual meetings—matching their actual business environment.

Participant Voices Across Asia

"We started off with the 'No Hesitation' Drill, ad libbing for 30 seconds. By the end of the second day, I was ad libbing for 6 minutes! That shocked me!"

— Engineer, Global Semiconductor Company

"More confidence to speak up! I strongly recommend Asian colleagues take this course."

— Project Manager, Regional Team

Beyond Individual Impact

Cultural Intelligence Bridge: Participants gained understanding of both Asian and Western communication styles, improving global team collaboration across all virtual meetings.

Methodology Validation: The confidence-first approach proved that communication effectiveness transcends language proficiency—participants with varying English levels achieved similar confidence gains, leading other business units to adopt the same approach.

The Bottom Line: What began as a Japan-specific solution evolved into a scalable model for building communication confidence across Asia. By addressing both quiet and assertive communication styles while teaching adaptive techniques, the Open University transformed individual hesitation into regional influence—proving that confidence-building works regardless of English proficiency or cultural background.

"The virtual format combined with confidence-first methodology created a repeatable solution that works across Asia's diverse business cultures."