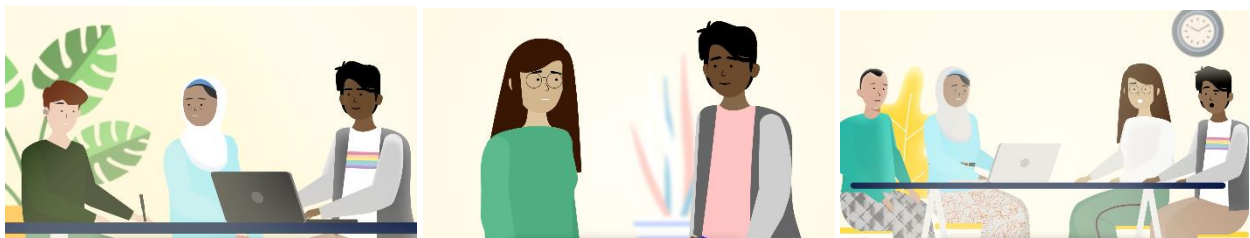


Toolkit Multilingual Meetings



Having meetings is done everywhere within the university, whether you are a member of a co-determination body, a researcher, a teacher, an HR-employee or a student information desk employee. If you have any international co-workers or if you are an international yourself, you might have wondered how you can have meetings with an international team. Of course, this can be done in English, but what do you do when not everybody is comfortable speaking English and some international co-workers do not speak Dutch (yet)? Then, having multilingual meetings could be a solution.



What are multilingual meetings?

A meeting is multilingual when multiple languages or different varieties of languages are part of the conversation.

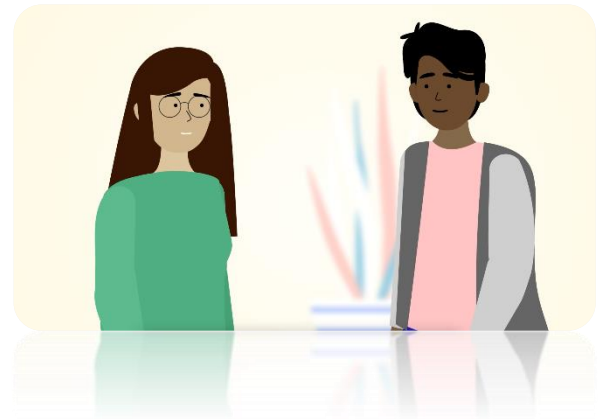
Maybe you have been in a meeting before with co-workers who did not all speak the same languages at the same level. Often, people choose to speak English, but you can also choose to use English AND Dutch. Then, Dutch people speak Dutch, and the international employee speaks English. This form of multilingualism is also called *luistertaal* (Lingua Receptiva): a situation in which speakers use different languages but can understand each other because of their listening skills in the other person's language.



The university council meetings are already multilingual. In [this video](#) the people involved explain how the U-council handles this.

Why opt for multilingual meetings?

- It can eliminate fear of speaking. Maybe you can understand English, but you feel uncomfortable speaking this yourself. Vice versa for an international co-worker who does not speak Dutch (yet).
- It contributes to the quality of the debate. After all, your communicative skills are better in a language you master. This way, your arguments will be expressed more clearly than when you are stammering and trying to find the right words.
- It can contribute to the effectiveness of a meeting. When people do not have to try to find the right words, this can save time.



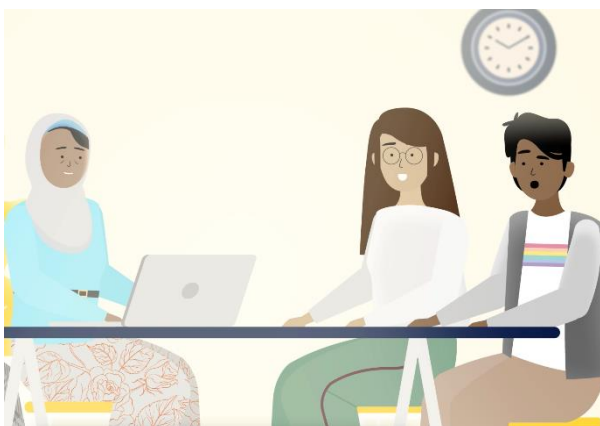
When choosing this form of multilingual meetings, it is necessary that people have sufficient listening skills in the languages of the interlocutors. If this is not the case, it is better to opt for an interpreter or other translation services.

Multilingual meetings: how do you do it?

When you have decided to have multilingual meetings with your team, accommodating (your language) is helpful. Research on multilingual meetings (by the [Multilingualism & Participation project](#)) has demonstrated that people are aware of the importance of taking one another into account, but often forget this during the actual meeting. Therefore, practice-based tips that can help you and your team are listed below.

Tips to get started

Why is it useful to establish what form of multilingualism you are going to use?



Depending on the composition of the attendees, you can opt for a different form of multilingualism. Therefore, it is useful to establish the language policy at the outset of a meeting. This makes people aware of the multilingual situation and the contribution they can make to it themselves.

Watch the video: [Why is it useful to establish what form of multilingualism you are going to use?](#) on YouTube.

General communication tips that can increase understanding

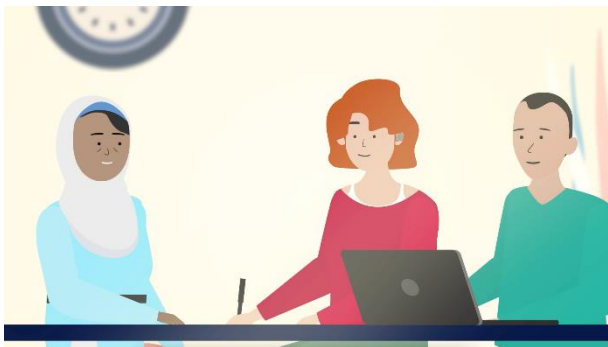
Why is it important to repeat agreements?



It seems so obvious, but checking understanding is crucial in order to communicate effectively. A common mistake is that people think that they have understood each other, but in reality, they both thought something else. Naming agreements explicitly can prevent misunderstandings.

Watch the video: [Why is it important to repeat agreements?](#) on YouTube.

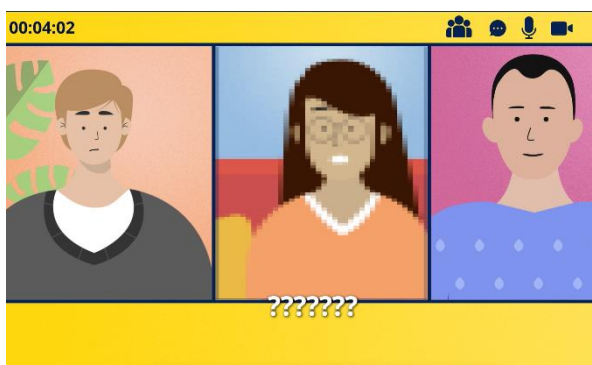
How can structure help during a meeting?



You listen very differently to a conversation if you think that it concerns a certain topic. When people deviate from the agenda, it can be very confusing. This might sound logical, but in practice, this does happen often.

Watch the video: [How can structure help during a meeting?](#) on YouTube.

What is the influence of your speaking rate?



When you talk fast, this can be hard to follow, and at the same time, speaking excessively slow can be annoying for a conversation partner. By checking if the other can follow, you can adjust your speaking rate. This is not just useful for people who speak a different language, but also during an online meeting.

Watch the video: [What is the influence of your speaking rate?](#) on YouTube.

Tips specifically aimed at multilingual meetings

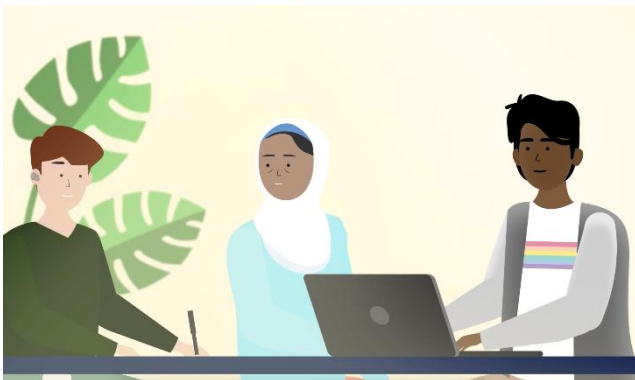
How do you deal with idioms and sayings?



Idioms and sayings often do not mean much when translated literally. This is because not every language has the same expressions. It can, therefore, help to avoid or explain idioms and sayings.

Watch the video: [How do you deal with idioms and sayings?](#) on YouTube.

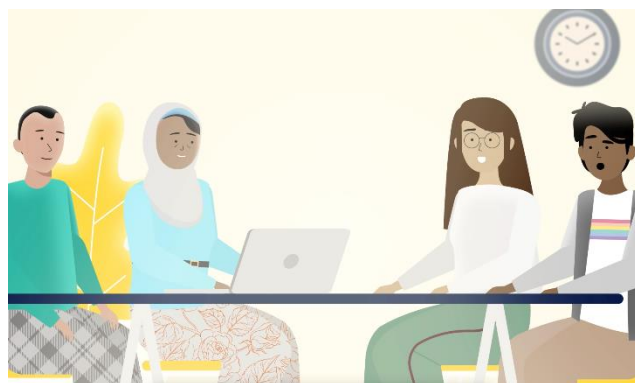
How do you deal with humor?



Making jokes can contribute to a good atmosphere during a meeting, but at the same time, irony, sarcasm and other jokes can be confusing. This applies in particular to multilingual meetings, in which different languages and cultures are involved. Therefore, try to indicate when something is a joke and explain it if necessary.

Watch the video: [How do you deal with humor?](#) on YouTube.

How do you deal with abbreviations and specific terminology?



Certain terms and abbreviations are barely used in daily life, but are crucial for business meetings. It is then especially important to familiarise non-Dutch speakers and new employees with this. You can solve this by introducing abbreviations and keywords.

Watch the video: [How do you deal with abbreviations and specific terminology?](#) on YouTube.

Project Multilingualism & Participation

This toolkit and the workshop multilingual meetings are both developed as part of the [project Multilingualism & Participation \(M&M-project\)](#).