

# Designing Globally Networked Learning Environments

Visionary Partnerships, Policies,  
and Pedagogies

Doreen Starke-Meyerring and  
Melanie Wilson (Eds.)



*SensePublishers*

## 11. INTERCULTURAL BUSINESS COMMUNICATION IN ACTION

### *Analysis of an International Videoconference*

#### INTRODUCTION

With globalization, a rapidly increasing number of business professionals exchange information and make decisions in intercultural or cross-cultural settings through virtual team collaboration. Advancements in technology such as e-mail, videoconferencing, group decision support systems, and web board discussions have not only opened new venues for communicating in the globalized business environment, but have also changed the way we teach international and intercultural business communication.

Advanced technology has made international collaboration feasible; consequently, an increased emphasis on virtual teamwork has also fostered the use of modern technology in international business communication. Traditionally, business managers of international firms would travel extensively to discuss issues with their international subsidiaries. Such travel is expensive, exhausting, and time consuming. One might wonder how productive a two-day meeting in Singapore might be after taking into consideration jetlag and length of travel, not to mention changes in climate. Bringing together a whole group of managers in one location, either at headquarters or a subsidiary, can become cost-prohibitive as well. While face-to-face meetings certainly have a place in international management, new technologies provide opportunities to change part of the work of international teams.

One of these technologies for international communication is videoconferencing, which combines technology and face-to-face communication. Videoconferencing simulates a synchronous meeting; however, it also incorporates some aspects of asynchronous meetings. Businesses use videoconferencing to cut costs while providing an environment that gives the illusion of real meetings. These meetings are a means of involving employees in the decision-making process in order to reach the goals of the business. Videoconferencing, therefore, is not an end in itself; it is a tool to overcome physical distance. In videoconferencing, the focus of the communication should always be on meeting the goals and priorities of the business organization (Varner & Palmer, 2002). The success of the videoconference depends, then, on how well participants have laid the groundwork for a fruitful discussion through the use of other communication channels.

In this chapter, we first describe a semester-long videoconferencing project where Chinese student groups from the City University of Hong Kong (CityU) communicated with American student groups from Illinois State University (ISU). Second, from questionnaires administered to both CityU and ISU students, we examine the effectiveness and dynamics of videoconferencing as a communication channel in globally networked learning environments.

#### DESCRIPTION OF THE VIDEOCONFERENCING PROJECT

The videoconferencing project involved BA (Hons) in English for Professional Communication students at the Department of English and Communication, City University of Hong Kong, teamed up with business communication students at Illinois State University, USA. The videoconferences were part of a joint research project, whose purpose was to teach cross-cultural communication through an analysis of McDonald's fast-food restaurant operations in both Hong Kong and different parts of the United States. Communication was facilitated through e-mail, the Internet, and videoconferences. Prior to the videoconference, students needed to collect data that served as the basis of information exchange and analysis for the videoconference and ultimately for their joint comparative report on business communication practices in the two franchises.

The groups of students assumed the role of management consultants advising McDonald's top management on how to adapt business and organizational practices from the United States to Hong Kong, or vice versa. The overall objectives of the project were to discover the similarities and differences in business practices and how culture affects these practices in American and Chinese cultural environments, to experience communication with Americans and Chinese, to develop or modify communication according to cultural variables, and to learn how communication through videoconferencing affects the overall communication processes.

The project consisted of three stages. During the first stage, students became acquainted with each other through e-mail self-introduction and exchanged information on the fast-food industry and on McDonald's in particular. They also conducted field research through observation and interviews with McDonald's managers, employees, and customers. During the second stage, students participated in a 55-minute videoconference, exchanged information, and jointly decided which business practices were transferable or non-transferable. The final stage was a post-conference debriefing in which both ISU and CityU student groups self-reflected on their videoconference performance by filling out questionnaires and writing self- and peer-critiques as well as consulting reports. Below, we describe in more detail what these three stages involved.

##### *Stage 1—Pre-conference Planning*

Planning was divided into three parts: technical, administrative, and pedagogical planning.

*Technical planning.* Although technology preparation tends to be neglected, it is a critical step for the success of any telecommunication project. The involvement of technicians is also crucial in the planning stage because not only do technicians from both ends need to communicate and check out system compatibility, but also instructors need to work with technicians to iron out all the details, such as physical set-up, or the projection of conference images. Good communication is therefore vital at this stage because when dealing with technology, one should never assume that things will work the way they should. It is wise to have a contingency plan and to ask "what if" and "how about."

The compatibility of the various technology systems can become a huge challenge. To illustrate, the American professor had earlier organized a videoconference project with the Helsinki School of Economics and relied on the technicians to arrange the setup. The American technicians wanted to test the technology, but they did not push for the test since the Helsinki technicians insisted that they did this all the time and that there would be no problems. By the time it became apparent that the connection did not work, it was too late to reschedule the conference. As a result of this experience, the connection between ISU and CtiyU was always tested before each conference. As technology advancements in IP systems have become available, costs have been reduced considerably. However, the involved parties need to clarify who will pay for the connection and who will dial up if the use of phone lines becomes necessary. Quality of picture image and sound can present huge problems as well. Sometimes a simple adjustment will solve the problem, but sometimes the problem lies with the equipment and takes time to fix.

*Administrative planning.* Managing videoconferences is a huge task that depends also on careful administrative planning. Issues to be considered in this respect include room setup and timing of the videoconference. The room setup needs to be addressed early on since most classrooms are set up in rows. The teacher appears on a screen in front, and the students all look to the front. This set-up does not lend itself very readily to a conference of discussion (Bull & Garofalo, 1998). Yet, the chosen rooms frequently have fixed furniture and little flexibility.

Another vital consideration is the time difference between the videoconference participants. The time difference between Illinois and Hong Kong is 13 or 14 hours, depending on whether the period is during Pacific Day Light Saving Time. As a result, our classes were not able to meet during regular class time. The only realistic solution was to hold evening meetings in the United States and morning meetings in Hong Kong. We were very fortunate that technicians were cooperative in accommodating our schedule and were able to take overtime. Even so, it is suggested that each party needs to check whether overtime payment is required and possible.

*Pedagogical planning.* Pedagogical planning needs to start with the identification of a manageable project the students will complete. The danger here is to be too ambitious. It sounds impressive that the students will negotiate a six-million dollar

project, but this is not very realistic. It becomes make-believe and not very interesting to the students.

We discussed possible topics during the annual convention for the Association for Business Communication in San Diego in 2001. Our goal was not only to enhance students' intercultural communication competencies, but also to provide them with a hands-on experience that would directly expose them to the intercultural environment. To meet the project goal, we decided to carry out a fast-food industry analysis that would involve students in various stages of collaboration. We also wanted a project-based collaboration rather than a "pen-pal" type of "light-weight" talk-session. The videoconference, therefore, needed to focus on specific topics of interest to the students, which would help them complete their joint project. An area of business most students have experience with either as consumers or part-time workers is the fast-food industry. McDonald's restaurants are known to every student; they are businesses students can relate to.

To ensure that every student actively participated, each intercultural group consisted of groups of four or five students from each university. The students had very specific planning tasks. During the first stage of the project, they became acquainted with each other through email self-introduction and exchanged information on the fast-food industry and on McDonald's in particular. Students also collected information on the restaurants in their respective environments. On the American side, for example, the owner of all the local franchises talked to the class about policy, hiring, menus, store layout, and promotions. Then each group visited a local McDonald's and met with the manager. The goal was for students to know the company, the policies, and the products very well before the videoconference. As for the Hong Kong side, aside from collecting information from the Internet, students also needed to conduct in-depth field research through observations and interviews with managers, employees, and customers. All the collected and exchanged information served as the basis for discussion and analysis during the videoconference, when the students also discussed and jointly decided which business practices were transferable or non-transferable.

All communication between students across sites during the planning phase was asynchronous. The advantage of this asynchronous communication was that it gave the students time to think over their responses (Deal, 2002; Wellington, 1997). Since the CityU students had to communicate in a foreign language, they effectively had time to formulate their responses more carefully. Nobody was put on the spot. In addition, the asynchronous communication allowed CityU students to do the necessary research before answering questions.

### *Stage 2—Actual Videoconference*

The videoconferences were the only example of real-time synchronous communication during the entire project. All students had seen videoconferencing on television, where typically someone is interviewed via satellite, so it all seemed so easy. The reality can be somewhat different, given issues of sound quality, transmission delay, room lighting, and room arrangement, as well as the fact that

the students had not met in the videoconference room before the actual conference. Despite these challenges, the second stage of the joint project was for each group to participate in a 55-minute videoconference where they discussed, negotiated, and jointly decided the transferable and non-transferable business practices of the Hong Kong or U.S. McDonald's business operations.

The actual videoconference brought out the growing international connectedness in that the students experienced first-hand international communication where native English speakers communicated with non-native English speakers. English has emerged as the world's prominent linking language and is a determining factor in the success of international business communication. In our project, ISU students were native-English speakers, whereas CityU students possessed varying degrees of English proficiency ranging from partial to near native-like, full bilingual English language proficiency. Although the overall English language proficiency of CityU students was adequate in participating in the videoconference, there was a need for native English speakers to accommodate their speech to the competency levels of their CityU counterparts. During the videoconference, we observed that the use of vocabulary and language structure introduced communication difficulties. An example of miscommunication due to the use of vocabulary occurred when a CityU student referred to customers paying with their "Octopus" cards, which are rechargeable stored-value smart cards used to transfer electronic payments in online or offline systems in Hong Kong, and assumed that ISU students would understand this term. In Hong Kong, an Octopus card is widely used and accepted by more than 250 retail shops, including fast-food restaurants. However, the ISU students' response was "We do not eat sea animals" in that ISU students thought the "octopus" was food rather than a kind of payment method. After this initial miscommunication, the students continued the disjointed discussion until a CityU student realized the cause of the miscommunication and showed the ISU students his Octopus card. The visual prop allowed the students to correct the misunderstanding.

Another example illustrates how differing syntactic structures can also introduce miscommunication in that CityU students directly transferred their Cantonese language pattern to English. For example, an ISU student stated, "So, Hong Kong people don't bus their tables", as an expression of surprise to a CityU student's statement. The CityU student replied, "Yes, they don't". This response is a direct translation from Cantonese and thus confused the ISU students because of its use of a mixed positive (i.e., yes) and negative (i.e., don't) sentence structure. Seeing that the ISU students looked puzzled with the response, the CityU students quickly moved away from this dialog as they were uncomfortable with the possible deeper analysis of the topic.

### *Stage 3—Post-conference Debriefing Activities*

Debriefing activities are an essential component of project-based learning activities (Du-Babcock & Babcock, 2000). Although students thought the actual conference was the most exciting part, the debriefing proved to be the most meaningful in

terms of learning. Through reflecting on their interaction, students were able to self-reflect and share their insights and, consequently, to deepen their learning.

The ISU students went through a short self-reflection de-briefing the next morning during class, while the CityU students not only completed a questionnaire but also wrote self-critiques, peer critique reports, and consulting reports. Both the ISU and CityU students had to complete a post-conference questionnaire and assess the effectiveness of the videoconference as a business communication tool. The post-conference questionnaire covered issues such as felt degree of influence, ability to convince counterparts, coherence of videoconference meeting, and value of the videoconference. The questionnaire also attempted to capture the perceived speech accommodation between ISU and CityU students.

The debriefing built on the two prior stages and emphasized the theory and practice of intercultural communication. Through reflecting on their interactions with their ISU counterparts, CityU students commented that debriefing activities led them to a deeper learning experience (Biggs & Watkins, 1996) in that they were able to self-reflect and compare their videoconference performance with their peers. The debriefing with each group was an example of synchronous communication within groups and allowed students to go back to their "safety zone." In doing so, the debriefing activities provided an opportunity for students to reflect on their intercultural videoconference experience, share their experience with their group members, and learn from other participants.

#### EVALUATION OF EFFECTIVENESS

To assess the effectiveness of the joint intercultural communication research project, we employed both quantitative and qualitative measurements. For quantitative measures, pre- and post-videoconference questionnaires were administered. The pre-conference questionnaire emphasized these items:

- the level of confidence towards counterparts in completing the collaborative project
- the usefulness of the information via email about the fast-food industry and McDonald's for the students' joint projects.

The post-conference questionnaires contained five sections, namely

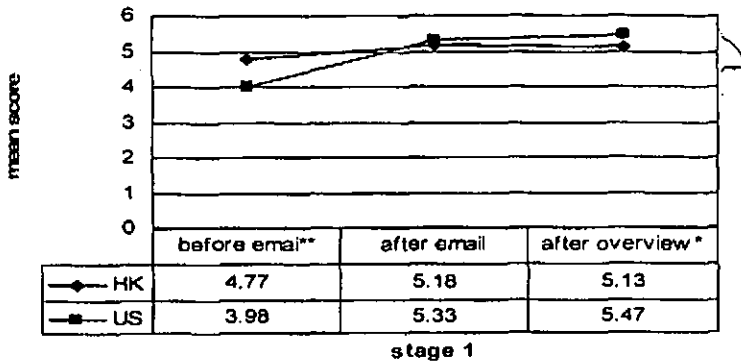
- preparation for the videoconference
- interaction during the videoconference
- perceptions of the within- and between-group relationship
- value of the videoconferencing session
- perceptions of speech accommodation

The qualitative data, including self-critiques, peer critiques, and consulting reports, provided an in-depth analysis of the success or failure of the project. In this section, we report the results of pre-and post videoconference questionnaires.

*Pre-Conference Questionnaire*

The pre-conference questionnaire focused on two aspects: the students' perceptions of their level of confidence in completing this joint intercultural research project and the usefulness of exchanged information. To capture whether there were any perception changes, the pre-conference questionnaire addressed three time periods: before and after receiving the e-mail messages from counterparts as well as after receiving the overview of the local fast-food industry.

Figure 1. Change in the Level of Confidence towards Counterparts (ISU vs. CityU) over Time



\* indicates  $p < .00$   
 \*\* indicates  $p < .05$

*Level of confidence.* Figure 1 shows that prior to the project starting, CityU students had higher levels of confidence than their ISU counterparts, believing that they would be able to collaborate well with them (4.77 vs. 3.98,  $p < .001$ ). This level of confidence increased dramatically after the self-introduction email exchange in that CityU students' confidence increased from 4.77 to 5.18, and the ISU students' confidence increased from 3.98 to 5.33. However, after exchanging industry information, the CityU students' level of confidence slightly dropped from 5.18 to 5.13, while the ISU students' confidence increased from 5.33 to 5.47 ( $p < .05$ ).

One possible reason for such a change in perception between the two groups stems from the fact that, after the self-introduction exchange, the CityU students prepared very comprehensive interim reports that overviewed the fast-food industry and reported their field research. Most of the CityU students, therefore, expected reciprocal enthusiasm from their ISU counterparts; however, the ISU students were required to submit only a two-page McDonald's summary report. This lack of team equality resulted in the CityU students feeling that the information given by their ISU counterparts was not as thorough as the information they themselves had given (one-third of the CityU student groups reported that they did not receive any industry overview from the ISU side). As a result, the



level of confidence among CityU students towards their counterparts dropped slightly from 5.18 to 5.13. In contrast, after receiving a complete and thorough industry overview from CityU students, ISU students showed a significant increase in their level of confidence towards their counterparts from 5.33 to 5.47.

In sum, when comparing the perceptions over this pre-videoconference period, it becomes clear that the confidence of ISU students in the ability of CityU students to successfully carry out the project increased dramatically from the mean score of 3.98 at the beginning of the project to 5.47 after the information exchange on the fast-food industry. The results also suggest that the exchange of emails and industry reports before the videoconference was important in increasing the levels of confidence in the success of the videoconference and the joint intercultural research project for both CityU and ISU students.

*Usefulness of information.* Students were also asked to rate whether the exchanged information (i.e., self-introduction, and fast-food industry information in general and McDonald's in particular) was useful to prepare them for the videoconference (see Table 1). Generally speaking, CityU students felt that the exchanged information helped them prepare for the videoconference. However, no significant differences were found between the CityU or ISU students' perceived usefulness of information in self-introduction, industry overview, or summary of McDonald's. One likely reason for this result may be the fact that the fast-food industry and McDonald's are familiar to all the students; consequently, students did not rely on their counterparts to supply information that would be essential for their participation in the videoconference discussion.

*Table 1. Mean Scores Regarding Usefulness of Exchanged Information between Two Groups*

Variables	Mean		F Value
	U.S.	H.K.	
Usefulness of Self-introduction	4.27	4.36	6.653
Usefulness of Industry Overview	4.86	5.20	1.261
Usefulness of McDonald's Summary	5.42	5.54	.001

*Post-Conference Questionnaire*

The post-conference questionnaire was administered after the videoconference meetings and was designed for students to reflect on their performance during the videoconference. The questions emphasized (1) the degree of preparedness of self and counterparts, (2) the degree of participation in the videoconference, (3) the extent of intra- and inter-group relationships, (4) the value of the videoconference for cross-cultural learning, and (5) their perceptions of speech accommodation.

*Perceptions of preparedness.* CityU students felt that they were much better prepared than their ISU counterparts (5.54 vs. 3.97,  $F = 12.403$ ,  $p < .001$ ). This finding was consistent with the ISU students' rating of their self-preparedness and that of their CityU counterparts (4.82 vs. 6.46,  $p < .001$ ) indicating that ISU students felt they were less prepared for the videoconferencing experience than their CityU counterparts. Reasons for such a difference may be attributable to students' motivations towards the project. There was a clear disconnect in motivation and effort between the two sides. While the intercultural joint research project accounted for 80% of the course grade for CityU students, it accounted for only 25% for ISU students. Due to the unequal percentage of the course grades allocated to the project, the CityU students felt that their ISU counterparts were not as well prepared as they were.

*Perceptions of interactions during the videoconference.* The focus of this part of the questionnaire was on how active the interactions were between the students across sites. The results show that the ISU students felt they interacted more actively than their CityU counterparts (5.96 vs. 5.17,  $p < .001$ ). This may be because most CityU groups had prepared an agenda and tended to strictly follow the agenda throughout the meeting, which meant the ISU students could be more responsive to the content and direction of the discussion. This perception gap about the degree of interaction is well-reflected in one CityU student's comment that "[t]he US counterparts tended not to follow the agenda. For instance, when we were discussing about the promotional strategies, they would suddenly ask us about the food items in Hong Kong, which had been talked about before."

*Perceptions of intra- and inter-group relationships.* The results of the intra- and inter-group relationship indicate that both CityU and ISU groups felt that the intra-group relationship between their fellow classmates was more supportive than the inter-group relationship, although the difference is not statistically significant.

The lack of or a delayed response from the U.S. may have accounted for the low rating of CityU students on the inter-group relationship (mean score = 4.95). The higher rating of the intra-group relationship of CityU students (mean score = 5.63) may be attributed to the fact that all of the CityU students had a "common goal," which was to accomplish the project and achieve a good grade. This motivation enhanced their group bond. Another reason accounting for the higher perceived intra-group relationship than inter-group relationship for CityU students may be the cohort system, so that they had all followed a sequence of classes, and members of CityU student groups had been collaborating for a longer time than the ISU students. As one of the students stated, "We had been good friends for a long time and worked together in several big projects."

*Self-reflection on videoconferencing performance.* There were four sub-statements allowing students to self-reflect on their performance at the videoconference:

- how influential they were
- how well they could convince counterparts to consider their viewpoints

- how coherent the meeting was
- how well they perceived the value of the videoconference for improving their intercultural communication competencies

Generally speaking, the ISU students rated their own performance higher in three aspects than CityU students except in the category of being able to convince counterparts to consider their viewpoints (see Table 2). One reason for the ISU students' feeling that they were not able to convince CityU counterparts to take their viewpoints was likely the inadequate preparation for the videoconference by the ISU students.

Table 2. Self-reflection on Videoconferencing Performance

Variables	Mean		F Value
	U.S.	H.K.	
Degree of Influence	5.54	5.06	4.575*
Ability to Convince Counterparts	4.86	5.02	.489
Coherence of the Meeting	5.68	5.11	6.381*
Value of the Videoconferencing	6.75	5.91	17.771**

\* indicates  $p < .05$   
 \*\* indicates  $p < .001$

*Perceptions of speech or communication accommodation.* The theory of communication accommodation or CAT is based on the premise that interlocutors unconsciously and mutually modify their linguistic and/or paralinguistic behaviors to become more similar to (convergence) or different from (divergence) their respective interlocutors (Giles, Mulac, Bradac, & Johnson, 1987). Speech or communication accommodation has been extensively researched in intercultural settings (see, for example, Bourhis, 1984; Kraemer et al., 1994; Niedzielski & Giles, 1996). Research on accommodation includes pronunciation, speech rate, and syntactic construction (see, for example, Bourhis & Giles, 1977; Branigan et al., 2000; Giles et al., 1991). In Du-Babcock's (1999) study, CAT was used to explain how and why Hong Kong bilinguals accommodated other speakers in first-language (L1) and second-language (L2) business decision making. In accommodating other meeting participants, Hong Kong bilinguals mutually modify their communication behaviors by exhibiting different communication behavior and thereby changing meeting dynamics.

The results of the current study revealed great differences in the perception of speech accommodation between CityU and ISU students. Figure 2 shows that 44% of the ISU students rated their levels of speech accommodation for their CityU peers between 6 and 7 on a 7-point Likert Scale, indicating that they had adjusted their speed when communicating with their non-native English speaking CityU

peers. In contrast, only 9% of the CityU students thought their ISU counterparts had adjusted their speed during the videoconference. However, the issue of speech accommodation did not appear to cause communication problems to CityU students, as only 26% of the CityU students rated their desire for speed accommodation among their ISU peers between 6 and 7, indicating that they felt strongly that the ISU students should adjust their speaking speed. This result was consistent with the fact that 53% of the CityU students rated between 1 and 4 on a 7-point Likert Scale, indicating that their English language proficiency was sufficient to communicate with their ISU counterparts, and consequently, there was no need for the ISU students to adjust their speaking speed.

The result of the need for speech accommodation was further supported by the total number of turns taken and the amount of time spoken between the two groups. The results show that the CityU students not only took more turns than ISU students (35 vs. 33 turns per person), but that they also spoke more (380 seconds vs. 305 seconds per person), although these differences were not statistically significant. This result differs from the established literature on the activeness of second-language speakers participating in intercultural communication meetings (see, for example, Bilbow, 1996). The results of the current study suggest that second-language speakers can participate as well as, if not better than, native-English speakers provided that they are well prepared and know the subject well.

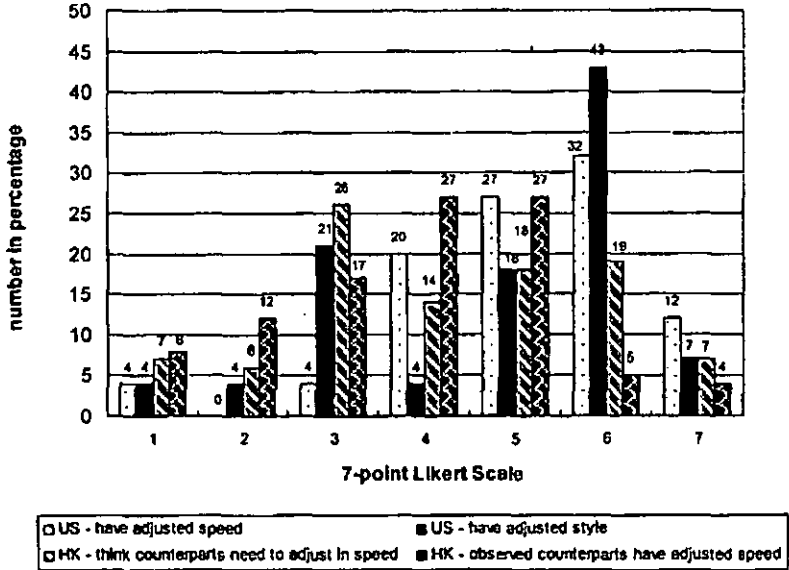


Figure 2: A Comparison of Speech Accommodation between ISU and CityU Students

Although the results show that the CityU students were able to actively and equally participate in interactive dialogues with their ISU counterparts, miscommunication did occur at times. Statements from two ISU students indicated that when communicating with non-native English speakers, a certain degree of speech accommodation is necessary, even when dealing with individuals who possess advanced second-language proficiency. As one student stated,

[t]he language competency was a factor that did in fact hinder the videoconference for some part ... Their Chinese accents played a role in our understanding of their responses and remarks, but the biggest problem I noticed was certain words and how they were used. I could tell that there were pauses when we used what seemed like common lingo to us college students, confused the CityU students. The adaptation of language to non-native speakers is not an easy task.

Another student further addressed the importance of second-language proficiency by stating that the CityU students:

- had strong accents and low tones of voice, but their messages were pretty clear when elaborated. [However] When terms such as, "maybe," and "might" or "could" and "would" were used by my group and me, the students in Hong Kong became a bit lost. They went along with it for polite reasons, but we could tell they might have missed the message. Simplicity in giving examples was the key; otherwise miscommunication would occur.

These responses suggest that the level of success of the intercultural decision-making meetings depended on three factors: the preparation of all meeting participants; the confidence level of Chinese bilinguals in English language communication; and the accommodation of native English speakers to the Chinese bilinguals.

#### PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

This joint intercultural videoconference research project has resulted in important gains in our understanding of teaching and learning intercultural business communication. The project enhanced the learning and teaching experience in six ways:

- The videoconference decision-making meetings and hands-on business projects enhanced the learning efficacy of the students to communicate, negotiate, and make decisions in real time;
- The collaboration between ISU and CityU students provided students with direct exposure to intercultural experiences;
- The design of the joint intercultural videoconference research project provided interdisciplinary integration and broadened students' knowledge in the areas of organizational communication and intercultural business communication;
- The experience gained in intercultural collaboration not only provided students with hands-on experience, but also allowed them to put classroom-learned intercultural and business communication theories into practice;

- The joint intercultural research collaboration broadened students' learning horizons and thereby prepared them better for communicating and working more successfully in the international workplace in their future careers.
- Both the ISU and CityU students developed an awareness of the need to accommodate in their speech communication, but their actual communication behavior did not reflect this attitudinal change. In particular, the ISU students did not accommodate the Chinese bilinguals and largely retained their normal communication behaviors in the teleconferences.

### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter presented a case study that described a joint long-distance research project through the use of videoconferencing. Overall, this collaborative experience was rewarding and innovative despite some difficulties encountered. Through interaction over a semester, the students experienced culture in action. They also experienced a high-tech environment and put their classroom learning theories to the test in a real cross-cultural communication context.

To ensure the success of intercultural collaboration through videoconferencing or virtual team work, we offer these recommendations:

- Ensure that the nature of the project is not overly complicated, and the kinds of businesses are internationally known (e.g., fast-food industry and McDonald's) and are shared by the intercultural groups involved.
- Have students exchange preliminary reports to establish a shared context for the videoconference communication.
- Build check-points into the project to monitor the progress of the project.
- Ensure the allotment of the project assessment is the same for both groups and the marks are significant enough for students to carry out the project seriously.
- Conduct training sessions emphasizing communication accommodation prior to the video conferencing and debriefing sessions after the conference to allow internalization and generalization of the videoconference experience.
- Plan, plan, and plan. The devil is in the details.

To conclude, we would like to comment on our personal experience in designing and carrying out the videoconferencing project. Although we experienced some unexpected hiccups, we found the project to be extremely rewarding to both our students and ourselves and encourage others to develop globally networked learning environments as well.

### REFERENCES

- Biggs, J., & Watkins, D. (1996). The Chinese learner in retrospect. In D. Watkins & J. Biggs (Eds.), *The Chinese learner: Cultural, psychological, and contextual influences* (pp. 269-285). Hong Kong & Australia: Comparative Education Research Center and The Australian Council for Educational Research Ltd.
- Bilbow, G. (1996). Managing impressions in the multicultural workplace: An impression-management-based model for cross-cultural discourse analysis and awareness training for the workplace. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, City University of Hong Kong.

- Bourhis, R. Y., & Giles, H. (1977). The language of intergroup distinctiveness. In H. Giles (Ed.), *Language, ethnicity, and intergroup relations* (pp. 119-135). London.
- Bourhis, R. Y. (1984). Cross-cultural communication in Montreal: The field studies since Bill 101. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, 46, 3-47.
- Branigan, H. P., Pickering, M. J., & Cleland, A. A. (2000). Syntactic coordination in dialogue. *Cognition*, 75, B 13-25.
- Bull, G., & Garofalo, J. (1998). Virtual Conferences. *Learning and leading with technology*, 25(5), 36-39.
- Deal, W. (2002). Distance learning: Teaching technology online. *The Technology Teacher*, 61(8), 21-26.
- Du-Babcock, B. (1999). Topic management and turn-taking in professional communication: First versus second language strategies. *Management Communication Quarterly*, 12, 544-574.
- Du-Babcock, B., & Babcock, R. (2000). Adapting an American-based simulation to a Hong Kong classroom. *Business Communication Quarterly*, 63(2), 9-40.
- Giles, H., Coupland, J., & Coupland, N. (1991). *Contexts of accommodation: Developments in applied linguistics*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Giles, H., Mulac, A., Bradac, J., & Johnson, P. (1987). Speech accommodation theory: The first decade and beyond. In M. McLaughlin (Ed.), *Communication Yearbook 10* (pp. 13-48). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Ho, T., Raman, K., & Watson, R. (1989, December). Group decision support systems. *Proceedings of the 10<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Information Systems*, Boston, MA.
- Kraemer, S., Olshain, E., & Badier, S. (1994). Ethnolinguistic vitality, attitudes, and networks of linguistic contact: The case of the Israeli Arab minority. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, 108, 79-95.
- Niedzielski, N., & Giles, H. (1996). Linguistic accommodation. In H. Gobel, P. Nelde, H. & S. Zdenk, & W. Wolck (Eds.), *Contact linguistics: An international handbook of contemporary research* (pp. 332-342). Berlin & New York: Walter de Gruyter.
- Sully de Luque, M., & Sommer, S. (2000). The impact of culture on feedback-seeking behavior: An integrated model and propositions. *The Academy of Management Review*, 25(4), 829-849.
- Trompenaars, A., & Hamden-Turner, C. (1998). *Riding the waves of culture: Understanding cultural diversity in global business*. (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Varner, I. I., & Palmer, T. M. (2002). Successful intercultural work teams: The role of human resource management. In A. Satzger, & G. Poncini (Eds.), *Business Communication: Europe and Globalization* (pp. 17-29). Frankfurt, Germany: Peter Lang.
- Wellington, R. (1997). Asynchronous communication technology: The effects on legitimacy in strategic decision making. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, The University of Waikato, New Zealand. Retrieved July 1, 2005, from <http://www.mngt.waikato.ac.nz/depts/mnss/rjwgrt/consortium.htm>.

AFFILIATIONS

*Bertha Du-Babcock*  
*Department of English and Communication*  
*City University of Hong Kong*

*Iris Varner*  
*Department of Management and Quantitative Methods*  
*Illinois State University, USA*