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Improving
Intercultural Communication Skills:
A Challenge facing Institutions of Higher
Education in the 21st Century

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1. Introduction

How quickly the world is becoming interconnected. Factors contributing to this phenomenon include recent changes in world political systems - the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the Soviet Union - as well as revolutionary advances in communication technology. The implications for higher education in this changing world scene are significant as the new global workplace, driven in large part by rapidly developing information technology, has made communication in daily life increasingly multinational and multicultural. Although higher education has not kept pace with globalization up to this point, it cannot lag behind in understanding and meeting this challenge.

More than ever, students must be trained to work with partners across cultural and national borders. To adequately prepare each student for the next century, educators must develop strategies to assure not only the mastery of abilities in functional areas of business and technology but also the command of intercultural communication skills. Accomplishment of this goal is one of the biggest challenges facing institutions of higher education today.

Business instruction at the University of Rhode Island takes advantage of recent communication technology to meet this demanding task. Using the Internet, students connect with other students around the world to debate timely, relevant topics and in the process, increase their awareness of how people of other cultures perceive their world.

In another exercise, students write and exchange cross-cultural dialogues to discover how cultural differences can lead to serious misunderstanding or a complete breakdown in communication. In this way, students not only improve their computer, writing, and critical thinking skills but also their intercultural awareness and sensitivity.

The purpose of this paper is to describe this teaching method and the experience gained through the use of this technique over the last seven years. The paper opens with a trio of rationales for improving intercultural communication skills in students. The next sections discuss the elements of intercultural communication skills and the Internet-based teaching technique. The final portion offers a preliminary evaluation of the effectiveness of this teaching technique, describes issues facing implementation of this technique on a

permanent basis, and introduces problems of instrument design for long-term assessment.

2. Rationales for Improving Intercultural Communication Skills

Three different but related rationales for international education and improving intercultural communication skills of today's students are

1) to maintain the well-being of national economies,

2) to assist student adaptation to the ever-changing nature of work and competition in the global workplace, and

3) to help students function effectively in their daily lives in the 21st Century.

2.1. The Well-Being of the National Economy

Over the years, alarms about eroding economic competitiveness have provided one of the most compelling rationales for internationalizing teaching and improving intercultural communication skills of students. Constantly reinforced by recent experiences in economic life, this argument has had the powerful effect of provoking fear and urgency in the minds of the people of many nations. The continuous move offshore of sources of supply, manufacturing plants, and, in the case of America, a growing national trade deficit have all contributed to this insecurity.

For example, the American people have begun reluctantly to realize and accept that American economic supremacy can no longer be taken for granted. Recent events highlight the fact that the economies of the world are inextricably linked. The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), introduction of the Euro, continuous alliances and consolidations of global companies - DaimlerChrysler is just one recent example - illustrate the point. Today's world economies are rapidly globalizing due to the economic forces of supply and demand worldwide.

The scores reflecting the extent and health of a national economy in comparison with other national economies are meaningless. Such assessment must be made within a global context as the economy of a nation strives or staggers with all other major economies of the world. The arena of economic competition is no longer national; it is global.

For supporters of this argument, the most compelling justification for international education and improving intercultural communication skills of students is the well-being of the national economy.

2.2. The Changing Nature of Work and Competition

Today, communication technology brings people at opposite ends of the earth to instant direct negotiations. People not only travel faster than ever before, but they also conduct routine business by cruising thousands of miles in cyberspace without ever having to leave their homes or offices. In the past ten years, e-mail and the world wide web have fundamentally changed the way we work and conduct business. A 1999 study, Cyber Atlas: Traffic Patterns: The Numbers Behind E-mail, reveals that there are 263 million e-mailboxes in the world.[1] Additionally, more than 3.4 trillion e-mail messages were delivered in 1998. For example, in the US alone, more than 9.4 billion messages were delivered every day.[2] The Institute for the Future reports that the average white-collar worker sends and receives an average of 30 e-mails per day.[3]

In addition, more people are buying and selling over the Internet. In the U.S., for example, of 9.4 billion e-mail messages being sent each day, 7.3 billion messages are commercial e-mail messages.[4] As of February 9, registered InterNIC domains worldwide numbered 5,130,769. Almost 60 % of that total is commercial domain.[5] Without a doubt e-commerce is here to stay and is changing the face of business.

A communication revolution is occurring, and no end is in sight. In fact, the only thing that is constant is change. Take the concept of employment and the notion of the work force of a nation, for example, and note how it has changed from confrontation - we vs. them - to communication and negotiation. The notion of one nation's homegrown young people beating their foreign competitors for profit at some exotic places is no longer valid. To many, this argument presents a very compelling rationale for improving the intercultural communication skills of a nation's young people; in addition, the reality of politics seems to compound the task.

2.3. The Reality of Politics and the Increasing Complexity of Daily Life

According to Nicholas Negroponte, the population of the Internet users is currently increasing at 10 % per month. At this rate, the total number of the Internet users would exceed the total population of this planet by 2003.[6] Obviously, more and more people are choosing to communicate with each other instantaneously. Add political realities to this fact, and the irony is obvious. On the one hand, technological advances to make communication even more simple and inexpensive continue; on the other hand, more and more borders spring up at the same time. The first meeting of the League of Nations in 1920 included 42 member nations out of a total of 73 nations in the world. Today, 193 nations are represented in the UN, and this growth is reflected in the increase in national borders as well.

In turn, the increasing number of national borders mirrors the discovery of increasing numbers of different cultures. Anthropologists declare that culture is unique.[7] Although they cannot state exactly how many unique cultures exist in the world, they do point out that neither nation nor race is culture. These terms are not interchangeable. Linguists today have discovered more languages than they thought existed only a few years ago.

The Atlas of Languages reports that more than 6,000 languages are used in the world. Subsequently, countless ethnic groups with their own languages and cultures demand to be recognized on their own right. (Not long ago, for example, the struggle of the ethnic Albanians in Kosovo monopolized most newscasts.)

To be sure, the workplace and marketplace are changing rapidly; at the same time, daily life is globalizing and becoming multicultural. For example, US President Clinton, in a 1996 speech entitled "Second Agenda", pointed out that more than 140 ethnic groups live together in Wayne County, Michigan,[8] and one can only guess how many ethnic groups live side by side in the five boroughs of New York City. Ability to communicate with each other effectively in the workplace and neighborhood seems to be increasingly inadequate. New borders, which separate people not only geographically but also emotionally and mentally, continue to be built. A case in point can be seen today. Even though the Berlin Wall came down ten years ago, it still exists in the minds of many Germans (Mauer im Kopf).

In light of this increasing complexity, it seems clear that the future depends on how the limits of individual, national cultures can be transcended. Borders separate cities, regions, nations, and minds. Ways to communicate across borders must be developed. To do so is not a choice but critical for survival. The need for effective communication across cultural and national borders provides the most fundamental rationale for improving the intercultural communication skills of our students everywhere. The following examination of the elements of intercultural communication skills encourages increased understanding of the education process involved.

3. Elements of Intercultural Communication Skills

According to D.C. Locke, in his Increasing Multicultural Understanding: A Comprehensive Model, culture is "the body of learned beliefs, traditions, principles and guides for behavior that are commonly shared among members of a particular group of people (at a given point in time)."[9] One of the key concepts underlying this definition of culture is the word "learned." Since culture is a set of "learned guides" for behavior "commonly shared" among a particular group of people, and since learning takes place through communication, communication and culture are inseparable. Anthropologist Edward T. Hall has in fact stated that "culture is communication."[10] In this sense, what is meant by intercultural communication is a set of "learned guides to behavior" that is or can be shared commonly by the people of different cultures.

These "learned guides" include three elements, whose extended definitions provide a framework for measurement of increased competence in intercultural communication:

- *Intercultural awareness*: the ability to identify and explain cultural similarities and differences - People who are interculturally aware are the people who notice that other cultures are not like their own culture. They can distinguish cultural differences from similarities. One can obtain intercultural awareness through observation, travel, or reading. While possessing this ability does not guarantee intercultural sensitivity, it is an indispensable prerequisite to intercultural sensitivity.

- *Intercultural sensitivity*: the ability to acknowledge, respect, tolerate, and accept cultural differences - People who are sensitive

to other cultures not only notice cultural differences but also appreciate, tolerate, and accept cultural differences exhibited in intercultural interaction. While possessing this ability does not necessarily guarantee intercultural communication competence, it is an indispensable prerequisite to intercultural communication competence.

- *Intercultural communication competence*: ability to interact and negotiate with the people of different cultures to bring about successful outcomes - A successful outcome is the result of intercultural interaction which is acceptable to all parties involved. Therefore, intercultural communication competence presupposes some linguistic competence, and intercultural awareness and sensitivity are its minimum prerequisites.[11]

These concepts seem to be hierarchically related. If a person is interculturally sensitive, the assumption is made that that person possesses intercultural awareness. And if a person is interculturally competent, i.e., he is more often than not successful in intercultural interactions, it is assumed that that person is not only linguistically capable but also interculturally aware and sensitive. But the reverse does not hold. The fact that a person is interculturally aware by being able to tell cultural differences from cultural similarities does not necessarily mean or guarantee that that person is, or will be, interculturally sensitive. Likewise, intercultural sensitivity does not guarantee intercultural communication competence.[12]

"Learned Guides" for Increased Competence in Intercultural Communication:

- *Intercultural Communication Competence*: behavioral; ability to bring about outcomes in cross-cultural interactions

- *Intercultural Sensitivity*: affective; ability to tolerate and accept cultural differences

- *Intercultural Awareness*: cognitive; ability to recognize cultural differences.

Some people who are interculturally aware - because they read a lot about other cultures, or they travel a lot, or both - may remain insensitive to the people of other cultures. They simply do not tolerate and accept cultures that are dissimilar to their own. Therefore, they often make blunders or offend those people with whom they want to

communicate. Likewise, people who are interculturally aware and sensitive may be incompetent in intercultural interaction because they do not have a sufficient command of the language being spoken. By the same token, people who can speak the language at hand may be incompetent in intercultural interaction because they are not sensitive enough to other cultures. This tripartite understanding of intercultural competence or skills provides us the intellectual basis for assessing the effectiveness of the Internet-based teaching technique.

4.   The Internet-Based Teaching Technique: International E-mail Debate

Background:

Presenting various concepts in classroom teaching is one thing; finding relevant hands-on student assignments related to classroom topics is quite another. Teaching information systems illustrates this universal problem. On the one hand, many professors want to increase the time that students actually spend using computers; on the other hand, they also want them to read more than just the relevant chapters in their textbook. An added frustration centered around the desire to give students some hands-on assignments relevant to their textbook reading.

4.1. Origins: A Personal Narrative

In the late 1980s, I decided to experiment with the idea of engaging students in academic debate using e-mail. Before I introduced some critical concepts of artificial intelligence, for example, I assigned a debate resolution to a pair of student teams: "Today's computers can be programmed to think like human beings." They were then asked to conduct research and write their side of the argument, either for or against the resolution. An interdisciplinary resolution such as this forced them to read broadly beyond their textbook.[13]

The rules of the so-called "e-mail debate" are almost the same as those of the traditional academic debate; the arguments, however, instead of being delivered traditionally, are written and exchanged using computers. This not only strengthened the hands-on part of the course but also helped students to improve their critical thinking, and writing skills. Over the next five years, this teaching technique underwent multiple evaluations and refinement.

In the early 1990s, as e-mail technology matured and its use became increasingly popular worldwide, my colleagues and I began thinking about using the same technique to link students with their counterparts around the world. Since we were constantly looking for creative ways to introduce global perspectives to teaching, the benefits of linking students across national and cultural borders seemed obvious. Soon we began looking for like-minded, international colleagues. This is how the so-called "international e-mail debate" originated.

In 1992, we sought and received funding from FIPSE (Fund for the Improvement of Post Secondary Education of the U.S. Department of Education) for a large-scale experiment.[14] We identified and invited ten international professors to participate. Based on their teaching and research interests, each professor from abroad was paired with his or her counterpart at our university. For example, a marketing professor from the Technische Universität Braunschweig in Germany was paired with one of our marketing professors, and one of our production management professors was paired with his counterpart at the Korea University. In this way, ten different pairs were formed. They examined each other's syllabus and jointly wrote a series of debate resolutions relevant to their teaching. They then prepared semester-long debate schedules by matching their academic calendars. In the 1993 fall semester, the students of these ten pairs of professors conducted the international e-mail debate for the first time.[15]

4.2. The Conduct of International E-mail Debate

Academic debate, a valuable teaching technique, has been practiced for more than 2,000 years.[16] For communication purposes here at the University of Rhode Island, "debate" is defined as a formal clash of ideas on a topic exchanged between two to three individuals or groups of individuals via e-mail. While it might be preferable to take students to their counterparts in Germany or China to debate face-to-face, e-mail debate is readily available and cost effective, and it "forces" students to think and write on their own.

Debate is conducted by exchanging a series of documents, called the constructive argument, refutation argument, and rebuttal argument. At the beginning of the semester, before they begin debating, students introduce themselves to each other through the procedure called Handshake in Cyberspace. At this time, many students invite their global colleagues to their web sites. They then conduct research on the

assigned debate resolution and write their initial position paper, either pros or cons. Called the constructive argument, this document runs about 2,000 words in length. The rules of writing a constructive argument are explained in the web site available to all students both at home and abroad. Holding to the semester-long schedule of debate, teams of students simultaneously exchange their constructive arguments. They then write their reaction to their opponent's constructive argument in a document called the refutation argument, about 1000 words in length. This is also exchanged simultaneously. Finally, students react to their counterparts' refutation argument in a 500-word document called the rebuttal argument.[17] At the end of each debate, students exchange their evaluative comments on their experience, and each team submits to their professor a hard copy of the debate itself and a copy of all other correspondence exchanged throughout the semester. The professor then evaluates the debate and gives each team a grade, with all members of a team (typically three to five students) receiving the same grade. According to the experience at The University of Rhode Island, debate of this type is most effective when ten to twelve weeks are allotted for the exercise. The relative weight of the grade for the debate is agreed upon by the participating professors before the debate begins and typically counts for between 25 to 40 % of the semester grade.[18]

4.3. The Outcome: International E-mail Debate

In this teaching program, five different outcomes - defined as student improvement in critical thinking skills, writing skills, computer skills, intercultural awareness and intercultural sensitivity as a result of participating in the international e-mail debate - were evaluated. Evaluation was conducted by three expert consultants, one each in writing, debate, and intercultural communication. They were Prof. Linda Shamoon (writing), Prof. Stephen Wood (debate/critical thinking), and Prof. Guo-Ming-Chen (intercultural communication) of the University of Rhode Island. Although the findings were generally satisfactory, problems were encountered in assessing intercultural sensitivity as it was defined. The participating students around the world took pre- and post-tests of intercultural sensitivity developed by one of the consultants, Prof. Guo-Ming Chen. The results (from a series of t-tests) did not show significant improvement of intercultural sensitivity.[19] Students were also asked to complete four open-ended questions about their feelings on the E-mail debate. Two of the

questions relating to intercultural communication were "What aspects of E-mail debate did you like the most? Why?" and "Do you think this technique will help increase intercultural sensitivity among students?" The results were universally positive. Evidence that business students at The University of Rhode Island and their counterparts around the world, as a result of being engaged in the international e-mail debate, actually improved their critical thinking skills, writing skills,[20] computer skills, and intercultural awareness was accumulated and reported. However, since it was impossible to quantitatively demonstrate that intercultural sensitivity had improved significantly as a result of our experiment the decision to experiment with a new idea of engaging students in writing, explaining, and exchanging cross-cultural dialogues using the Internet was made.

5. The Internet-Based Teaching Technique: Interpretation of Cross-Cultural Dialogues

5.1. Background and Origins

Cross-cultural dialogues are brief conversations between people with different cultural backgrounds. Determining who first used the concept of cross-cultural dialogues to teach or to help enhance intercultural awareness or sensitivity is impractical. Craig Storti, who published Cross-Cultural Dialogues: 74 Brief Encounters with Cultural Difference in 1994, expressed his appreciation for the dialogue technique to Alfred Kraemer, who used this technique in work he did for the U.S. army in the 1970s.[21] In any event, the object of cross-cultural dialogues is to make the reader aware of cultural differences. As such, misunderstanding or communication breakdown is not obvious in the conversations. In fact, it is intentionally "hidden" by the author. However, just enough clues to cultural difference are given in the conversation to encourage the reader to figure out on his own which cultural difference, if any, has contributed to the problem of miscommunication or communication breakdown. Storti used this kind of dialogue and explanatory note to help teach intercultural awareness. The following example from Storti's book illustrates this technique:

Waiting for the Contract

(In this dialogue, one can assume that Warren is an American manager, and Chao and Sung are Chinese. Sung reports to Chao, and Chao reports to Warren.)

Warren:	*Is the contract ready then?*
Chao:	*I am afraid not. Mr. Sung still hasn't prepared it.*
Warren:	*He's not very efficient, is he?*
Chao	*Not anymore. But he used to be an excellent worker. I've been trying to find out what's wrong.*
Warren:	*What did he say to you?*[22]
(Chao:	*No response.)*

The reader must first ask whether or not a communication breakdown or misunderstanding has occurred in this conversation between Warren and Chao. If the answer is yes, then the reader must ask which cultural difference(s) might have caused communication problems in this conversation. Communication breakdown or misunderstanding in this conversation is not obvious. One of the clues is the last line "What did he say to you?" and the fact that the conversation ended where it did with no response from Chao. This dialog illustrates a communication problem between two persons of different cultures. Warren comes from the culture in which directness in communication is highly valued, whereas Chao comes from the culture in which avoiding embarrassment or saving face is more important. Miscommunication, if not communication breakdown, in this conversation is due to the assumption which Warren obviously had made. He assumed that Chao "must have" talked with Sung about the contract; after all, Sung reports to Chao.

5.2. The Conduct of Cross-Cultural Dialogue Exchange

The way cross-cultural dialogue is used at the University of Rhode Island is unique in one important respect. Students participating in this program[23] do more than just read and learn about cultural differences by reading cross-cultural dialogues written by others. First, they read and listen to the lectures on culture, cultural dimension, and cultural differences. Then they read works like Storti's to become aware of the art of writing effective cross-cultural dialogues.

Next they write their own cross-cultural dialogues which might be based on their own experience of interacting with people of other cultures.[24] Third, using the Internet, they exchange their dialogues with their counterparts abroad. Finally when they receive their counterparts' dialogues, they then write and send their explanation of what they think is the reason for the communication breakdown or misunderstanding.

Upon receiving the explanatory notes, the authors of the dialogues provide feedback commenting on the accuracy of their explanation. If the given explanations of cultural difference are correct in the eyes of the authors of the dialogues, the students who wrote the dialogues send their explanatory notes which agree with their counterparts' explanations. At this point, the exercise ends. They can repeat the process again and again (writing and exchanging new dialogues and explanatory notes) until the end of the semester. If the authors do not agree with their counterparts' explanations, however, they further discuss the problems that are hidden in the dialogues. Students here and abroad are encouraged to communicate with each other as often as possible throughout the semester. At the end of the semester, all teams of students hand in the hardcopy of the exchanges they have had throughout the semester. This provides professors opportunities to examine the degree to which students were engaged in the discussion on cultural differences.

5.3. The Expected Outcome: Cross-Cultural Dialogue Exchange

What is the outcome of engaging our students in the exercise of writing their cross-cultural dialogues which are then explained by their counterparts abroad?

Instead of trying to develop a metric of intercultural awareness and sensitivity in a person, in this experiment the goal was to assess if our semester-long course as a whole makes a difference. Does the course, which includes reading, lecture, discussion, international e-mail debate, and finally writing of cross-cultural dialogues and explanatory notes, actually improve a student's intercultural awareness and sensitivity? An instrument for measurement is currently being developed. In the meantime, the results of the work being done by the participating students in this experiment are encouraging.

A sample dialogue which was written by one of the German students participating in the program at the Technische Universität Braunschweig will help illustrate the increased insight gained from the interchange.

A Chinese Guest

(Chang, a Chinese living in Munich, is invited to the German family in Braunschweig. He and his friend, the host, have decided to take a bicycle trip to the Harz Mountains in northern Germany.)

Maier: *Hello Mr. Chang, welcome to Braunschweig.*

Chang: *Thank you for inviting me.*

Maier: *How was your trip to Braunschweig?*

Chang: *It's a long trip, but it was not bad.*

Maier: *You must be hungry. Would you like to eat something before we head for the Harz?*

Chang: *Ah . . . No.*

Maier: *All right then, let's go.*

Chang: *Now?*[25]

Upon reading the dialogue several times, one sees that not everything in this conversation is straightforward. The fact that Chang ended the conversation by saying "now?" gives the reader enough clues that some unresolved issues exist between these two people.

This dialogue illustrates the difference between the low- and high-context cultures. In general, the way the German people communicate is more low-context than the way Chinese communicate. Compared to the Chinese, Germans usually mean what they say, and they value directness in communication.[26] Since Chang said No, as far as Maier is concerned, Chang was all set (he is not hungry), and they were ready to leave. What Maier did not appreciate is the fact that Chinese are a high-context-communication people. In the way they communicate, what is said is often less important than how it is said. That is, they often let the context "speak" rather than the message itself. So, in this conversation, what Chang said (Ah . . . No.) does not necessarily mean that he was not hungry. He simply did not want to be very direct. So, when Maier said, "All right then, let's go (Alles klar, gehen wir jetzt!), Chang obviously was taken by surprise. To him, everything was not "all right". And this was expressed to Maier indirectly when he said "Now?" In like manner, Chang did not

appreciate the fact that Maier is a "typical" German person. Most Germans as low-context-communication people mean what they say, and therefore, it would never occur to Maier that his friend Chang would actually say NO and mean YES, which is tantamount to telling a lie to a friend.

The work of the participating students is very revealing. They have mulled over the implications of cultural differences. Their writing is thoughtful, analytical, and insightful. It is very revealing to compare typical explanations that the students of different cultures exchange and then discuss. For example, a typical explanation of this dialogue by American and German students is very similar since both Germans and Americans are low-context people. They say that Chang said he was not hungry. So the miscommunication is the responsibility of Chang, not Maier. (It is not my fault!) How can Maier know that Chang is not being forthright? On the other hand, a typical comment by Chinese students is: I don't understand why Maier had to ask him (Chang) if he were hungry. Isn't it obvious to him? Maier should have had some food ready for his friend in the first place. Consequently, students here and abroad can learn, appreciate, and even accept cultural differences, and this is what intercultural sensitivity is all about.

6. Implementing the Internet-Based Teaching Techniques on a Permanent Basis: Additional Issues

The Internet-based teaching techniques discussed in this article have proven valuable. Meanwhile the experience gained through the use of these techniques over the past seven years in a permanent course at the University of Rhode Island points to several issues which must be addressed by higher education if this kind of program is to be institutionalized. They are:

1. Finding like-minded professors here and abroad. Students worldwide really enjoy the experience of being linked across borders, and they "feel strongly" that this kind of exercise will improve their intercultural sensitivity. The difficulty is finding like-minded professors both at home and abroad who are willing to participate. Simply put, students for this kind of experience are in an abundance, but professors who are willing to participate are scarce. This is a challenge facing administrators of higher education. They must find

ways to provide professors some incentives to experiment with this kind of innovative teaching program.

2. Matching academic calendars of universities around the world. No two academic calendars match precisely. For example, the academic semesters of the universities in the US and in Germany simply do not match. The overlapping period is often too short to engage students in meaningful experiments. Typically, in the case of the US and German semesters, the useful overlapping period is only about six to seven weeks long. Ways must be found to offer courses not bound by academic calendar. Additionally, this accommodation might also free professors to participate in the project.

3. Accessing foreign students on campus as a source of cultural information. As teaching and learning are globalizing, increasingly student populations are multiethnic. Somehow ways must be found to "take advantage" of the foreign students on campus. Students need to interact in cross-cultural activities with their on-campus counterparts from different cultures. Foreign students on campus can be important and inexpensive sources of cultural information.

7.   Summary and Conclusions

Following discussion of the rationales for improving students' intercultural communication skills, this article described how the professors at the University of Rhode Island and their counterparts around the world use the Internet as a mechanism for improving a student's intercultural awareness and sensitivity. Using the Internet, students here and abroad debate on timely, relevant topics to become aware of how people of different cultures see things differently. In addition, they write and exchange cross-cultural dialogues and explanatory notes to become interculturally sensitive. In this way, the students meet with their future partners of the global workplace, while honing their computer skills, writing skills, and enhancing their intercultural awareness and sensitivity. However, those in higher education who want to implement this kind of Internet-based teaching technique on a permanent basis must first address several difficult issues, including how to find like-minded professors here and abroad who are willing to participate.

If correctly used over time, these techniques (international e-mail debate and cross-cultural dialogues) can improve students'

intercultural awareness and sensitivity. Assessment of whether or not this improvement lasts over a period of time presents a quantitative problem. Defining intercultural sensitivity practically and satisfactorily is the first task facing educators interested in following this path toward improved communication. One of the greatest challenges facing the institutions of higher education of the 21st Century is how to improve intercultural communication skills of their students. Accompanied by a yet-to-be-developed instrument for quantitative measurement of long-term outcomes, projects like the international e-mail debate and cross-cultural dialogue may well become the tools for understanding and negotiation in the new global environment.

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12   Kim and Chen.

13   Additional debate resolutions included: "Euthanasia is ethical"; "NAFTA will create more jobs in North America"; "The Internet will ultimately invade individual rights of privacy"; "Smoking in public should be banned"; "Foreign exchange rates are predictable"; "The government should regulate marketing research practices"; "Abortion should be banned worldwide"; "Y2K will be the greatest threat to the economic development of the world in the 21st century"; "The Japanese are soon going to achieve the supremacy in computer technology that the US currently enjoys"; "The only culture possible in today's world is commercial culture"; "Globalization promotes exploitation of the poor nations by the wealthy ones" and "Marketing of sex on the Internet should be controlled".

14   The grant was received from the Fund for the Improvement of Post-Secondary Education (FIPSE), 1992-96. The title of the project was "Global Classroom: Internationalizing the Business Curriculum via E-mail Debate," P116A2028.

[15] Participants in the International E-mail Debate include Technische Universität Braunschweig (Germany), University of Oslo (Norway), City Polytechnical University of Hong Kong, Korea University, Twente University (Holland), Manchester School of Management (England), Odense University (Denmark), Bilkent University (Turkey), Ecole Superienure des Affaires, Universite Pierre Mendes, Grenoble (France), and Universität zu Köln (Germany). Of these universities, Braunschweig and Bilkent continue to work with us to improve this teaching technique.

[16] Stephen C. Wood, "The Results of International E-mail Debate on Enhancing Critical Thinking" (Final Report submitted to FIPSE, US Department of Education: 1997), P116A2028.

[17] Definitions of constructive argument, refutation argument, and rebuttal are given in web site (www.cba.uri.edu, click Global Classroom) which participating students visit before the debate.

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[21] Craig Storti, Cross-Cultural Dialogues: 74 Brief Encounters with Cultural Difference (Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press, Inc., 1994), vii.

[22] Storti, 41.

[23] Students at Technische Universität Braunschweig and the University of Rhode Island participated in this experiment for the first time in the fall semester1998 when this author was a guest professor at Braunschweig. During this semester, Professor Dr. Wolfgang Fritz of Braunschweig and this author jointly offered the course called "Communication Across Borders."

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