1992

Internationalizing the business communication textbooks

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Internationalizing the business communication textbooks

by

Mei Ying Lou

A Thesis Submitted to the

Graduate Faculty in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

Department: English
Major: English (Business and Technical Communication)

Approved:
Signature redacted for privacy

In Charge of Major Work
Signature redacted for privacy

For the Major/Department
Signature redacted for privacy

For the Graduate College

Iowa State University
Ames, Iowa

1992
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Background

Reflecting on the accelerating pace of globalization of the world marketplace, Hanson quotes one professor of Brigham Young University saying: "If we are preparing managers to manage only Americans we are preparing for a world which no longer exists" (Hanson 209). This sentiment aptly describes the need for managers with an international business orientation.

Major U. S. corporations such as Dow Chemical, Gillette, Black & Decker, and IBM generated over 40 percent of their total sales from their foreign operations in 1988; Coca-Cola, Johnson & Johnson, ITT, Avon, and Xerox were not far below that level. Foreign investment in the United States is growing. In 1987, the level of foreign investment was over $260 billion a year, about 80 percent of the value of the U.S. investment abroad (Himstreet 634).

Considering this trend of internationalization of business, educators have recognized the pressing need of students in the fields of business administration, business communication, as well as other related areas to receive training in international business communication. Steps have been taken in the field of higher education to ensure the production of quality graduates for the ever-changing and increasingly challenging business world.
In May 1987, the Executive Committee of the Association of Business Communication set guidelines to help college students prepare to meet the needs of modern business. They emphasized that the business communication course should expose students to the following areas:

- The theory of business communications
- Analysis of message purpose and audience
- Commonly accepted short message types
- Oral presentations
- Ethical issues in business communications
- International aspects of business communications
- Use of computers in business communications

It is important to note that the international aspects of business communication are identified as one of the key business communication topics. That is to say, basic business communication courses can be used as an important tool to prepare students for the international business environment. If the overall objective of the business communication course is to educate productive future employees for American businesses, then students must receive training in international business communication to be effective in both the domestic and international business sector.

**Overall Purpose of the Paper**

The objective of this paper is to investigate the status of coverage of international business communication topics in business communication
texts. On the basis of this investigation, I will recommend improvements for internationalizing the business communication textbooks.

**Plan of Study**

First, I will attempt to gauge the level of coverage of international business communication topics in the basic business communication textbooks used at the university level. I will base the evaluation on a survey of ten current well-known textbooks that have been adopted for the basic business communication course at Iowa State University during the past five years.

Having identified weaknesses in the basic business communication textbooks, I will then offer some suggestions to resolve the problem areas. I will discuss methods to broaden the coverage of international business communication topics within the framework of a traditional business communication textbook. Finally, a conclusion section will summarize the content of the paper.
CHAPTER II
LITERATURE REVIEW

In response to the heightened awareness of the globalization of the American business, and in reaction to curricular guidelines set by the Executive Committee of the Association of Business Communication, some proposals have been made on how to integrate an international business communication element into business communication courses. The report "How to Teach Intercultural Concepts in a Basic Business Communication Class" by the Teaching Methodology and Concepts Committee (members of the committee include six faculty members from six different universities) offers a teaching plan for an international business communication unit. The authors agree that as a result of the increasingly international nature of American business, a unit on intercultural communication can greatly benefit the basic business communication class. They also introduce some class activities such as self-instructional guides, role-playing, intercultural cases, and critical incidents to aid this learning process. They stress that these activities are designed to help students develop effective intercultural communication skills.

In "Teaching Intercultural Communication Interculturally," Carol C. Gigliotti suggests that a study tour is an effective tool to maximize students' awareness of the international discussions of business communication. For example, a study tour which takes students to visit European companies can give them a first-hand knowledge of cultural
differences in office operation abroad. "In addition to experiencing intercultural communication first-hand through conversations and observations of persons in each country, students also experience the importance of interpersonal communication through the 10-12 day interaction process" (28). After the study tour, the students are required to summarize their international experiences in a paper that compares the operations of a typical American office with those they have observed abroad. An oral presentation is also required in class in connection with the paper. This method would be helpful but out of reach for most departments.

Iris I. Varner's "Internationalizing Business Communication Courses" agrees with Gigliotti's idea that the basic business communication course can be used as one effective way of providing students with an adequate focus on an international business dimension. She, however, takes the idea one step further, asserting that the entire basic business communication course can be internationalized to equip the students with more effective skills.

She specifically points out that the following topics in the traditional business communication courses can be easily internationalized:

- Function of business communication and communication practices
- Principles for effective writing
- Beginnings and endings of reports and letters
- Formats for letters and reports
• Tone and formality

Her conclusion is that even though internationalization can add an exciting dimension to the business communication course, it is not necessary to cover twenty countries in order to internationalize the course. Instead, concentrating on one or two cultures can be very effective.

Other scholars like David A. Victor and Jules Harcourt suggest establishing international business communication as a separate course. In "Teaching International Business Communication: Framework and Application," David A. Victor gives an account of implementing a separate course as a model for teaching international business communication topics. The course was initiated at Eastern Michigan University in 1986 and was titled "Managing World Business Communication." The purpose of such a course is to help students develop the special skills needed for evaluating essential business communication practices for any given culture.

According to Victor, the course focuses specifically on the following six objectives:

• to develop techniques for creating managerial synergy in a global business environment

• to increase understanding of the managerial communication process, theory and concepts as they apply to business in a global setting

• to develop techniques for managing cultural differences as they relate to motivation in the workplace, business communication
practices, and conducting business abroad or in a multicultural domestic environment

- to sharpen interpersonal and group communication skills as they relate to conducting world business
- to increase the understanding of ways to cope with problems that arise out of channels, conflict and change peculiar to conducting international business
- to increase effectiveness of persuasive communication across cultures as it relates to conducting business with executives, clients and other businesspeople from different cultures (86)

To achieve these objectives, the content of the course covers in detail seven major areas, including global management in the cultural context, breaking down international business communication barriers, motivation in a global context, managing cultural shock, the role of business communication in international conflict management, management and cultural synergy, and business communication in specific national settings. Victor deemed the course a successful one with 26 students enrolled, and their interest in the course material was high.

Another similar course, "Communicating in the International Business Environment," is offered at Murray State University. It is reported in Jules Harcourt's article "A New Cross-cultural Communication Course: Communicating in the International Business Environment." The content of the course encompasses nine major topics--the extent of international business, understanding the
American culture, the challenges of international business communication, language differences, nonverbal communication differences, other cultural differences, guidelines for successful cross-cultural communication in the business environment, marketing communication, managing foreigners, and living in a foreign culture. This course attempts to provide students with the challenges of international business communication, offering practical guidelines for successful cross-cultural business communication and for solving international business problems.

The articles reviewed seem to reflect two major approaches to addressing international business communication in the field. One approach is to incorporate international topics as a unit into the basic business communication courses. The other is to develop and implement a separate course for international business communication.

Victor's article "Cross-cultural Influences on Business Communication: Applications for Teaching and Practice" offers a workable framework for analyzing these two trends. Following an exposition of the two existing trends in teaching international topics in the field, he weighs the advantages and disadvantages of each approach.

The semester-long framework of a course devoted entirely to the subject of cross-cultural business communication allows ample time for objective testing, and both individual and group research projects. Additionally, a full semester allows for more in-depth readings and time for discussion on intercultural business communication issues (9).
There is, however, one major flaw in this approach. Students who believe that they can do without international communication knowledge if they intend to work in a strictly domestic environment may feel disinclined to enroll in such a course. In contrast, the alternative of incorporating international topics in one unit of basic business communication courses has merit. Since basic business communication courses are mandatory in most institutions, all students will at least be exposed to some knowledge of international business communication. Nevertheless, Victor alerts us, the flaw in this approach is that a single unit can do no more than offer a minimal awareness of cross-cultural business communication issues. The students are unlikely to gain an in-depth understanding of the cross-cultural business communication issues and problems they are likely to face in the future.

The solution that Victor suggests is to offer both options—to include the international unit in the basic business communication course and also to offer a separate course for the same topic. Under this proposal, students can at least be exposed to some international knowledge. Furthermore, if they are interested, they can take the separate course to further develop their skills in this area. Yet, in this article Victor does not offer any specific suggestions on how to include an international unit.

This brief review of the literature reveals an encouraging trend—that is, international topics are increasingly drawing the attention of teachers of business communication courses. Also, different methods
have been used experimentally in classroom settings. Yet I feel further questions still need to be answered. Since growing attention has been given to address the issue of either including an international unit or establishing a separate course for international business communication, what has been done in the direction of internationalizing the business communication textbooks that will be used in these courses? Are the contents of these textbooks appropriate for the internationalized business communication courses? If not, what needs to be done to catch up with the latest developments in the field?

Few articles have been written to address these issues. Therefore, a good place to begin this investigation would be the basic business communication textbooks themselves. The textbooks selected for this survey have been used for basic business communication courses (English 302) for the past five years in the Department of English of Iowa State University. This course enrolls over 15,000 students each year. The purpose of my textbook survey is to uncover how the topic of international business communication is addressed (if at all) in various basic business communication textbooks and then suggest how the business communication textbooks can be internationalized.
CHAPTER III
SURVEY OF BUSINESS COMMUNICATION TEXTBOOKS

This section of the paper will begin with a review of ten business communication textbooks, focusing on the international business communication chapter of each book. The discussion will be based on a content analysis of each international chapter. Since the textbooks I have chosen are all well-known works in the field, the findings should be fairly representative of texts in the field.

The source of the textbook selection comes from the listing of textbook orders in the English Department of Iowa State University. Since a basic business communication course is taught every semester at Iowa State University, the textbooks which have been selected for the past five years should reflect trends in the field. The ten textbooks used as major texts during the past five-year period for the basic business communication course (English 302) are listed as follows:


The objective of this textbook survey is to conduct a content analysis of the international material in each of the selected texts. A discussion will follow the survey with the purpose of establishing the typical issues in the area. I have posed the following two research questions to aid this discussion.

- Within the international business communication chapter, what are the topics that are typically covered, and where the information is placed?
- What role does an international business communication chapter play in the surveyed textbooks?
Before I answer these questions, I will present a content analysis of international materials in ten business communication textbooks.

**Analysis of International Materials**

*Effective Business Communications* (6th ed.) by Murphy and Hildebrandt  

The international chapter in this book appears to provide an extensive coverage of international business communication topics. Apart from containing all the traditional units of business communication, which range from business communication principles, good news and bad news letters, persuasive messages, and business reports to formal and short, oral presentations, job application process, and legal aspects of business communication, the book also has an extensive twenty-nine page chapter on international business communications. This chapter is the longest and most detailed international chapter among surveyed textbooks. According to Bush-Bacelis and Victor's article, in the book's 4th edition, the same topic merited only a seven-page chapter (49).

In this chapter, Murphy and Hildebrandt discuss international communication in six sections, including background to international adaptation, national environmental variables, individual environmental variables, preparation for overseas work, a summary of the chapter, and some exercises and problems designed for the students.

In the first section, which is entitled "Background to International Adaptation," Murphy and Hildebrandt treat a number of issues. First, they address the concept of culture, which they define as being the "behavioral characteristics typical of a group." They also sensitize the
reader to the cultural differences with this disclaimer: "Thus, to assume that all suggestions for improving your written and oral communication as noted in this book are true throughout the world is incorrect." They then describe culture as existing in three levels: formal, informal, and technical. Finally, they address the cultural adaptation issue by stressing that "Knowing some of the general background issues [in a culture] should help you understand why differences between people and nations exist" (738).

In the following section, they analyze cultural variables at two levels--the national environmental level and the individual environmental level. At the national environmental level, they identify seven conceptual areas which are subject to change from culture to culture. These are education, law and regulations, economics, politics, religion, social norms, and language. Each is discussed along with some interesting insights and concrete examples and anecdotes.

Typical of the insightful observations is that found in their discussion on education. They first introduce the section on education with these words:

In many countries throughout the world, the employees, including factory managers, are not as well educated as their United States counterparts. For instance, if your future work takes you to the Far East, Chinese and other Asian managers have less formal education than you do (740).

This warning helps readers realistically adjust their expectations in their dealings and communication with the Asian counterpart.
Next, a table of “Education Levels of Chinese, Asian, and U.S. Managers” is presented to illustrate Murphy and Hildebrandt's point. With regard to the highest level of education attained, 79.8 percent of American managers hold undergraduate degrees, and 30 percent of them hold graduate degrees. Among Chinese managers, only 27.6 percent have undergraduate degrees, and less than one percent hold graduate degrees.

The strength of Murphy and Hildebrandt's interpretation of this table lies in their culturally based analysis. "A quick conclusion may be that the Asians, particularly the Chinese, are less interested in education, that the nation is ill equipped to hold its own with other parts of the world". Then they go on: "You could be wrong. You must go beyond your initial inference and assess the reasons why Chinese managers lack extensive education" (741). At this point, they lead the reader beyond the surface conclusions, pointing out that there are some specific cultural reasons responsible for the phenomenon:

- China does not have many institutions of higher education;
- China is an agrarian economy, and over 800 million people are peasants;
- Most universities in China were closed during the Cultural Revolution for ten years (1966-1976) (741).

These carefully reasoned observations reflecting Murphy and Hildebrandt's emphasis on the need to know the general background issues in another culture should help students to understand why differences between people and nations exist. This analysis
demonstrates to the readers that it is important to be familiar with the cultural background of a country, so they can avoid making wrong assumptions about the given culture, thus resulting in fewer communication misunderstandings.

When discussing cultural variables at the individual environmental level, the authors explore differences in verbal, nonverbal communication expressed through various concepts such as time, space, food, dress, manners at home and at work, and decision-making patterns. A table of a sample cultural comparison is given to show some of the different concepts of time that exist in different cultures. For example, in one culture, someone will say “Let’s set a phone appointment for 8:15,” while in another culture, the concept of time is expressed in a more ambiguous way: “We’ll give you a call,” without specifying the exact time. Similar examples can also be found in the same table. When someone says 8:15 in one culture, people in another culture will shift the same time concept to “some time tomorrow” (744).

The following section addresses the issues related to preparation for overseas work. The authors offer some practical guidelines for executives who are posted overseas. They recommend that if one must take on a foreign assignment, learning the local language would be most appropriate and helpful. Other suggestions include knowing the communication differences that exist, understanding some differences in writing styles, doing some research on the given culture, contacting some helpful organizations such as the local American Chamber of
Business Communication Today by Bovee and Thill

In their 13-page international chapter, the authors handle the international topics in much the same way as Murphy and Hildebrandt, except they start the chapter by stressing the goals of international business communication. They emphasize that the same goals for American business communication should be applied to the international business communication. According to the authors, these goals are: "The audience should understand exactly what you mean; the audience should respond to the message as you intended; you should have a good relationship with the audience" (578).

They then devote a major portion of the chapter to difficulties confronted in international business communication, mainly in verbal and nonverbal communication barriers and cultural differences. They subdivide the section of verbal barriers into three parts: options for crossing the barriers, barriers to written communication, and barriers to oral communication.

Options for crossing the barriers include learning a new language, getting an interpreter, or teaching people of other cultures your language. Bovee and Thill suggest the option of taking along an interpreter is a more practical approach, considering that learning the language of the country can be very time-consuming. They also feel teaching other people (such as employees working in a multinational
company) English would be more practical than most of us usually realize.

Next Bovee and Thill introduce the topic of cultural differences. Seven variables are identified as crucial to understanding cultural differences. They are religion and values, rules and status, decision-making customs, concepts of time, concepts of personal space, body language, social behavior and manners. These elements are likely to change from one culture to another. As a consequence, they often result in considerable difficulties in the international business communication field. Such difficulties are well illustrated in one of my favorite examples in this chapter. A computer salesperson was visiting a customer in China. Wanting to see everything go smoothly, he brought along an expensive gift—a grandfather clock—to impress the customer. Unfortunately, the middle-aged customer was deeply offended, because sending a clock in China is a symbol of bad luck. Sending someone a clock in the Chinese language can be interpreted as the act of Songzhong, meaning "send someone to the grave." No wonder the middle-aged customer was furious with the gesture. The salesperson's act of generosity backfired because he did not understand the cultural significance of his deed. Bovee and Thill maintain that problems of this kind arise from many of our unconscious assumptions which are based on our own cultural values and beliefs as well as non-verbal communication patterns. The authors alert us to be more watchful with similar circumstances because of the cultural chasm that separates us from people of other countries.
The following section is entitled "The Practice of International Business Communication," in which Bovee and Thill offer some guidelines to handle written and oral international business communication more effectively. Tips on written communication are given which cover a broad range from business letters and memos to reports and other documents such as price quotations, invoices, and letters of credit. Tips on oral communication include some specific advice. For example, they provide a list of useful phrases set in several languages, such as French, German, Spanish, Italian, Chinese, and Japanese. They group the phrases into categories of greetings, general conversation, money, and communications. The chapter ends with questions for discussion and exercises.

*Communication for Business and Professions* by Malra Treece The international chapter comes in Chapter Twenty of this book and is 16 pages long. Treece begins the chapter by giving an overview of international communication, in which she defines the concept of culture and distinguishes various designations in international communication.

She further stresses that the trend of expansion into the international arena by U.S. firms justifies the need for more communication knowledge. She gives supporting evidence to show that the number of Americans working abroad is fast increasing while at the same time more American companies export goods or service to foreign markets. A parallel trend indicates that more and more Americans in
the United States as well as those abroad are working for foreign employers.

In the following section entitled "Understanding and Accepting Customs Other Than Our Own," Treece cites Richard E. Porter to explain the concept of ethnocentrism:

We place ourselves, our racial, ethnic, or social group, at the center of the universe and rate all others accordingly. The greater their similarity to us, the nearer to us we place them; the greater the dissimilarity, the farther away they are. We lace one group above another. We tend to see our own groups, our own country, our own culture as the best, the most moral. This view also demands our first loyalty, carried to extremes, produces a "my country first--right or wrong" attitude (558).

Next Treece discusses the cultural differences in terms of nonverbal communication. She points out that nonverbal communication is more important than verbal communication in intercultural communication because of language barriers and differences in backgrounds and perceptions. Like Murphy/Hildebrandt and Bovee/Thill, Treece also discusses nonverbal communication in the order of time, space, and other nonverbal cultural differences. She draws several concrete examples to help get her point across.

In the following section, she focuses on verbal communication that appears both in intercultural communication and written business communication situations. Treece uses the last section of the
international chapter to briefly address the preparation for an overseas assignment.

**Business Communication: An Audience-Centered Approach** by Paul Anderson It is surprising to find as one of the most authoritative books, Anderson's book does not include an international chapter. The absence of the international chapter is especially astonishing given its publication date of 1989. The preface states the objective of the book as "to prepare students to become confident, flexible, and resourceful communicators. At work they will encounter such a wide variety of writing and speaking situations that no single formula or short series of recipes that we might teach will serve as well. Instead, we must equip them with strategies, together with the skills, knowledge, and attitudes needed to put those strategies to good use" (Preface V).

It is fine to teach students skills to deal with domestic business situations, and for that purpose, Anderson's book includes excellent material. Nevertheless, focusing solely on domestic business situations is far from adequate. What should students do when they have to deal with an international audience? Will writing strategies the students have learned from this book be good enough to handle different cross-cultural situations? Or, we may ask, are writing strategies the only skills needed when communicating internationally? Obviously, Anderson's book fails to answer these questions, and is therefore a limited resource for students with interests in international communication. For example, the use of common abbreviations such as
U.S.D.A., F.T.C., and references to U.S. laws such as Anti-trust legislations may be lost on foreign business associates. These terms are context-bound and readily understood by Americans, but are not known to most non-American businesspersons.

*Communicating in Business* by Sigband and Bateman This book does not go beyond the concepts of domestic business communication. Like Anderson's book, this one does not include an international chapter. The book covers written, oral, and listening skills within the context of acquiring and holding a job within a typical American business setting. In addition, the latest communication technology in business communication such as electronic mail and fax machines is stressed through extensive application and illustrations.

*Communications in Business* by Walter Wells There is no international chapter in this book. It consists of five major parts. Part One deals with the basics of business writing, such as mechanical precision and factual and verbal precision. Part Two teaches the fundamentals of writing business letters and memos. Part Three serves as an extension of Part Two by emphasizing how to write negative messages and formal proposals. Part Four focuses on report writing, and Part Five elaborates on the art of speaking and listening. Generally speaking, this book deals with conventions of domestic business communication.

*Business Communication* by Dumont and Lannon Like Anderson's *Business Communications*, Sigband and Bateman's *Communicating in Business*, and Walter Well's *Communication in*
Business, this book does not include an international chapter. The book consists of six parts. The first part is focused on the writing process and the fundamentals of business communications. Part Two teaches strategies for writing memos and business letters. Part Three deals with summary writing. Part Four covers proposal and report writing. Part Five concentrates on career-oriented communications. Finally Part Six treats the subjects of listening and oral communication. The emphasis of the book is information technology. For example, in Part Two, the authors advise businesspersons to be direct and forceful in communicating specific information, requests, and critique. A business counterpart or associate from China who is less familiar with this American trait may interpret this directness as brashness and lacking of business etiquette.

Business and Administrative Communication by Kitty Locker  According to the author, this book is comprehensive, covering not only traditional topics in business communication but also topics on the cutting edge of the field, such as international business communication. The topic of international business communication is dealt with in two different sections of this book. This topic is first mentioned briefly in Chapter One of Part One, under the section of "The Technology of Office Communication." The second mention is in Chapter Twenty-three of Part Five, under the title of "Nonverbal Communication."
In Chapter Three, "The Technology of Office Communication," the author discusses producing documents first, then on transmitting the message, and lastly on the technology of international business communication. The topic of international business communication technology takes only a half-page. The author briefly talks about the international business practices in terms of using advanced technology such as telex and fax.

Part Five is on oral and nonverbal communication, and the international topics come in Chapter Twenty-three. This is another place in the textbook where international topics are discussed in conjunction with the traditional business communication concepts. In other words, this chapter is not solely devoted to international topics, but a mixture of traditional and international topics.

Locker begins the chapter by giving an example to illustrate the importance of nonverbal communication in a domestic environment. "A young woman took a new idea into her boss, who sat there and glared at her, brows together in a frown, as she explained her proposal. The stare and lowered brows symbolized anger to her, and she assumed that he was rejecting her idea. Several months later, in casual conversation with another employee she learned that her boss always "frowned" when he was concentrating. The facial expression she had interpreted as anger had not been intended to convey anger at all" (443).

Locker seems to be stressing that in a domestic business environment, misunderstandings in nonverbal communication can cause problems. So it will become an even more complicated matter when
of learning about nonverbal language is to help us to project the image we want to project and become more aware of the signals we are interpreting.

In the next section, Locker discusses nonverbal communication in the context of voice qualities, body language, space, time, and other nonverbal symbols. In a section on voice qualities, Lockers explains that the different pitch, stress, and volume of the voice will communicate different messages. These concepts are discussed in a comparative manner. For example, when explaining gestures as part of body language, she writes "Americans sometimes assume that they can depend on gestures to communicate if language fails." But she says scholars have been searching for quite a long time, and have found no body motion which has the same meaning in all societies. She then gives an extreme example by explaining that in Bulgaria, people nod their heads to signify "no," and shake their heads to say "yes"!

Another feature of carrying discussions on international topics in Locker's book is to cite quotes in the margins of the text. Illustrations of this kind help the reader realize how easily misunderstandings can occur. One such example is given from a Japanese student. "On my way to and from school I have received a smile by non-acquaintance American girls several times. I have finally learned they have no interest for me; it means only a kind of greeting to a foreigner. If someone smiles at a stranger in Japan, especially at a girl, she can assume he is either a sexual maniac or an impolite person" (447).
Business Communication: Theory and Practice by Arther Bell

The international chapter appears in Chapter Twenty-one, and is 14 pages long. The chapter begins with a brief background section on the impact of internationalization on American business. Then the chapter is divided into three sections. First it focuses on cultural differences. After some general description of these differences, the author discusses them in more detail by providing categories of the cultural differences. For example, the differences are narrowed down to categories of greetings, visiting, talks, speeches and public addresses. When cultures differ, the variables in these categories will change from culture to culture. The author advises the students that while reading the categories, they should compare their own culture in each category to another culture with which they are familiar.

Business Communication: Theory and Application by Raymond Lesikar

The author chooses a different approach from the textbook authors we mentioned above to address international business communication. The whole textbook consists of two broad sections. Section One deals mainly with communication theory. Section Two deals with its related applications to business in general. The topic of international business communication comes very briefly in Chapter Eight of Part Two: "Correspondence--The Basic Elements." The topic does not occupy a whole chapter, but takes only a small portion of it, running only a page and a half. In such a limited space, the author manages to discuss briefly the effects of culture and cites examples to illustrate the misunderstandings caused by cultural differences. Then
he gives suggestions to solve the problems. One is to learn the cultures of the people with whom one communicates; and the other suggestion is to write simply and clearly, avoid using slang and cliches, but choose straightforward language.

Discussions

In summarizing the content of the international chapters of the ten business communication textbooks, I can answer part of the first question that I posed earlier in this section: Within the international business communication chapter, what are the topics that are typically covered, and how are they covered?

Generally speaking, typical topics of international business communication fall into three categories: cultural differences, verbal communication variables, and nonverbal communication variables. Cultural differences are strongly influenced by a given culture's political, economic, and educational systems. Other cultural elements that belong to this category include law and regulations, religion, and social norms. Verbal communication barriers such as differences in vocabulary, dialects, idioms, slang, syntax, as well as translation errors cause misunderstandings. Nonverbal communication barriers often refer to differences in concepts of time and space, body language, dress patterns, and decision-making customs.

A similar finding is reported in Jane Gibson's "Teaching International Topics in the Business Communication Courses." In this article, she reports a random survey of 200 American Business Association members on what are the typically covered international
business communication topics. According to her survey, 92% of the respondents indicated that topics frequently covered are cultural variables. Other topics that are also frequently covered indicated nonverbal communication (90% of the respondents) and verbal communication (67% of the respondents).

Now let us consider the second part of the posed question--where the information is placed in the business communication textbooks. The common practice seems to be, at least on the surface, to introduce the above-mentioned topics in one chapter, often separated from all other traditional business communication chapters. Take Murphy and Hildebrandt's textbook, for example. Even though the authors have prepared a fairly comprehensive chapter on international business communication, they still confine the topic to a single chapter. Bovee and Thill dismiss the topic in 13 pages.

These isolated chapters may have some advantages. Varner observes that when the coverage of the international chapter is spelled out in the syllabus, students are assured that international aspects will be covered in class. Also the syllabus will indicate that a certain amount of time is reserved for the discussion of these international topics. Nevertheless, as she later points out in the same article, that covering international business communication topics in one isolated chapter has two major disadvantages.

First of all, an additional unit takes more time. The Association of Business Communication guidelines stipulate that in business communication courses the instructors are advised to teach ethical
aspects of writing, writing with computers, and oral presentations, in addition to the traditional business communication curriculum. There simply is not enough time to add another unit on top of those already required. Secondly, a separate unit isolates material. Students may miss the point that international aspects are an integral part of business communication. International know-how is increasingly necessary to do well in American business. Many students who decide to find employment only in domestic businesses will probably find themselves encountering international situations.

I believe the disadvantages of the isolated international chapter outweigh advantages. Varner points out the need to integrate the international aspects of communication into the overall business communication curriculum. With American business going global at such a rapid rate, international aspects of business communication have become very critical. As a consequence, training in business should be expanded to encompass a strong international orientation. From a curriculum perspective, more weight needs to be placed on international topics in the business communication textbooks. Students need to realize, either from the framework of the textbook, or from its content, that traditional and international business communication practices are intertwined in modern business and are two parts of a whole. To that extent, international business communication skills ARE business communication skills. Hence, to merely include international topics in one isolated chapter in a business communication text is totally inadequate.
The second question posed at the start of this project focuses on the role that international business communication topics play in the basic business communication textbooks.

This question is, in fact, closely related to the first question. Of the ten surveyed textbooks, six of them cover international business communication topics. Clearly, the message conveyed is that international communication is viewed as not really that important. Structurally, most of the international chapters come at or near the end of the book. For instance, Murphy and Hildebrandt place theirs at the end of the book in Chapter Twenty-five, well after all other traditional business communication topics are covered. Another example is the international chapter in Treece's Successful Communication. It is placed in Chapter Nineteen, obviously used as the concluding chapter of the book. This placement could be interpreted in two ways. One interpretation is that the international aspects of business are recent, and the authors have just begun to incorporate them into their text. This isolated treatment of the topic is a first step in this process. Eventually, the topic will be fully integrated into all the other material in the text. The other interpretation is that the international aspects of business communication are only a minor part in the overall business communication process. As such, they deserve only minor treatment. And this lack of emphasis is reflected in the inclusion of the additional chapter which identifies how business communication is to be handled in an international setting.
Other authors such as Bovee and Thill use a different approach. In *Business Communication Today*, they incorporate the international material in one of the four component chapters, which include *International Business Communication, Grammar and Usage Guide with Exercises, Format and Layout of Business Correspondence*, and *Documentation of Report Sources*. These chapters are positioned near the end of the book. According to the authors, the purpose of keeping the chapter in its present place is to "give professors maximum flexibility in designing a course that suits the needs of their students" (Preface VIII).

Here the emphasis is on the flexibility of the component chapters. In other words, the instructors are given much leeway to do whatever they want with the component chapters. My interpretation of this approach is that if the professor has time to cover the international topic, she is encouraged to do so. In situations such as the course being very crowded, she may elect to drop it. Or, as often the case, she does not feel comfortable nor confident in teaching the topic, she may skip the unit, since it is positioned at the end of the book anyway. In other words, the placement of the material at the end of the book indicates that it is dispensable, or that it is tangential to the total curriculum. Obviously, the end-of-book location of the international chapter renders it less important when compared with other business communication topics in the book.

Another way to view the importance of the international aspects of business communication is to count the number of pages in the
international business communication chapter. When weighed against that of the total number of pages in the book, international communication topics make up only a small percentage of the textual materials. In Murphy and Hildebrandt's book, the 29-page international chapter occupies only 3.8 percent of the body material in the text. Treece's chapter counts for 2.7 percent, Bovee and Thill's 1.7 percent, Locker's 2.2 percent, and Lesikar, who has only a page and a half to say on the same topics, devotes less than one percent of the text to the international aspects.

Judging from these factors, it is unmistakably clear that international topics play only a small role in the business communication textbooks. We should admit that the textbook authors have already done much to include international topics in their textbooks. Yet we should also realize that treating these topics in one, and usually an isolated chapter of the business communication textbooks, is far from adequate.
CHAPTER IV
TENTATIVE SOLUTIONS

Obviously, identifying the inadequacies of single, end-of-book position of the international chapter in business communication textbooks is not sufficient. It is only the first step. We need to remedy these inadequacies. For this reason I have devoted the entire fourth chapter of this paper to working out some solutions to this problem.

I have attempted to use my reading of the literature in the field, my understanding of the issue, and personal experiences stemming from my cultural background to help me formulate some practical suggestions. I hope that the content of this section will offer some help to address the problem. I also hope that this section may help to generate further research by other scholars and some insightful ideas towards internationalizing business communication textbooks.

I believe that we must begin with the assumption that the business communication course needs to be internationalized. On this basis, I will offer some strategies on how this task can be accomplished. We need to restructure the framework of the business communication textbooks, extending international business communication topics to more chapters whenever the international concepts are applicable. Some sample units will be described so as to aid better understanding of my framework and suggested teaching practices.
Objectives

To begin with, I think we should internationalize the objectives of the business communication textbooks. This practice can be done through articulating in writing the significance of an international dimension. Usually the most prominent position for an objective to appear is the preface of the textbook, as is done in Murphy and Hildebrandt's *Effective Business Communications*.

This book is designed to develop communication skills needed by those preparing for, or already in, a business or management position. Student-readers learn how to deal with problems common to business people--how to organize effective letters, reports, and speeches in order to communicate successfully in the business and non-business environment (Preface V).

If we take into account the pervasive nature of a globalized world marketplace and its impact on American business, then merely teaching students to organize business letters, reports, and speeches alone would not adequately prepare them to meet the demands of their jobs. There is more to be learned beyond basic written business communication. These topics include cross-cultural sensitivity and communication problems in an international setting. So the above objective in Murphy and Hildebrandt's book appears suitable largely for communication in the domestic setting. We can improve it by adding an extra paragraph on the importance and need for an international dimension of business communication. An example paragraph could read like this:
With American business becoming globalized, international business communication skills become more and more crucial to the effective performance of executives in all business and management positions. To be in tune with rapid globalization of the business environment, this book incorporates international topics in order to help students develop international business communication skills.

Thus, by incorporating an international element into the existing textbook objectives, the textbook author(s) will increase students' appreciation of the significance of international business communication skills. Also, by highlighting the importance of international business communication, a stronger twin emphasis of the textbook on domestic business communication and international business communication will become evident.

The instructor should also include such an international element in the syllabus. As a result, the students will know, right at the outset of the course, what to expect throughout the semester. They will also learn that traditional business communication skills go hand in hand with international business communication skills. Hopefully, they will learn to adopt a more holistic view of business communication—one in which the international elements are highly relevant and needed.

Integrating international elements into the course objectives will not weaken the importance of traditional business communication concepts. On the contrary, this integration will strengthen the course. It is just that we need to take into consideration the international
reality of the American business and to prepare students for the globalization of the business world.

An Integrated Approach

Next, let us discuss specifically what can or should be done towards internationalizing the business communication textbooks. As we mentioned earlier in the literature review section, some attempts have been made to address the importance of international business communication. The faculty at Eastern Michigan University has designed a separate course to meet the need for international business communication. The course is still at the experimental stage. This model, while an attractive one, does not fully address the problem. First, the course is only offered in summer school. Secondly, it counts for one credit hour. I personally think there is a more economical, and more efficient approach.

Offering a separate international communication course raises questions associated with compartmentalizing business communication. To me, the element of international business communication is an integral part of business communication. When we separate the two, which are really complementary to each other, the students will suffer from the failure to see their connectedness. As we have stated in the revised course objectives, we should let the students see the complexity of business communication today in an international and multicultural setting. Since the practice of business is truly internationalized, by taking a course which combines the elements of traditional and international business communication, the students will be exposed to
an excellent demonstration of how business works today. On the other hand, separating what is originally a unifying whole would present a distorted view of the business world.

After much reflection on this issue, I feel that an integrative program would work better to stress both basic and international communication. That is to say, we do not have to design a separate course for the topic of international business communication. Instead, we can reconstruct the existing framework of business communication textbooks by integrating international topics into as many traditional business communication sections as possible. We do not have to worry about addressing the topic at the end of the course. The integration comes naturally, with the topic of international business communication topics interwoven with the traditional business communication concepts. I believe this approach will work because, on one hand, the content for traditional business communication provides a natural foundation for international business communication issues to build upon. On the other, international business communication topics will add a new and fresh dimension to standard business communication concepts.

For example, while talking to students about audience analysis, the instructor can begin with the basic method of presenting this topic. Usually the instructor will start by conducting an audience analysis, asking questions such as who is the audience, are they men or women, are they businesspersons or professionals, are they new or longtime customers, how old are they, what are their educational levels, and
what are their attitudes? In addition, the instructor can introduce the international element into the discussion. The instructor can ask further questions such as if a company wants to market a new product in China, what should they know about their audience? Are they likely to use the product? Will their lifestyle promote the sale of such a product? Is there anything in the Chinese culture that will inhibit the successful marketing of such a product? Questions should also be asked about how to approach an international marketing firm.

The students' interest will have been stimulated by questions the instructors ask about how a communication problem can be addressed in a certain international situation. The students will soon learn that international problems in communication, like domestic ones, require deliberate and thoughtful response, and that their coursework will help them prepare to deal with these issues. In this way, our institutions of higher learning will produce the kind of talented and well-trained executives sensitized to cross-cultural differences that are needed by U.S. businesses. This addition will benefit the business sector and the employees themselves.

Textbook author(s) can also strengthen the textbooks by including some exercises in international business communication in their sections on problems and exercises. To include cross-cultural cases in the exercise section would remind students of the existence of problems in international operations. Through these exercises, students will also learn to solve the problems and will be able to develop international business communication skills. The inclusion of the exercises and
problems should and will inject more fun and excitement into the course. An example would be introducing cultural practices which are acceptable in the U.S. but considered inappropriate in other cultures. For instance, it is inappropriate to address a new acquaintance or a business associate by the first name in China unless the individuals are very close friends. In the U.S., the use of first name signifies familiarity and friendliness, but in China this custom may be interpreted as lacking formality and etiquette.

Since communication is culture specific, it therefore cannot be generalized only through abstract terms such as verbal and nonverbal communications. The textbook should include some concrete information about a specific culture, so students can get in touch with a method of approaching a culture. That is to say, instead of addressing forty different cultures in a book, authors will do better to concentrate on one. A textbook could begin by citing examples from the Chinese culture. There are two reasons for choosing the Chinese culture. First, since much of East Asia (Korea, Japan, and Singapore) shares a common cultural heritage of Confucian influence, understanding some aspects of Chinese culture will help Americans deal with somewhat similar cultures found in many countries in that part of the world. Supplementary articles and books on Chinese culture will be recommended later in this section.

Second, the majority in the United States are of European stock and are, therefore, largely unfamiliar with Asian cultures. Vast differences exist between the East and the West in the way the people
think, the value systems they embrace and behaviors they use in business. Highlighting some of these differences will help to sensitize American students to the potential problems and help bridge the gap.

Of course, the reason for using examples from Chinese culture stems from my personal cultural background and experiences. I feel bringing my personal cultural background as a resource to this study will allow me to illustrate more effectively cross-cultural issues that I am intimately familiar with.

For the scope of this paper, it is impractical to even attempt to work on internationalizing any one of the reviewed textbooks. What I will do instead is to focus on only portions of a certain textbook. For this purpose, I have chosen to examine two sections from Murphy and Hildebrandt's *Effective Business Communications* (namely communication process and audience analysis/you-attitude). This choice does not mean, however, that the rest of the topics in the textbook are not readily expanded to include international topics.

**Communication Process**

I believe one effective method to introduce international topics into standard business communication concepts is to use cases to guide the discussion. In the following example, the use of cases will serve as a transitional paragraph to enable a standard business communication topic to be linked with a related international topic. In the section, Murphy and Hildebrandt first give a definition of the process, which involves five elements, including sender, message, medium, receiver, and feedback. Then they provide an in-depth
discussion on how these elements work together in the process of communication.

Communication is a process of transmitting and receiving verbal and nonverbal messages to produce a response. The communication is considered effective when it achieves the desired reaction or response from the receiver. Simply stated, communication is a two-way process of exchanging ideas or information between human beings (14).

For the convenience of reference, I have labelled this paragraph as Paragraph A. Immediately following Paragraph A, they go on:

In actual practice, however, the communication process is not simple. It involves more than sender--message--receiver. Sometimes it is quite complex and imperfect, and malfunctions can occur easily and may result in miscommunications (14).

Again for the same purpose of reference, I called this paragraph Paragraph B. Soon after Paragraph B, they give a thorough discussion on the process of business communication with a focus on the domestic business practices. I name this part as Section C.

In order to incorporate the international element into the original text materials, I would rearrange the paragraph order by putting Section C after Paragraph A, then place Paragraph B at the end of the Section C, since Paragraph B can serve as an excellent transition paragraph to introduce international communication topics. In other words, I would like to expand on their Paragraph B.
I believe Varner's scenario will serve our purpose if we change one of the businessperson's nationalities from Japanese to Chinese. It will read like this: "John Smith, an American businessman, and Bao Gui Yang, a Chinese businessman, are negotiating a business deal. Since Mr. Smith and Mr. Yang speak only their mother tongues, without an interpreter, they simply cannot communicate. To Mr. Yang, the message sent by Mr. Smith in English will stand only for noise that is incomprehensible. The same is true for Mr. Smith when Mr. Yang attempts to communicate." Students should be able to recognize that the barrier between the sender and the receiver is a language one.

So in this case they need an interpreter. But the use of an interpreter will complicate the communication process. Mr. Smith as a sender has to convey the message first to the interpreter, who decodes it in English, encodes it in Chinese, and then sends it to Mr. Yang, the receiver. Once Mr. Yang gets the message, he has to decode it in Chinese in order to understand it. When he wants to send back a response, he will have to go through the same route for his message to make sense at all to Mr. Smith.

In the process of international business communication, the role of the interpreter is very important. She or he has to be very fluent and knowledgeable in both languages and has to have much familiarity with both cultures. If she or he misinterprets the messages, the result is miscommunication. Other possibilities of miscommunication are found in written translation errors, and examples are abundant. The
following two examples are presented in Judy West's article "International Business Communication Opportunities: A Key to Success."

1. When Coca-Cola introduced the cola in China, the Chinese characters used in the translations, when pronounced, sounded like the product name. The characters were placed on the cola bottles and the drink was marketed. The cause for low sales was found when research results revealed that the characters used translated to mean "bite the wax tadpole."

2. General Motors was troubled by the lack of enthusiasm among the Puerto Rican auto dealers for its recently introduced Chevrolet "Nova". The name "Nova" meant "Star" when literally translated. However, when spoken, it sounded like "No va", which, in Spanish, means "it doesn't go" (227).

By using examples, the textbook author(s) should be able to indicate to the students that in real-world situations, the communication process is a complicated one. This case is especially true in an international setting, when people are trying to communicate through more than one language. But verbal communication is only one factor in international business communication. The author(s) can now turn the students' attention to another factor that influences the communication process: cultural differences. Owing to the different cultural backgrounds of the two businessmen, Mr. Smith and Mr. Yang, their negotiation styles will also be different. Mr. Smith is a goal-oriented and efficient American manager, anxious to make a business deal, while
Mr. Yang insists on the priority of establishing a personal friendship before any business agreements can be reached.

After bringing out the fact that cultural differences will also affect the process of communication, the author(s) can end the section by listing some questions for the students to think about. One of these questions could be something like this: "If you were Mr. Smith, how would you solve this problem?"

After the students are guided into an international communication context, the textbook author(s) can assign a set of supplementary reading material for outside class reading. It will be helpful to develop a list of related reading materials on the topic of language and cultural differences. For example, one of these short article can provide some background knowledge of the contrasting features of the Chinese and American cultures. While American culture values efficiency, seeing time as money, and efficiency as life, the Chinese culture places a high value on lasting business relationships. People develop trusting and loyal relationships with the business partners through a longer period of time. For the Chinese, friendship is intended to provide the basic framework within which agreements can be reached.

The students should be assigned to read some or all of the articles and come back to class with a better understanding of the complexity of the process of business communications and the impact of culture on business communication in general. Teachers who are not familiar with cross-cultural issues will similarly benefit from exposure to this reading material. The textbook author(s) can even give extra examples to check
if the students have fully understood the reading materials. The following is an example that one can use, taken from the diary excerpt of the captain of the U.S. ping-pong team during his visit to the People's Republic of China in 1971.

I seem to have some kind of a communication gap with many of the Chinese I met. I had a number of talks, for example, with our interpreter, but we sometimes had difficulty getting through to each other. He spoke excellent English, and I used very simple words, but he often apologized and said I should get a better interpreter because "I just can't understand what you are saying." I used words like "individual" and "unique". They are words he knows. But he couldn't relate to the idea of doing what you want to do (Managing Cultural Differences 58).

The students can be asked to point out, from the above example, the underlying assumption the captain made with regard to the Chinese interpreter. And what is the difference in basic values in Chinese and American cultures that causes the miscommunication? The assumption made here by the captain is that, like a Westerner, the Chinese interpreter understands and values the idea of individuality. But in reality, individualism, as known and practiced in the United States, is not well understood or valued by the people of China (Managing Cultural Differences 58).

As we can see from this unit, international topics such as verbal communication as in the case of Mr. Smith and Mr. Yang, are introduced as possible language barriers, and cultural variables. Further, the
Further, the example of the frustrations of the U.S. ping pong team's captain with his Chinese interpreter has been blended naturally into the traditional business communication context. More importantly, the scenario and the additional reading material will plant the seeds of cultural awareness and sensitivity in the minds of the students.

**Audience Analysis**

Having discussed the possible incorporation of the international topics into the unit of the communication process in business communication textbooks, let us now turn our attention to a key business communication principle audience analysis, and see how this topic too, can be expanded into an international context.

Most of the business communication textbooks place the "you-attitude" as the center of audience analysis. Lesikar in his *Business Communication: Theory and Practice* defines "you-attitude" as an approach that involves seeing situations from the readers' standpoint. As a result, communicators should choose words and strategies which will bring about a favorable response in the readers' minds. You-attitude often involves using second-person pronouns, because the words *you* and *your* clearly call attention to the readers and their interests (117).

Lesikar further stresses that the use of "you-attitude" involves placing the readers in the center of things--talking to them about them. Sometimes it may involve just being friendly and treating people the way they like to be treated. And at times it may involve skillfully handling people with carefully chosen words in order to get a desired
reaction from them (117-8). Quite interestingly, in Chinese business letters, it is common to address the group instead of a single person. For example, the business letter should be addressed to a certain department as a group instead of to a certain member of the staff in that department.

To Murphy and Hildebrandt, audience analysis is a technique to be used to "visualize your reader with their desires, problems, circumstances, emotions and probable reactions to your request." Chapter Three and Four of Murphy and Hildebrandt's *Effective Business Communications* are devoted to the concept of audience analysis as a key business communication principle. They introduce these chapters with these words:

To compose effective messages you need to apply certain specific communications principles. They tie in closely with the basic concepts of the communication process and are important for both written and oral communications. They provide guidelines for choice of content and style of presentation--adapted the purpose and receiver of your message. Called the 'seven C's', they are completeness, conciseness, consideration, concreteness, clarity, courtesy, correctness (36).

Next, the authors give in-depth discussion for the seven concepts with concrete examples. For example, in Chapter Four, when explaining the concept of clarity, they advise business communicators to use short, familiar, conversational words instead of Latin terms, so the reader can quickly understand the message being transmitted. They also remind
the business communicator to use synonyms instead of Latin terms, and they provide a list of specific words to be used. For example, use "about" instead of "circa", "error" instead of "inadvertency", "home" instead of "domicile", and "pay" instead of "remuneration." They next suggest not to use technical and business jargon. "If you must use those words, define them briefly and clearly. If you don't, you will confuse, embarrass, or irritate the reader, and perhaps be forced to explain later" (62). For example, when a technical document is written with the above Latinate vocabulary, and is presented to the Chinese readers, it is highly plausible that misunderstandings will arise. The reason is that English is a second language to most of the Chinese readers. Thus when excessive Latinate words are used, the communication problems will compound.

Generally speaking, the content of Chapters Three and Four can be readily used as context materials to incorporate international topics. Let us take the section of clarity in Chapter Four for example. At the end of this section, the author(s) can guide the students into an international context by saying something like this: "While writing memos, reports, and business letters, you should keep your audience in mind. You should be even more careful when your audience is foreign nationals. For example, if you are writing an instructional manual for an international audience, you should pay special attention to your structure and choice of vocabulary. Be sure to use straightforward, standard English, and avoid using American slang and colloquial expressions. The idea is to present the instructions in an easy-to-
understand language so as to avoid unnecessary confusion and misunderstandings.

When she is dealing with an international audience, it is not enough for the communicator to write in clear and easy-to-understand language. She should also be familiar with the cultural background of a given audience. The textbook author(s) can also give a list of outside class readings, as could be done in the previous example on the business communication process. Again, the topic of studying the cultural background can also be initiated within the framework of the textbook. Giving a concrete example is always a good way to start. The following example from Graeme Browning's book entitled *If Everyone Bought One Shoe* would be an interesting one.

China has a population of more than one billion people. Western businesses look at those raw numbers and begin to dream wild dreams. *Imagine selling a billion bottles of aspirin, a billion cans of deodorant, a billion boxes of detergent!* Wags have taken this argument to extreme: *Two billion feet? Think how much money we'd make if everyone bought one shoe!* (7)

This example demonstrates to the students the consequences of the absence of audience analysis, especially the lack of background knowledge of the Chinese culture. What is missing is the lack of appreciation concerning culturally based product-use or preferences related to self-medication and body odor treatment. For example, the Chinese are less preoccupied with social rejection stemming from personal hygiene practices and body odors. One of the advantages of
reading these articles and books is that students can read them with a specific problem in mind. When they have completed the reading assignments, they can return to the class, bringing with them the cultural insights that they acquired, and discuss the given issues in an intelligent and educated manner.

**Supplementary Readings**

Supplementary materials should include some in-depth analysis of the cultural background of the audience. Generally speaking, these articles should provide a guide to students with some information on what people in other cultures think, how they feel, what they want, and what they need. Judy F. West notes that American communicators should strive to achieve awareness of values and behavior patterns of other cultures. In order to compete effectively in international business, Americans need to recognize that persons of other nations think, behave, and relate differently to colleagues—in short, do business differently (228).

I recommend that the following be included in the supplementary reading list for both teachers and students when focusing on Chinese culture. Yao Wei, a member of the ministry of Foreign Affairs of China, has written an article "The Importance of Being KEQI: A Note on Communication Difficulties." The article appeared in the book *Communicating with China*, edited by Robert A. Kapp, and published in 1983 by Intercultural Press, Inc., The Asia Society, Inc. Yao's article discusses a key Chinese concept of KEQI, which frequently causes
misunderstandings between Chinese and their foreign counterparts when conducting business transactions.

In this article, Yao explains that in Chinese, "Ke" means "guest", and "qi" means "behavior". But when the two words are put together as a compound, the resulting word means more than the "behavior of the guest". It also means to be polite, humble, courteous, modest, and well mannered. The cultural clashes of the misunderstanding of being KEQI is illustrated in Yao's interesting example.

If a first-rate Chinese carpenter went to a furniture company to find a job, the interview dialogue would probably be something like this:

Employer: Have you done carpentry work before?
Carpenter: I don't dare to say that I have. I have just been in a very modest way involved in the carpenter trade.
Employer: What are you skilled in then?
Carpenter: I won't say "skilled." I have only a little experience in making tables (although he may have been making all kinds of tables for the past twenty-five years).
Employer: Can you make something now and show us how good you are?
Carpenter: How dare I be so indiscreet as to demonstrate my crude skills in front of a master of the trade like you?

By this time the employer might just be fed up and say "I'm sorry but we don't take novices" and show him the door. But, if the employer is more subtle and persistent, the carpenter would probably
respond: "If you really insist, I'll try to make a table. Please don't laugh at my crude work." With that he commences to work on a table, saying a few more times "Please don't laugh at my crude work..." and gives the final touches to a perhaps beautiful piece of art in the shape of a table.

Realizing the cultural differences in terms of KEQI is important. In business negotiations, the Chinese like to begin with some pleasantries—serving everyone a cup of tea, having a friendly chat, and waiting for the right moment to get down to business. To the Chinese, the personal relationship is more important than business. The Chinese even have a saying for this: prepare for a rainy day by having people, not money in the bank. American negotiators, on the other hand, like to jump right into the subject and make a business deal as soon as possible, because of the orientation that "time is money, efficiency is life." Reading the Yao's article will certainly help to better understand the notion and to open a line of communication with the Chinese.

Another helpful book entitled *Chinese Etiquette and Ethics in Business* by Boye De Mente, should be added to the reading list. De Mente's book can serve as a guide to understanding the Chinese cultural background and business etiquette. With his rich experiences and scholarship in Asian affairs, he reveals historical factors and individual qualities that have influenced and shaped the way the Chinese do business today and quite likely the direction they will take in the future.
Apart from providing a reading list for the students, another way of familiarizing oneself to a given culture is to use the *Culturgram*. The David Kennedy Center at Brigham Young University has prepared *Culturgrams* of 90 countries. In each *Culturgram*, the map of the given country is presented, and information on that culture is categorized in four sections: customs and courtesies, the people, lifestyle, and the nation. For example, the *Culturgram* for Finland tells us that it is customary to shake hands with men and women when introduced. People may sometimes use both hands, but further physical contact is usually avoided.

If one needs to check information on the language, the following is included in the *Culturgram* for quick references. "Over 95% of the population speak Finnish, a member of the Finno-Ugrian language family. Swedish, although spoken by only about 7% of the people, is also an official language. There are also small minorities that speak lappish or Russian. English is widely spoken as a second language, especially among the young and well educated" (221).

The significance of these *Culturgrams* is that they provide a shortcut and quick aid for cultural studies. Students can use them as quick references to explore different cultures. To include them as supplementary material for the business communication textbooks will serve as a good alternative to other reading materials.
CHAPTER V
CONCLUSIONS

In this paper, I set out to examine the level of coverage for international business communication topics in business communication textbooks. This task was undertaken through a survey of ten frequently used business communication textbooks that have been adopted for the business communication course at Iowa State University in the past five years.

What I have learned from this survey is that the level of coverage is often limited—only six out of ten textbooks provide a chapter on international business communication. Among those with international business communication coverage, the major weakness is that coverage is limited to only a single chapter, and usually is confined to the end of the book.

Having identified the inadequate treatment of international business communication topics, I then proposed to broaden the coverage of international business communication by internationalizing the framework of business communication textbooks. The following steps were recommended. First of all, the objectives of the business communication textbook need to be internationalized. Secondly, the content of the text should reflect an integrative approach, which combines the traditional business communication topics with an international perspective. Thirdly, supplementary material illustrative of international situations should be included in the text.
These recommendations should serve as a basis for further research and thought in internationalizing the business communication textbooks. Perhaps a specialized text on international business communication should be considered for advanced students in the field.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my major professor, Dr. Carol David, and my thesis committee members, Dr. John Wong and Dr. Nancy Blyler, for all their time and guidance, without whose help the completion of this thesis would not have been possible. I also wish to express my gratitude to Dr. Carol David and Dr. John Wong for the use of their personal library resources and related materials.
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