Chapter 6
Use of New Media in Intercultural Communication Classes:
"I Have to Text My Classmate in China!"

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ABSTRACT

Since the term intercultural communication was first used by Edward T. Hall in 1959, more than half a century has passed, and the context of intercultural communication has gone through dramatic changes. With the advent of the internet and the digital media technologies, instructors can offer students computer-mediated intercultural communication using a variety of new media such as video-conferencing and instant messaging. Drawing from contact theory, learning cycle theory, and new media theory, the authors examine the use of computer-mediated intercultural communication, report various ways that new media are used in classrooms based on an online survey, discuss its benefit and limitations, and review a best practice example, a case of "Global Understanding Course" coordinated by East Carolina University and Global Partners in Education. The authors believe that integrating the use of new media in intercultural communication education helps prepare students for the global society.

INTRODUCTION

Since the term "intercultural communication" was first used by Edward T. Hall in 1959 (Rogers, Hart, & Miike, 2002), more than half a century has passed, and the context of intercultural communication has gone through dramatic changes. Development of transportation systems and decreased airfares have made international tourism much more affordable for many people. In 2012, one billion tourists traveled the world (UNWTO, 2012), impacting local cultures on remote corners of the world. Nearly 13% of the U.S. population was foreign-born in 2014 when it was only 5.4% in 1960 (Brown & Stepler, 2016). Due to economic globalism, the world is becoming more and more interconnected with the increased flow of goods and services. Advancements in information technology (IT) make it common to communicate with colleagues and business partners working around the globe via email, text messaging, video conferencing, and social media.

BACKGROUND

Intercultural communication competence, the ability to communicate effectively with people who have different cultures, is now embraced not only in the field of international business and international diplomacy, but it is also needed in personal and professional lives in the domestic context. The negative impact of increased intercultural exchanges harbors new concerns in various settings. In Palau, local residents are not happy with a sudden influx of international tourists who affect the local environment (South China Morning Post, 2015). Images of beach volleyball athletes wearing different types of bathing suits raised the eyebrows of many spectators at the Rio Olympic Games in Brazil (BBC News, 2016). Hate crimes frequently occur when intolerant perpetrators attack victims who belong to different cultural groups (BBC News, 2017). Increased contacts between individuals with diverging cultures could be a great resource for human prosperity, but this wonderful opportunity also harbors the unexpected negative consequences due to misunderstanding, power struggles, and heightened protectionism and ethnocentrism. Cultures that have had little contact with each other are now coming into contact, creating a clash of cultures. It raises the question of how educators can help today's young people to become more interculturally competent.

Increasing intercultural contacts via new media have the potential to improve education in intercultural communication for a larger number of students. In addition to intercultural courses, intercultural training, and study abroad programs, educators now can provide computer-mediated intercultural contacts using a variety of new media, such as video conferencing and instant messages. Since Internet-based

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