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A POSTMODERN INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS COMMUNICATION MODEL IN THREE-DIMENSIONS

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ABSTRACT:
Representational models of communication behavior have been created in the United States to describe specific communication problems since the early 1940’s when communication science was recognized as a separate social science. The three-dimensional model presented here describes the intricacies of 21st century international business communication. Its creation rests on three requirements demanded by current communication speed and technical communication capabilities. First, the model treats culture as a characteristic of communicators. Second, it discusses the dynamism or changes in communicators and the message itself. Third, it also describes the education of international communicators as they recontextualize their cultures to match each other. It also describes and depicts a taxonomy: a structure that holds in its boundaries the new information and practices that undergird cultural maturity. The model serves as a practical tool to increase communication research and to encourage discussions about the nature of international business communication

KEYWORDS:
international, intercultural, business, communication, model, representational
INTRODUCTION

What would Aristotle think about Twitter? Is *The Republic* the ultimate blog? Discussions of communication and their resulting purposeful models across Aristotle’s time and into the 21st century incorporate an understanding of a sender of a message, a message, and a receiver of a message. Today’s world made new by technology, however, demands new images of communication, “The traditional tripartite model of communication...has proven to be far too simplistic and needs to be replaced by a far more sophisticated understanding” (Thompson, 2005, p. 1). The relationship of the *originator* and *translator*—terms more suited to post-modern understandings of communication participants—and the intervening message have become the topic of much theorizing, particularly as technology advances offer substantive changes in the medium of message transmission and as originators and translators behave in a global environment that disrupts their pre-conceived notions of one another.

This article describes an image of international business communication that incorporates three post-modern understandings of international originators and translators of messages: culture, dynamism, and denotation/connotation recontextualizing.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Aristotle, in discussing rhetoric, identified three rhetorical forces or appeals that helped explain how to understand others and get work done in a civic setting. These elements are usually drawn as the three corners of an equilateral triangle and labeled *ethos*, *pathos*, and *logos*. This tripartite model of communication may also be viewed as a simple transmission model reading left to right: “author” or ethos, “message” or logos, and “audience” pathos.

Aristotle’s work dominated communication modeling until the late 1940’s when Lasswell’s work (1948) added the concept of *channel* to the discussions of communication models. The Shannon and Weaver model (1949) followed immediately when these two Bell Laboratory engineers worked to devise a communication system as close to 100% effective as possible. The “noise” in the system that reduced effectiveness introduced the concept of *barrier* to modeling. Their linear, mathematical model viewed semantics as irrelevant.

In the 1960’s various sawtooth models (see Ruben 2007) changed the emphasis in representational communication models to highlight the communication process itself, its dynamics. Dance (1967) proposed a helical-spiral model; a circular model was proposed by Thayer (1968) who defended a translation model of communication; and a sawtooth model was advanced by Watzlawick, Beavin, and Jackson (1967) whose model was based on the concept that one cannot not communicate. These models began to acknowledge the evolving nature of a message and to imply the importance of the relationship between the two communicators.

The Rileys’ (1951) model, an interactional model like the sawtooth models, was one of the first to include culture as part of the representational model by embedding the originator and translator in integrated social structures and processes. Originators send messages as members of a primary group, and translators receive messages as members of a primary group. Shramm (1971) further developed the idea of
culture in communication in a model drawn with overlapping circles that he labeled *fields of experience* (Fig. 1). The concepts of encoding, decoding, and feedback are implicit in this model.

![Fig. 1: Shramm's Field of Experience Model (1971)](image)

**FIG. 1: SHRMM'S FIELD OF EXPERIENCE MODEL (1971)**

The study of semiotics resulted in the complex Berlo model being drawn to explain three understandings: meanings are in people; meanings are not in messages; no two people can have the exact same meaning for anything (1960). Further, the Gillard and Johansen (2004) model implied a loose connection between the message and the medium: the message and medium are constructed during the communicating process. Most important, their double-cloud model required re-defining data. Data is knowledge only when it is translated and transmitted as interpreted information. Even more contemporary, 2008, Bednar and Welch’s (2008) informatics model (Fig. 2) took the hermeneutic dialect perspective that “meaning is created by those individuals who are seeking to orient or be oriented within a particular context to which a message may be relevant” (pp. 101-102).

![Fig. 2: Bednar and Welch’s Infological Equation Model (2008)](image)
The majority of current undergraduate communication texts teach with representational models, often variations on circular or linear transmission models; and they discuss culture using the words *culture*, *context*, *larger context*, *frames of reference*, or *inferences* (Rentz, Flatley, Lentz, 2011; Guffey, 2008; Ober, 2008; Locker, 2006; Lehman, DuFrene, 2005). Graduate texts often employ a more sophisticated visual model such as Hynes’s complete strategic model (2008), or Barrett’s (2011) update of the Aristotelian model. Clampitt (2005) used the Shannon-Weaver model, and Penrose, Rasberry, and Myers (1997) used drawings to represent concepts such as the dimensions of diversity.

Some international business communication texts also offer representational models that include theories of culture in them: dimensions of culture (Chaney & Martin, 2000), universalism vs. particularism (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 1997), scales on fixed truth and relative truth (Carté & Fox, 2004), and context/culture (Tuleja, 2009). Guirdham (1999) discussed several communication theories to develop her communication accommodation theory (CAT) that includes “the impact of the situation, the interactors’ initial orientations, the psychological/sociological states of speakers, the addressees’ focus, and the evaluation that interlocutors take away from the encounter (p. 215) (see also Kim, 1989). This model is important to a discussion of an international business communication model because of its dynamic nature: communicators are in a constant state of flux adjusting to each other’s communication characteristics whether they are personal or cultural.

The models that most clearly address the dynamism of global business communication are the Varner and Beamer (1995) models that discuss *schemata* or mental categories. Their first model (Fig. 3) shows messages transmitted between two communicators who must filter the messages through their own 

![EXHIBIT 3-3 Communicators Send and Receive Messages through Schemata](image)

understandings of the other’s culture.

**FIG. 3: VARNER AND BEAMER SCHEMATA MODEL (1995)**
Their second model, the more dynamic model (Fig. 4), displays the process as a result of induction or the accommodation of new data by alteration of the schemata: “The more you understand about another culture, the better your communication will be” (p. 22). This statement implies that a thoughtful originator is forced into introspection simply because of the comparison and contrast with another culture.

Jameson furthered the requirement of self-knowledge that is required to develop competency in her 2007 model. She placed an emphasis on cultural self-knowledge by posing answers to identity: vocation, class, geography, philosophy, language, biological traits with cultural aspects, and other. Her purpose was to provide “increased emphasis on the individual perspective and a reconception of cultural identity…. (p. 231). Her non-representational model seems particularly important in cyberspace where an increased awareness of self and one’s culture is required in order to avoid losing both. Palomba (2006) pointed out the importance of self-knowledge when one communicates internationally, “Rather than assuming that people need to adapt to other cultures by gaining knowledge of ‘the other,’ negotiating reality involves reflecting first on the impact of one’s own cultural underpinnings” (p. 3).

DEFINING/EXPLAINING THE MODEL: CULTURES

The first element in building a representational international communication model is examining the concept of culture to position it logically on the model. Many business communication texts define culture
similarly as a complex system of values, traits, morals, and customs shared by a society. This definition reflects the influence of Franz Boas who is credited with bringing the term culture into U.S. anthropology. The definition explains culture as learned behavior. The Boas’ (1907) definition, however, is problematic in two ways. First, it assumes the members of society arrive as a tabula rasa ready to be taught the complex systems of their own cultures. Second, it assumes that the instructive societies are static units with cohesive, instructive centers.

Modern psychological thought and research, particularly as it acknowledges the biological basis for much behavior and response to the external world provides the counterargument to Boas-influenced definitions (anthropological) of culture. Humans are born with differences in brains—not only genetic differences, but also differences in physiology, response time, and sensory differences. These differences affect the way people perceive the world and the way they learn about it; the differences affect individuals’ understanding of their world and culture. These personal characteristics are unlike any other individual’s, and they provide a cultural base, apriori knowledge present at birth about the world. This can be termed personal culture.

In a broader sense of personal culture, Jameson’s (2007) model refocused the concept of culture on the “sense of self derived from formal or informal memberships in groups that impart knowledge, beliefs, values, attitudes, traditions, and ways of life” (p. 200). Her emphasis on studying the self challenged the many international business communication texts and popular press publications that study culture as the natural outgrowth of discussions about the audience that begin with Aristotle. Kim (2002) also discussed cultural identity among the uprooted and identified it as a sense of self that comes from the same formal or informal membership discussed by Jameson. This emphasis on self-knowledge can also be defined as personal culture.

The concept of national culture is the concept invoked most often when discussants say the word culture when talking about international or intercultural culture. Post-modern criticism, however, blurs the traditional definition of culture that assumes a certain static nature or a cohesive center to a group of individuals. The post-modern suspicion of rationality is easily leveled at Hofstede (2001) who identified five dimensions of national culture. Lovitt (1999) viewed cultural analysis in this style as “too blunt an instrument to guide communicators’ context sensitive decisions and too focused on audience analysis to address the complexities of communicating in global workplaces” (p. 3). Hofstede’s five group characteristics—power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism vs. collectivism, masculinity vs. femininity, and long-term vs. short-term orientation—however, have served as a valuable basis for discussion on international communication since the publication of Culture’s Consequences: International Differences in Work-Related Values (1981).

Semiotics offers a post-modern analysis to approach the concept of national culture that is more encompassing than Hofstede’s. Semiotics, as found in culture studies with its encoding/decoding schema, “is transparently a variant of the transmission view of communication” (Sless, 1991, p. 3). The likenesses of signs or concepts—vs. the capability of words—in relationship to national culture helps explain how we see ourselves and members of other cultures as displaying some uniformity. Groups of people formed into a nation tend to develop similar characteristics sometimes based on their geography, their relationship to their food supply, their weather, and other outside influences. The similarities evolve into recognizable tendencies or signs that we use to explain ourselves to others. This understanding of a similarity in signs allows the concept of national culture to be embodied in an international business communication model.
The third cultural element that differentiates an international business model from other communication models is organizational culture, or in this case, business culture. This element develops differently in different cultures and at different speeds simply because businesses experience the need to communicate internationally at different times. Victor (1992) helped base the concept of international business culture in his LESCANT model when he listed the aspects of culture that affect communication in a business setting. The desire to communicate internationally, labeled the motivator by Mattock (2003) pushes a company to communicate regardless of the nature of the person who is the contact, the hierarchy in which the person operates, or the language or the culture of this contact. For example, Emmons (2005), quoting Deshpandé in the Harvard Business School Bulletin, discussed local context as a motivator integral to the global big picture:

If an innovative entrepreneurial culture benefits customers wherever they are in the world, it’s important to realize everyone can be innovative in very different ways in Brazil, or Japan, or India, or the United States…In my view, globalization is not forcing a U.S. model across the world (p. 3).

What globalization is creating is a successful business-practice model. Emmons added that corporate culture trumps national culture and that the best international companies exhibit similarities in certain standards and practices. Quoting the Dean of the Harvard Business School, Krishna Palepu, Emmons (2005) noted that the benchmarks for corporations who aspire to operate globally are sound corporate governance, transparency, an orientation to quality, and a performance-driven, high-standards organizational culture (p. 2).

When a message originator prompted by a motivator chooses to communicate internationally, even if that is across internal diversity borders within an organization, the personal culture, the national culture, and the organization culture flow together to create the originator’s cultural identity (see Locker, 2004).

DEFINING/EXPLAINING THE MODEL: DYNAMISM

After defining the originator of a message as being the total of his or her personal, national, and organizational culture, the second element required to model an international communication representationally is dynamism. The experience of international communication changes the originator’s experience of the event, the translator’s experience of the event, and the nature of the communication itself. The originator who experiences a feedback unrelated to the message he or she sent knows simply, “I botched that.” That moment is best described by using semiotic terminology. Was the problem the sign (in this case, the message itself); was the problem the referent (what the message stood for); or was the problem the users (the originator and the translator)? In locating the problem, user educate themselves about creating a message by manipulating the referent until the sign seems to become clearer. The education changes the nature of the users. Users must engineer both their own cultural influences and their
signs, learning by experimentation until the originator is capable of being understood by the other user, the translator. In one example, a U.S. academic writer e-mailed an Indian editor and asked directly (a U.S. business culture characteristic) if an article had been published. The editor, who had already congratulated the writer on the article but had not used the word accepted, was confused. The sign seemed clear to the U.S. originator who had used politeness beyond U.S. business communication practice, but its referent was totally confusing to the translator. The dialogue that resulted educated both the originator and the translator, resulting in the sign and its referent coalescing.

The commonality of this experience is the result of electronic communication and communication technology. International letter-writing has long thwarted business writers, and translators have puzzled over signs and referents with the hope of a correct interpretation. Because immediacy dominates (immediacy governed by time zones), these signs and referents now undergo manipulation and meaning-making at a rapid speed. A representational model of contemporary international business communication, therefore, must acknowledge the changes that appear as users attempt to make meaning. Varner and Beamer’s work with schemata (2004), the perception of another’s culture moving closer and closer to the actuality of the other culture, is an example of displaying dynamism in an international model.

DEFINING/EXPLAINING THE MODEL: DENOTATION AND CONNOTATION

The international communication education growth in originator and translator is termed dynamism in this article, but the specific education is the work of locating a message in an appropriate place along the denotation/connotation spectrum. Even the most heartfelt attempts to generate messages that are genuine and neutral can result in originators and translators becoming trapped in processes of misinforming (Bednar and Welch, 2008). If we attempt to assume that either originator or translator can actually create a message without some type of bias, we must also assume that a message can exist independent of human interpretation. The bias in messaging exists because of limitations in the human mind in dealing with tacit knowledge (see Maqsood, Finegan, and Walker, 2004). Humans have a limited capacity to store, retrieve, and process information. While originators and translators like to assume they are using denotative (naming) functions in messaging, they are also and most often using connotative (associating) functions.

In the case of attempting to send and receive international messages, the education may be termed the re-contextualizing style of education. The originator is embedded in certain political, economic, technological, social, environmental, and structural contexts—the sum of personal, national, and organizational cultures. This context, appropriate for organizational or national communication, is a connotative context that must undergo introspection by the originator in order for her or for him to adjust to the new context of international messaging. As Maqsood, Finegan, and Walker (2004) note, “Sometimes recontextualization alters the knowledge to such an extent that it represents new knowledge” (p. 299). Acknowledging the connotative power of language within a context and the need to recontextualize or adjust connotations in the messages defines the educational content of communicating internationally. As Bednar and Welch (2004) explained in their model of communication:
Data [denotation] does not contain information. Information is produced by an interpreter making sense of data using his/her personal pre-knowledge (including know what, know that, and know how) (p. 91).

CREATING AN INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS COMMUNICATION MODEL

A new international business communication model that allows us to visualize international or intercultural communication begins with analyzing the world of the originator and translator. Because an originator is influenced by three cultural forces, we can place the influences at the corners of a triangle (Fig. 5), and assume they flow together, more or less, as an originator’s or translator’s life propels him or her toward one of the cultural forces. The triangle is the originator’s or translator’s cultural world.

FIG 5: CULTURAL INFLUENCES DEFINING ORIGINATORS’ AND TRANSLATORS’ CULTURAL CONTEXT

If we indicate the self or persona of the originator or translator in the center of the triangular world by placing a dot in the triangle, we are saying that all three forces are acting somewhat equally on the
communicator’s persona. This central location is traversed by the self as people in business attempt to balance and accommodate what their internal voice says to them, what their nationality says to them, and what the business of earning a living says to them. In an international business communication, the beginning originator’s self is located near the national/personal side of the triangle (Fig. 6) on a line parallel to the national/personal side. For example, the beginning originator, a college graduate at the first big job or a manager who is told to prepare to review a new corporate acquisition in another country, carries more characteristics of national and personal identity than business identity.

FIG.6: THE SELF IN THE BEGINNING INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS COMMUNICATORS’ CULTURAL TRIANGLE

We see the relationship of the originator’s self to the translator’s self by placing a translator in his or her own cultural triangle in a similar location, between the personal and national points, and placing the originators and translator’s triangles side-by-side. (See Fig. 3). At the same time, the direction of the three triangular points tells us something about both their business maturity and their country’s economic/social/business culture. If an originator is from a country with economic conditions, social conditions, or business conditions that do not encourage international communication, that person’s business culture in relationship to the world is pointed away from the potential translator. Also, originators from countries with economic conditions unfriendly to trade and communication, whether from poor government, lack of resources, or protectionist or restrictive business practices, would be turned with their national cultural point toward the world. When international business originators attempt an early communication into a country that is still more nationalistic than internationalistic, their message must pass through all the elements of both communicators’ national cultures in an attempt to make contact; and the intended translator may or may not receive the message as intended (Fig. 3). The distance on the illustration between a translator and originator in this situation is the longest possible distance between two personae. It can correctly be called distance decay, a spatial modeling term that says that the strength of relationships between locations decreases as the separation increases (deSmith, Goodchild, & Longley, 2009, p.205). The difficulties in this distance may be caused by a person’s schemata; or perhaps an e-mail appears to be spam to the translator; or perhaps a letter is simply addressed in a manner that the receiving post office cannot deliver it. Perhaps the originator has used the word “We” in a message to a company in a country where formality between strangers mandates that the informality of “We” is just too inappropriate to be viewed as anything other than rude. Perhaps the originator is sending an inquiry for facts to a country where establishing the person-to-person relationship precedes any discussion of facts. The difficulties can be as simple as the originator and translator belonging to what Stohl (2001) terms organizational typologies (p. 329): The originator may belong to a typologically international corporation while the translator is part of a typologically multicultural corporation.
In these cases, international business communication is at times one-direction only (See Fig. 7), and no feedback will occur. All the business originator will know is that, “I never heard anything.” The response may never occur, or the response will not be true feedback: it will look like a message, but it will be another one-direction message. The translator simply may not receive or understand the message because the sign misses the translator’s technology capabilities or the translator’s acuity in relationship to the referent—all variations of distance decay may occur. This is particularly true if both the sign and the referent are unfamiliar to the translator.

Moreover, we see the communication model’s national culture point being turned toward the world if we think of Hostede’s (2000) “power distance” national characteristic. Countries – and thus their business people—that have a high power distance index (defined as “the extent to which the less powerful members of organizations and institutions (like the family) expect and accept that power is distributed unequally”) are characterized by social systems that repress women and/or that allow for unchecked radical political rule. In this case, an international communication being sent from the United States by a female originator may or may not be read as a powerful business message depending on the male reader’s personal culture: A one-way message may occur. Again, an international business message may be one directional only and fail simply because the culture is uninterested in or opposed to the message.

Many influences interfere with or disrupt international business communication. The motivation to communicate is strong enough to propel companies and employees to educate themselves about another culture or cultures. This is the case whether the motivation derives from a company’s desire to go international, from a manager’s shifting to an international responsibility or from a manager desiring to do a better job at international communication. When the companies and employees educate themselves, changing their behaviors and attitudes in order to work effectively across cultures, they develop competencies in international communication. They develop personal techniques, refine their personal models, and become savvy to the changes they have made: they become knowledgeable, more culturally
competent. Also, a corporation that reflects communicators’ learning also becomes more knowledgeable (see Weick and Ashford, 2001, pp. 706-707).

The new cultural competence creates two movements in the communication model. First, the communicator’s self moves toward the business culture point of the triangle. Secondly, the communicator’s entire business culture begins to turn toward the receiving communicator’s world. The triangle begins to rotate (Fig. 8). The rotation is a reflection of the new business, the new interest, the new potential for success as the international prospect is incorporated into the communicator’s ideas.

**FIG. 8: THE CULTURAL MATURING OF TWO INTERNATIONAL COMMUNICATORS**

This cultural maturity, a recently acknowledged phenomenon, was described by Emmons (2005), in discussing international management:

> Despite national differences, these transnational road warriors frequently have a common grounding in education, professional background, and global popular and business culture. In the arena of international commerce, they share an expectation that differences will be set aside in order to advance with common purpose toward a larger goal—getting the task at hand done right (p. 1).

As international business is expedited by electronic communication, those involved in international business communication begin not only to communicate effectively, but they also begin to build taxonomies. Kendall (2006) defined communication taxonomies this way: “There are frameworks, taxonomies, for helping us understand, communicate, and work across differences. It is as simple as raising awareness, and as complex as trying to understand the subtle nuances of those things only those born into a culture can understand and the societal norms we conform to” (p.1). Emmons (2005) added, “As the best international companies exhibit similarities in certain standards and practices, managers within these firms, despite national and cultural differences, are finding common ground where they can work together” (p.3).
Rogers (2008) labels the specifics of finding common ground *CQ Talk* that deliberately glean from observations and responses during an evolving interaction the information and practices needed to be learned interculturally (p. 253).

As communicators and their businesses build taxonomies, an additional phenomenon appears on the international business communication model (See Fig. 9). First, the cultural triangles of originator and translator continue to turn toward each other, and the business point of each triangle nears the other. A shortening of the intellectual and culture distance required for any one originator to communicate with a translator occurs. As originators and translators near each other, they move away from their comfort zones of national and personal culture; and both this movement and new taxonomy place stress on the individual communicator’s being. The struggle to find a way to communicate pulls originators and translators away from their personal and national cultures in order to make the communication work. For example, the young Indian workers in the rapidly growing Indian call center business, as they acquired new income, spent their wages to look and be more “U.S.” Kalita (2005) called it a kind of cultural backlash.

**FIG. 9: SUCCESSFUL INTERNATIONAL COMMUNICATION: BUILDING A TAXONOMY**

In other instances, although both communicators are attempting to be culturally competent, they are pulled by deep-seated cultural habits. Mattock (2003) described a Swedish manager working with a French manager. The Swedish culture pushed the manager to start a discussion at the bottom with facts and work his way up. The French manager’s desire was to hear the proposal first instead so that he could seek evidence for the proposal. In this case, while the Swede is thinking, “So irrational, so impatient, so Latin,” the French manager is thinking, “So pedestrian, so cold, so Northern” (p. 61). The way to accommodate these deep-seated cultural differences is to bring these differences to the surface to find solutions because as communicators build taxonomies, they build them on individual understandings first. Moreover, if businesses must communicate internationally with other businesses, their members must first start understanding their own culture. Every person is a cultural being. When a communicator gets to know about his or her own cultural bubble, then communicators can start to understand one another. Ting-Toomey furthers the need for awareness and self-knowledge when discussing *identity negotiation theory*, and she notes the need to modify self-image to communicate successfully in an international realm (Ting-Toomey, 2005).
Then comes the building of a framework for communicating with individuals in other cultures—cultural competency. We learn how to understand the messages from others, and we begin to tolerate what we cannot change. Communicators learn to be “able to hold two polarized value systems and be at ease with the dynamic tensions that exist between the vulnerability spectrum and the security spectrum” (Ting-Toomey, 2005, p. 230). The individual then moves past the business culture point and operates beyond it while still based in his or her own cultural milieu. In this new taxonomy (Fig. 10), the attempt to be less culture-bound lessens communication stress as understanding begins, and communicators naturally include more of their personae, their national and personal culture in their communication, in the new taxonomy. The developing of taxonomies, the frameworks, is a new shared culture.

![FIG. 10: NEW INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS COMMUNICATION MODEL WITH TAXONOMY](image)

If the business cultures (B) are near, the new taxonomy area is small: the communicators’ understandings in the two business cultures are similar, and they have few new communication strategies to share. On the other hand, if their business cultures are far apart, and especially if their personal cultures and national cultures are far apart, the new taxonomy area will lengthen, showing the importance of practitioners’ maturity for successful cross-cultural business communication. This elasticity and size reflects the shared cultural content of the taxonomy.

The taxonomies and the matured capabilities allow for more and more successful communication. To represent the personal growth of the communicators in a successful business communication that facilitates cultural maturity, the international business model takes on its third dimension. The communicators rise in international business communication acumen and in international knowledge (Fig. 11). For example, an ethical United States communicator and an ethical Chinese communicator must come to terms with highly different sets of assumptions. The United States communicator who is aware of the Confucian or Neo-Confucian tradition may comprehend the similarity of U.S. individualism vs. Chinese self-realization. Further, Confucian ethics requires the individual to cultivate and exercise several key virtues, chiefly...
goodness, righteousness, wisdom, faithfulness, reverence, and courage (Dragga, 1999). How these values, familiar to a United States businessperson, are achieved, however, is very different. Goodness may well mean doing good works like charity to the United States businessperson. Goodness may imply a hierarchy of clear level relationships with family always having the top priority in Confucian cultures (Dragga, 1999).

FIG. 11: THREE-DIMENSIONAL REPRESENTATION OF A MATURING INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS COMMUNICATION RELATIONSHIP

If a business communicator experiences a lull in communicating with a translator, he or she (C) will fall lower in the model although his or her business culture (B) remains static. When the communication is resumed, the taxonomy will be slightly stretched bottom to top. The taxonomy will be intact, however, and the communicator will rise in the figure until the communication task is once again as efficient as possible.

An important point in thinking in terms of taxonomy is that it explains many instances of changes in international communication. For example, if two communicators need to relieve the tension of operating too far away from their personal or national culture, the model will show them retreating slightly, that only lengthens the taxonomy. They will still communicate successfully because the taxonomy is elastic. If a communicator works in a changed milieu—boycott, trade war, any number of communication interrupters— the communicator experiences his or her business point of the triangle being forced to turn. The taxonomy can stretch, not infinitely, but enough to resume business later.

CONCLUSION
The international business communication model developed here explains the development of a new cultural element, a taxonomy of information and practices. It shows the dynamics of cultural maturity and denotation/connotation recontextualizing. If the communicators are from similar business cultures, the taxonomy will be small because the new communication understandings they must share are minimal. If the communicators emerge from two very different business cultures (their triangles are further apart to begin with), the taxonomy will be larger, particularly if their personal and national cultures are far apart. This elasticity and size is the reflection of the shared cultural content of the taxonomy; it is an area of agreement. As the originators achieve greater cultural maturity and experience, they rise in the model simultaneously with the translators. Variances in maturity or opportunity may stretch the taxonomy, but the business communication ability stays intact.

The taxonomy communicators create is the result of and concurrent persistence of mindfulness; it is a framework and a set of skills that can be applied to initiate communication with a second or third culture as represented by individual communicators. Elements of this taxonomy embrace knowledge that is efficient, useful, and human; and it is, therefore, transferable to other international communication. As Ang and Van Dyne discussed (2008), a global identity correlates with cultural intelligence. Parts of the taxonomy may include the products of communicators’ introspection. For example, it may include knowledge of pacing—the time required to begin a new international communication and the moment when dealing with the referent becomes relaxed for both originator and translator. It may contain negative elements: what not to initiate when communicating internationally.

The advantages of the representational international business communication developed here is that it furthers concepts from previous models like the Schramm model that broke ground by acknowledging the importance of the communicators’ backgrounds. It also borrows from the Bednar and Welch model that emphasizes the requirement of translation to understand the nature and dynamics of a message. Also, this model furthers the concept of schemata in the Varner and Beamer model by providing a third dimension in which to explore the increased proximity of mental categories (schemata) drawn in their model. The three-dimensional model emerges as the synergy of these earlier models.

The new model also proposes a scaling of successful communication in relation to the degree a communicator has moved the self toward a business culture and how far the communicator’s business point of the cultural triangle has turned toward international business. In the case of India, for example, this turning was expedited, according to Friedman (2006) by two major phenomena. First, India’s large population needed to look outward toward other countries where its students and citizens could succeed. Second, during the United States’ dot.com era, excess profits allowed cable to be laid many places including from the United States to India and China. India became connected—it had the wealth and business depth required to take advantage of connectedness—to the world early. China’s connection was also clearly evident in the international display of technological connectedness in the televised 2008 Olympics. The necessity to communicate internationally and the electronic capability to do so are the motivators for India and China’s communicators to move toward the business point of their cultural triangle and for them to experience an accompanying turn by their countries. The reverse is shown by Saudi Arabia’s 2010 attempt to limit the Blackberry phone’s messaging capabilities because, as the country’s Communication and Technology Commission said, highly encrypted messages flowed through a central Canadian (overseas) point. It is also evident in China’s attempt to censor Google’s search capabilities beyond the limited censorship Google was employing. While communicators had established international
communication taxonomies, the countries turned away from business culture toward their national cultures dragging business communicators’ cultural selves with them.

The identification of a taxonomy allows researchers and educators to actively find out what they do not know and what they do. The visual locus of the results of CQ Talk, for example, encourages discussions of new information and new practices that expedite international business communication.

**FUTURE RESEARCH**

Researchers in international and intercultural business communication work across disciplinary lines, and the three-dimensional model can help organize some of this information. Moreover, because researchers’ pursuits range from the theoretical to the pedagogical to the practical, the three-dimensional model helps organize the material and supports the legitimacy of these research areas by demonstrating the highly interconnected world of international business communication. With further research, it may be able to help communicators and researchers identify and name the cultural maturity of each originator or translator. A set of criteria, for example, to identify low, medium, and high cultural maturity would allow researchers to quantify some of our knowledge about building an international communication taxonomy.

Knowledge from those international businessmen and businesswomen who view themselves as culturally competent needs to be gathered and assessed to locate the components they identify that make them culturally competent. These components need to be categorized to discern which are bound by a given culture and which can be generalized to aid in improving all international communicators. For example, does one need to submerge one’s own national culture as much as possible for a time in order to achieve cultural competency? How long is this period? The advantage of the three-dimensional international business communication model is visualizing this push and pull of cultures. The stresses of moving away from personal and national cultures should be identified, separated, and ranked apart from the concept of communication skills for the purposes of research and teaching, based on quantitative information from international communicators. New vocabulary needs to be developed along with research using visual models to describe new international communication experiences, vocabulary that expands and clarifies previous models.

All international business communicators and their communication practices need to be researched to discover their introspective discoveries from interaction with other cultures—whether they are personal, national, or business. Getting into the mind of three dimensions vs. two dimensions helps those discoveries, and understanding that these communicators have built taxonomies helps us visualize what we want to ask them. For example, what does it mean to a U.S. business communicator to be so factually driven in communication? Using introspection, what will a U.S. originator or translator discover about the self to modify the “just give me the facts” characteristic when communicating internationally? In the visual communication channels including those as simple as Skype, what does a Japanese originator or translator need to know about the difference between the waiting/listening characteristic and the effect of maintaining an impassive face when communicating internationally? What kinds of cultural changes will the Japanese communicator discover need adjustment through introspection? What does an African communicator need to know about the importance of familial culture when communicating internationally where families have differing bonds? How will introspection about these values inform the African communicator?
Studying culturally competent international communicators helps researchers know more about how taxonomies shown in the three-dimensional model develop and what they contain. This heuristic technique may help us know and categorize frameworks for good international business communication; and we can, therefore, understand and discuss international business communication using a common vocabulary with three dimensions of understanding rather than two. International business will, at the same time, force new business communication taxonomies regardless of the rate of change in business communication scholarship. The international communication business model will allow us to explore the world’s communicator’s common knowledge that we must understand and communicate and forestall misunderstanding and miscommunication.

REFERENCES


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