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## Global Advances in Business Communication from Multiple Perspectives: A Panel Discussion from Experts in the Field

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## **GLOBAL ADVANCES IN BUSINESS COMMUNICATION FROM MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES: A PANEL DISCUSSION FROM EXPERTS IN THE FIELD**

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### ***INTRODUCTION***

To introduce the *Global Advances in Business Communication Journal*, it seemed fitting to open this first issue with something special. To do so, I have assembled the print equivalent of a panel discussion on the state of global business communication.

To assemble a strong group set of questions, I conferred with the journal's Associate Editors Hadina Habil of the Technological University of Malaysia and Paul Verluyten of the University of Antwerp. The questions were as follows:

In what direction do you see global business communication going?

How do new media and social media influence global business communication?

In what way does local culture continue to affect global business communication? In what ways do multinational companies and enterprises need to consider local cultural differences regarding their training needs, marketing campaigns or organizational communication?

Related to the previous question, while signs of convergence are present in the increasingly integrated world economy, clear signs of divergence are evident as well. Is it possible to identify predictive factors which might explain where and why there is convergence and where and why divergence?

It is the position of the GABC Journal to bring together multiple fields (integrated marketing communication, business ethics, computer-mediated communication, linguistics, organizational behavior and more). How can researchers of global business communication provide the most value to other disciplines?

### ***THE PANEL***

The Panel consisted of 16 experts from across the many fields covered by this intentionally interdisciplinary journal. The panel included experts not only in Business Communication itself but

extending to a wide range of other areas including Management, Integrated Marketing Communication, Finance, Foreign Language for Business and Professional Purposes, English, and Business Ethics. All of the panelists are experts in their fields and all serve on the Editorial Review Board of this journal.

The panel also consisted of experts from universities in a wide range of national settings, as befits a truly global journal based on three continents. In all, experts based in 10 countries contributed: Belgium, India, Finland, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Mexico, Japan, Singapore, Turkey and the United States.

The Panel consisted of

- Richard Babcock, University of San Francisco, US
- Claire Babanoury, Lauder Wharton Institute of Management and International Studies, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, US
- Roger Conaway, ITESM San Luis Potosi, Mexico
- Bertha Du-Babcock, City University of Hong Kong
- Hadina Habil, Technological University of Malaysia (UTM), Johor Bahru, Malaysia
- Daphne Jameson, Cornell University, Ithaca, New York, US
- Naoki Kameda, Doshisha University, Kyoto, Japan
- Orlando Kelm, University of Texas at Austin, US
- Leena Louhiala-Salminen, Aalto University (formerly Helsinki School of Economics), Helsinki, Finland
- Banikanta Mishra, Xavier Institute of Management, Bhubaneswar, India
- Priscilla Rogers, University of Michigan at Ann Arbor, US
- Sheila Sasser, Eastern Michigan University, Ypsilanti, US
- Ayseli Usluata, Yeditepe University, Istanbul, Turkey
- Joo-Seng Tan, Nanyang University, Singapore
- Barry Thatcher, New Mexico State University, US
- Iris Varner, Illinois State University, Normal, Illinois, US
- S. Paul Verluyten, University of Antwerp, Belgium

The appendix at the end of this article provides a brief biographical overview of each panelist.

### ***ABOUT THE FORMAT OF THIS INTERVIEW***

This article is an edited version of many written responses from those interviewed. Not all of what each expert wrote is included, although everything that is included was directly quoted from that expert.

To make it easier for the reader to identify each interviewee with his or her quotation, I have chosen to follow two somewhat atypical formatting choices. First, each time that I have quoted the individual panelist, I have placed his or her name in boldface print. Second, each quoted response is set off in italics. The material that is not italicized represents my own attempt to synthesize or comment on the material as a

whole. I hope (perhaps mistakenly) that this allows the reader more readily to identify who has said what and perhaps to give the article the feel of a spoken interview.

### ***THE CURRENT DIRECTION OF GLOBAL BUSINESS COMMUNICATION***

All of the respondents were asked to share their view on a single question:

***“In what direction do you see global business communication going?”***

In the end, 12 of the 16 panelists responded to what they believed was the direction in which they saw global business communication as field was headed. The range of responses was notably broad. Indeed, this variety of responses suggests that no *single* direction exists for the field.

As **Leena Louhiala-Salminen** notes:

*Global business communication is developing in several directions at the same time.*

**Priscilla Rogers** writes:

*How the field of business communication develops in our global world is tough to predict. But the necessity of multi-tasking, compromise, and competitiveness, challenged by information overload and misrepresentation, attention deficit, and cross-cultural impatience, summons experts like us to develop frameworks and tools that help employees, managers, teams, and organizations process information, decipher falsehood, speak truthfully, seek understanding, reach consensus, and discipline self-centeredness.*

The panelists emphasized that, as **Ayseli Usluata** puts it:

*Global business communication is gaining more and more importance in the market.*

Indeed, **Roger Conaway** asserts that:

*I see global business communication as positioned at the core of global business.*

**Claire Babanoury** explains that the centrality of global business communication derives from and will continue to be driven by technological change. As she puts it, the

*Interconnection between people through technology shall continue to be at the center of the global business communication process.*

**Roger Conaway** too emphasizes this technology-related interconnection, explaining:

*Faster communication and transportation, technology growth, and global markets have produced amazing opportunities for multinational enterprises. But today's firms will not succeed without effective business communication. Global firms today depend on their managers' ability to communicate, whether across cultures, within the organization, or with competitors who are challenging the company's very existence.*

**Orlando Kelm** points out how changes in global business communication pedagogy merit attention as well. He explains that those teaching in the field have begun to experience changes in the classroom. He notes:

*In response to where global business communication is going, I will draw on some thoughts related to current educational practices. As a university-level educator, I have been impressed to see how our teaching of academic courses has changed in recent years.*

For **Orlando Kelm**, the teaching of global business communication (in his case within the context of the foreign language classroom) is at the “strategic inflection point” for transformation:

*What Andy Grove (1996) describes as “strategic inflection points” in the life of a business, seems to have spread into education and communication as well. Recall that strategic inflection points are a time in the life of a business when the fundamentals are about to change. For some the change will bring new opportunities and for others it will signal the beginning of the end. Access to information, education, and communication all find themselves at a strategic inflection point.*

**Kelm** sums this up by concluding:

*To answer the question about where things are going, I believe that we are experiencing a strategic inflection point. Consequently, it is time to implement innovative changes to the way we educate and communicate.*

**Ayseli Usluata** emphasizes the need to train others:

*To develop new communication skills which they can then use to reach local markets and cultures.*

**Sheila Sasser**, for her part, urges the identification of pragmatic application through specific strategies, explaining that:

*It becomes even more essential than ever before to adopt integrated marketing communication strategies that enable spontaneity, flexibility and adaptability within a range of international situational environments.*

While Sasser is here speaking only about one subset of global business communication (the global aspects of integrated marketing communication), her point applies to the field as a whole.

**Barry Thatcher**, in particular, calls for some sort of measurement of relevance. He points to how other business fields do this as a model for global business communication:

*Accountants can measure their roles and relevance; so can attorneys... We need to develop our discipline this way so as to demonstrate the value we add to global business.*

While this point has considerable merit, others suggested that too much emphasis on pragmatic application might risk oversimplification. **Paul Verluyten** explains that the result of this is a

*tension between research and training. Business(women) like recipes, do's and don'ts and certainties; research only offers nuances, doubts and controversies. In our field, it is necessary to tread a tightrope between the two.*

Echoing Verluyten's concerns, **Iris Varner** writes:

*There will be a continuing tension between the desire to have one global communication policy and the need to take cultural differences into account. Marketers have realized that they need to adapt their message to the different needs and perceptions of their audience. In the "hard" subjects, such as engineering, finance, accounting, the temptation is to disregard the cultural differences because, after all, "numbers are numbers."*

Part of the difficulty to which both Verluyten and Varner point is that training that is primarily intended to be pragmatic tends to encourage simplification while increasingly, as **Richard Babcock** observes:

*global business communication is going in the direction of increasingly more complexity and diversity.*

This complexity and diversity, in turn, results in differing levels of what Babcock calls "competency levels" of familiarity and knowledge regarding how to communicate with others. **Richard Babcock** explains that:

*Business communicators will communicate with people from around the world who have varying competency levels in terms of their abilities to speak languages, their knowledge of the global business environments, and their intercultural communication skills. The increased levels of complexity will require that business communicators develop the ability to adapt their communication levels to fit the competencies of their interlocutors and the situations in which they communicate.*

In other words, Babcock emphasizes that in a constantly-changing global business setting, one must adapt to a constantly variable set of factors that grows out of the level of knowledge and skill of those involved in the communication exchange. In other words, one must have specific knowledge of the way specific variables affect specific individuals in specific situation; it is not enough for an individual to know only *in general* what differences and similarities exist across cultures, nations, technological level or language proficiency.

**Daphne Jameson** similarly emphasizes a need to adjust to varying levels of individual competence. She observes that:

*The individual context and situation critically affect what makes communication succeed or fail. Yet, in the modern world, local cultural differences are rarely fixed. Immigration, education, and the evolution of values mean that communicators must continually study what the local context is.*

Thus for Jameson, global business communication remains complicated through its constant flux due both to varying competency levels between business people as well as the way in which cultures and national composition continually evolve.

### ***INFLUENCE OF NEW MEDIA AND SOCIAL MEDIA ON GLOBAL BUSINESS COMMUNICATION***

The question with the highest response was the one regarding the effect of new media and social media:

#### ***How do new media and social media influence global business communication?***

In all, 14 of the 16 panelists responded. Each of them consistently recognized the importance of the new media and social media in changing the nature of global business communication. Still considerable variance of opinion occurred with respect to what degree they felt this represented a surface change or something much more fundamental in the nature of global business communication.

**Joo-Seng Tan** asserts that:

*New media and social media will transform global business communication in fundamental ways.*

Indeed, **Tan** sees these media as creating a fundamental change within global business communication:

*our current thinking about what constitutes global business communication and our current theoretical models and perspectives of global business communication will undergo a paradigm shift. It's really not the technology behind new media and social media; it's the transformations unleashed by these new media about how people connect and interact with each other -- new ways of communicating and interacting, and new connections forged between new media and "traditional" media.*

Others among the panelists addressed the effects of the new media on the rapidity of business communication in a global setting. **Sheila Sasser** observes that

the pace of global business communication rapidly accelerates through continual technological advancements.

**Daphne Jameson** also points to the effect the new media has on the pace of global business communication, and suggests that, without care, this raises a possible area for miscommunication:

*New media and social media have affected the pace and speed of global business communication, but human interactions and relationships are still what matters most. A potential danger of the increased speed is that people may speak or write too quickly without thinking carefully enough about the impact of language choice on human relationships.*

**Naoki Kameda** too indicates that the demands of this accelerating pace “will change communication styles.” Interestingly, though, Kameda suggests that the new media will actually force its users to revert to an earlier demand of classical business communication. Kameda anticipates that

*The old style of English letter writing such as 3Cs will come back into fashion and weaken the cultural differences in communication as well, because concise yet correct and complete messages are preferred for social media.*

For Kameda, then, the pace of the new media will increasingly revisit the need for the 3 C’s of concise, correct and complete messaging.

**Banikanta Mishra** sees a loss in at least one area of communication. He argues that certain social media de-emphasize the entire area of nonverbal communication. He writes that in:

*the face of hi-tech modes of communicating at the group level, non-verbal communication - at all levels - would, however, get increasingly sidelined... Unfortunately, the increasing use of social media - which would of course see strategic and smart use by many corporations for business communication - would also, to a very large extent, disparage, if not eliminate, the importance of non-verbal communication, including that of ‘silence.’*

**Ayseli Usluata** suggests that advances in social media create a potential to reach new audiences by breaking down the language barrier:

*One of the most important barriers in global business communication is in language differences; however, in a way, social media is solving this problem since messages are being translated into local language by mediators and distributed to the local people.*

The ability of new technologies to replace human translation, though, may likely still be a fair way into the future. **Claire Babanoury** explains:

*In spite of the temptation induced by technology to simplify those human interactions, the intricacies of the human experience in communicating with others probably make this a far-fetched goal to reach but nevertheless these are serious issues to consider, that could affect global business communication in the future.*

**Claire Babanoury** then explains in more detail some of these issues:

*Due to the advances in technology and the increasing use of text messaging, e-mail and social networks, the message types used in business communication have changed and are probably considered 'simpler to use' by the global user; at the same time the global socio-economic conditions and realities as well as the business interactions remain very complex worldwide. The language and culture training specialists are therefore facing the challenges of first tracking the changes that derive from the technological advances and of then deciding how to modify their language and intercultural teaching practice accordingly. For example, one question that comes to mind is whether national business codes and etiquette, which are an integral part of global business communication, could one day be replaced by a unique, global and uniform way of handling situations in a business setting?*

As a result, Babanoury has found that the shrinking of the world through the new technology will drive the need for improved foreign language skills. **Claire Babanoury** explains:

*It seems obvious that a high level of language proficiency for oral and written communication purposes should continue to be strongly promoted because of the quintessential need to understand how to work together and to get things done within the context of the myriad of existing world cultures.*

**Orlando Kelm** particularly emphasizes the transformational effect of the new media on language learning. The new technology may not replace the human translator, but it has, Kelm asserts, transformed the way language for business purposes is and will be taught:

*I share three brief examples in the area of foreign language education to illustrate potential implications. In recent weeks it was announced that Voxy received \$2.8M to teach Spanish and Portuguese speakers how to speak English via smart phones (TechCrunch, 2011). They are totally skipping the laptop computer, and have gone straight to the mobile device. The application is clever. Via GPS mapping, Voxy identifies the types of stores and buildings that are near the user and provides vocabulary, phrases to hear, and phrases to speak, for such locations. For example, suppose that you are near a movie theater. The application knows that, and provides learners with language related to movie theaters. It is not my intent to defend the effectiveness of the methodology, but it is excellent evidence about an innovative strategy that has responded to new fundamentals.*

*Second, Koreans currently spend \$9.1 billion every year on language learning (Yahoo! Finance, 2011). That is more per capita than any other country in the world. Rosetta Stone's ReFLEX is leading the way by taking learners away from the "book smart" and "test-taking" mode of language learning and trying to help learners focus more on actual speaking. A good portion of this takes advantage of live online instruction and innovative speech recognition technology, no doubt, which better understands the attempts of Koreans as they speak English. Again, the focus on adaptive learning shows how the fundamentals have changed.*

*Third, recently Livemocha surpassed the 10 million user mark (GeekWire, 2011). Imagine, over 10 million partners to practice speaking as a learning community in 38 languages and 190 countries. They*

also raised another \$5 million to bring the total funding of Livemocha up to \$19 million. When asked what their biggest mistake has been, their response was to underestimate how fast the market moves. They specifically mentioned the “nimble, hungry” competitors in China, India, Europe, and Latin America.

**Orlando Kelm** then shares how the new media has transformed language learning not just in the abstract but in his own classroom:

*In my own case, last semester our students did not purchase a physical textbook. (And those who did order supplementary recommended books did so online. There were no copies sitting on the shelves of the university bookstore.) All materials were provided online. Student assignments included projects in Facebook groups, communication during lectures was enhanced via twitter feeds, student-generated videos were shared on Youtube channels, class presentations were shared via wikis and blogs, and grades were maintained on content management systems. (Even when there was a gunman on campus, we received an emergency text message to stay away!) There is a huge sense that the fundamentals have changed!*

The widespread adaptation of language learning is not the only way in which the new media extend the reach of global business communication to multiple audiences. Indeed, **Hadina Habil** finds that the new media has significantly broadened the target audience for global business communication:

*The new media and the social media influence global business communication in the target audience that they are reaching. The new media and the social media are very popular among the younger generations – teens and young adults. By having your presence felt in the new media and the social media, you are reaching out to a different group of customers. The nature of social media, for example, allows the concept of promoting through the ‘word-of-mouth’ in the form of ‘liking’ and ‘following’ what their friends ‘like’ and ‘follow’. This tremendously increases the number of people who know about you and your business, or your product/services and your organization. It enables ‘multiplicity’ effect of a business, product, service or organization. You can reach out to more people from around the globe regardless of where you are geographically.*

**Barry Thatcher** is careful to point out that this is a “complex issue” in large part because

*The new media are not neutral devices, relating to each cultural and communicative tradition in the same way. Further, new media are not deterministic in the way that they force specific uses upon all cultures.*

Thatcher discusses the role of the new media on global business communication at greater length than any of the respondents interviewed here. In particular, he approaches the subject from the perspective of the field of rhetoric, explaining how the new media and cultural norms interrelate and affect one another:

*The new media and cultural traditions are related three complex ways, based on their fit, reciprocity, and kairos. In other words, the new media have to be grounded in the local tradition first.*

**Thatcher** defines *fit* within the context of global business communication and the new media as:

*The degree of correlation between the rhetoric of the media itself and the rhetorical tradition of the group. For example, some collective cultures are also predominantly oral cultures because orality as a medium reinforces many collective behaviors, while many individualistic cultures place a lot of emphasis in writing, especially to regulate social relations. The new media such as the internet, social media, and e-mail have complex features of both orality and writing, so their fit to cultural traditions are perhaps mixed.*

**Thatcher** then explains how the new media change and are themselves changed by the cultures, a process called *reciprocity*:

*Reciprocity means the mutually constitutive and remediative relations between the media and the culture. For example, television now has many hypertext features because the new media is remediating the old media. In the same sense, even though some cultural traditions may be more comfortable with orality, the use of cell phones or social media is changing orality itself.*

Finally, **Barry Thatcher** discusses the issue of timing (called *kairos* in traditional rhetorical terminology) and how the new media are changing the notions of immediacy as well as the choice of written vs. oral communication choices:

*Kairos means timing, that is, when and why to use each media according to the larger rhetorical traditions of the group. I have many examples along the U.S.-Mexico border in which Americans are conditioned to use writing at critical moments of a business or industrial project, when in fact Mexicans would insist on orality, and vice versa. The new media, however, are reconstituting this timing.*

*These new media map onto – or are very comfortable with– traditionally oral cultures and their corresponding values of collectivity, particularism, and diffuseness... Thus, social media might allow for more oral cultures to ground their communications in such a way as to allow them to get to writing more quickly, thus allowing those from more written cultures to maintain their customary use of writing more easily.*

**Leena Louhiala-Salminen** finds that the increasingly interconnected communication network resulting from the influence of advances in communication technology and social media creates somewhat of a contradiction:

*It is, on the one hand, getting more complex with further advancing globalization - more and more cultures involved - and rapidly changing technology. On the other hand it might be getting 'easier' as an increasing share of present global business communication takes place within one large, globally operating organization and the subsidiaries and outlets in different parts of the world share the corporate and organizational environment and culture.*

To the degree that Louhiala-Salminen is correct that global business communication takes place within a shared environment, the new technology may tend to have a homogenizing effect. **Banikanta Mishra** sees a past precedent in this, noting that:

*Television has a lot of influence, especially through the advertisements. Audience picks up not just the in "lingo" but also the in "body language."*

For **Sheila Sasser**, the new media help to:

*Facilitate the formation of global cyber communication and diverse online communities with shared norms, customs, beliefs, and values...such powerful new platforms may change the world as we know it for better or worse, depending upon our own humanity, hopefully, it will be a force for good -- only time will tell?*

**Iris Varner**, by contrast, sees the homogenizing effect wrought by the use of the new communication technology as essentially only at the surface level:

*The global use of technology and the speed of communication easily trap us in the belief that cultures converge. However, this is frequently a surface convergence only. People use social media, email, video conferencing, and the same business jargon, but they still bring different viewpoints to the table. It is easy to overlook these differences since everyone seems to say the same thing. In similar cultures and similar industries there may be a greater convergence, but we cannot extrapolate from that to all cultures. For example, business people from the automobile industry in Germany and Sweden may have more in common than a German business person from the insurance industry and a Chinese manager from the automobile industry. The level of possible convergence will depend on whether people are working in technical or creative fields.*

**Daphne Jameson** strikes a balance between the two positions on the effect of communication technology advances:

*Global business communication has been and will continue to be transformed by rapidly changing technologies, but the heart of effective communication remains the human connection: people's feelings, thoughts, beliefs, fears, and hopes for the future.*

This seems a good remark on which to close as Jameson's remarks offer a good point to draw together many of the other points shared above.

## ***THE EFFECT OF LOCAL CULTURE ON GLOBAL BUSINESS COMMUNICATION***

One of the central issues of research within the field is the role of culture in shaping global business communication. To that end, the panelists were asked:

***In what way does local culture continue to affect global business communication? In what ways do multinational companies and enterprises need to consider local cultural differences regarding their training needs, marketing campaigns or organizational communication?***

Half of the 16 panelists responded to the question, raising many new questions in the process.

For **Daphne Jameson**:

*The belief that “all politics is local” could be applied equally to our field: All business communication is local.*

**Iris Varner** agrees, explaining that:

*An understanding of local culture is crucial to success in global business. We need to realize that the importance of understanding local culture may depend on specific tasks and goals of the business/industry.*

**Roger Conaway** expands on Varner’s comment, both agreeing with the importance of local culture and emphasizing the importance of the specific tasks and goals involved:

*Whether an MNE is contracting in a joint venture with a host country, establishing a manufacturing subsidiary overseas, or starting a franchise restaurant in a different culture, the firm must communicate internally and externally. It must communicate internally to train its managers and employees to adapt to local tastes, customs, and preferences. It must communicate externally through marketing campaigns, with documents meeting a local government’s financial reporting standards, or through advertisements to employ local personnel. All the internal and external business communication decisions of the firm will be shaped by the local culture. How the firm communicates and adapts to local differences will determine whether it succeeds or fails in a new environment.*

**Richard Babcock** also stresses the importance of local culture, noting, though, that the environment in which that business is set remains a factor:

*I believe that local culture affects all international business communication to some extent, but more in some environments than in others.*

**Hadina Habil** expresses the importance of the consideration of local culture as a point of reference within the various locations in which multinational enterprises operate. She notes:

*Local culture continues to affect global business communication in terms of being the culture of where the business is operating. It becomes the reference point of culture for all aspects of business communication.*

This “reference point of culture” carries pragmatic application in the day-to-day functioning of the multinational company. **Hadina Habil** explains:

*Thus, multinational companies need to be aware of, and include, the consideration of local culture in their training needs, marketing campaign and organizational communication. This is because the majority of their workforce consists of local people and only about 10% are people from the country where the parent company is. Hence, the training needs of the local people should be given due attention. In addition, the marketing campaign must include messages that have meaning to the specific community in order for it to be successful. Moreover, the ‘ways of doing things’ of the people following the local culture need to be considered when reviewing organizational communication. This is because the people who make up the majority in the workforce are the locals.*

**Ayseli Usluata** makes a similar point, giving an example of the local culture’s influence on the US-based McDonald’s in her native Turkey:

*The local culture is affecting global business communication as well by forcing multinational companies and enterprises to create new local branding or marketing strategies for the local taste. For instance, McDonald’s in Turkey, during the fasting season (Ramazan), has created a new brand under its own logo, called “McTurco” as a special menu for those who fast, and common Turkish saying meaning “Hear ye! Hear ye!” (Duydukduymadıkdemeyin!) was used during the campaign to invite local people to buy this special menu.*

**Richard Babcock** too comments in pragmatic terms on:

*How local culture should be considered in relation to training, marketing, and organizational communication. For training needs, international firms need to identify local communication norms and practices that impact the communication process and include these in the design of their training programs. For marketing, international firms need to avoid developing messages that violate or do not respect the local cultural norms. For organizational communication, issues regarding face and context level will take on increasingly more important as people interact more frequently through electronic media.*

**Naoki Kameda** also addresses the need to address local cultural considerations in pragmatic terms within the multinational organization:

*Multinational companies should incorporate hybrid communication systems for their HR training, marketing strategies, and organization management. After thoroughly studying and analyzing the differences among regions and ethnic groups in the world, MNCs will need new communication technologies to adjust to those differences and are likely to produce innovative approaches that will allow corporate adaptation to any region and ethnic group.*

Yet while culture is of central importance, a problem arises with how both researchers and practitioners tend to pigeonhole behaviors as belonging to one culture or another. Cultures, as noted in the

responses to the previous question, are far from monolithic. In short, cultural differences may be useful to a point, but *only* to a point.

**Iris Varner** observes:

*In the past we frequently have used nationality as a marker for local culture. While nationality can be a good start, we need to go beyond this and get away from sophisticated stereotyping.*

*Equating cultures with nationalities – an extremely common practice – presumes that nations are culturally homogeneous. Geert Hofstede’s surveys are arguably the most-cited research dealing with culture’s consequences on international business. Yet Hofstede makes no distinction between a largely shared culture in a nationality (say, Japan or Poland) and a nationality whose people are culturally distinct and even adversarial (say, Belgium, Canada or South Africa).*

Yet, as **Iris Varner** observes:

*It is amazing how often we refer to research by Hofstede, Trompenaars, Hall to justify our discussion of German culture, French culture, American culture, or Japanese culture. However, we do not do business with “the” Germans or Italians, or Chinese; we do business with specific people in specific industries who come from specific cultures. Our understanding of culture requires a solid grasp of the history of the culture and how this history has shaped cultural priorities. We also need to understand how rhetorical patterns come out of these cultural priorities and specific world views.*

Thus, local culture is only one among several influences. As **Richard Babcock** explains:

*In addition, the local cultures from different countries compete with professional and organizational cultures to influence communication patterns in and between international firms and with their various external constituencies.*

*In other words, corporate culture and organizational culture influence how one conducts business communication just as much as one’s nationality (or subnationality). Accountants share a professional culture with other accountants. Employees of McDonald’s share certain corporate cultural expectations with other employees of McDonald’s. In other words, to understand how an individual is likely to behave, one must consider a range of cultural factors, of which local national culture is only one. To do otherwise is little more than pigeonholing.*

Additionally, cultural behavior at any level (nationality, organizational, occupational) is far from static. This makes cultural descriptions at best a snapshot in time. As **Daphne Jameson** explains:

*Prediction has always been the goal of business communication scholarship and research, but that goal has been elusive. We seek certainty about how, when, why, and with whom to communicate to solve problems, but the shifting forces of politics, culture, economics, and science make it impossible to achieve that certainty.*

**Paul Verluypen** suggests that cross-cultural research may not even be the most pertinent question to ask in assessing the impact of culture on business. He explains:

*Most research (such as Hofstede's) is cross-cultural (comparative: a cross-section of different cultures), but we need much much more intercultural research: how to cope with cultural differences, which adaptation (or not) strategies yield the best results in business?*

**Richard Babcock** reinforces Verluypen's point:

*My prediction is that it will become more difficult to identify and isolate the size and relative impact of cultural influences because of the interaction of these multiple cultural influences. The influence of local culture is likely to be more significant in multi-domestic than in global firms and industries. It is important for firms to identify and adapt for those cultural differences that have a more significant impact on the communication process. This identification and adaptation can prevent miscommunication (negative) or contribute to better understanding and reaction to messages (positive).*

**Iris Varner** warns that:

*We must get away from over-interpreting the surface culture, or the front-stage culture. The "what" of a culture is interesting and important, but the "why"—the underlying reasons for behavior—is much more crucial.*

Yet there is considerable pressure to, as Varner puts it, "over-interpret surface culture." This is because the research that most academic business journals in other fields favor is largely quantitative. That said, surface cultural categorization is central to quantitative research. In quantitative analysis, one either belongs to one category or not, or else one falls somewhere on a simple scale. By its nature, quantitative analysis simplifies (and often oversimplifies) cultural norms and behaviors and – even at its best – captures only a snapshot of the people it studies at a specific time. Nevertheless, the need to have one's work accepted for publication drives the direction of research.

Because of this need, notwithstanding the flaws in doing so, research in global international business communication, as **Paul Verluypen** points out, is likewise:

*Mostly quantitative, but we need qualitative research (cases, fieldwork) much more in my opinion. In a 'publish or perish' situation, how can we encourage the latter, which is much more time-consuming and with no guaranteed results, therefore less likely at the outset to lead to a potential publication in an A-journal?*

It is hoped that this journal, may provide at least one outlet for both types of research and act as a bridge among not only disciplines but research methodologies.

## **CONVERGENCE OR DIVERGENCE**

Tied to the previous question was a second question, that of whether globalization has had an effect on cultural convergence and cultural divergence. To that end, the panelists were asked:

*Related to the previous question, while signs of convergence are present in the increasingly integrated world economy, clear signs of divergence are evident as well. Is it possible to identify predictive factors which might explain where and why there is convergence and where and why divergence?*

In all, eight of the 16 panelists responded to this question.

**Joo-Seng Tan** reframed the question to point to the choice of:

*Two views here: do we subscribe to Thomas Friedman's perspective that "the world is flat", or the counter-perspective that "the world is spiky"? Do cultural differences matter, or they don't? I'm inclined towards the perspective that, despite globalization and greater cultural convergence, (local) cultural differences do matter, and MNCs will continue to find ways to make the "think global, act local" a competitive edge in doing business across the globe. As long as "borders" (I'm not referring to just national borders) and "boundaries" matter from a competitive business perspective, "divergence" will be there as cultural differences present "arbitrage" opportunities for businesses.*

**Richard Babcock** observed that convergence and divergence in culture seem to rely on the framework within which the interactions take place:

*I think there are key contexts and mechanisms that are truly influential in convergence and divergence. The most critical seem to be finance, energy, law, and transportation. Each one of these factors can significantly influence the global and local. For example, in the late 2000s, many manufacturing plants in northern Mexico were relocated to China because of cheaper wages and better tax structures for business. However, when energy costs increased, the transportation costs associated with shipping these products to the United States became greater than the labor savings, so jobs were now moved back to Mexico. Further, many global corporations were still finding it difficult to work with the copyright laws of China, while Mexico, on the other hand, was busy revising their laws to meet international standards. Finally, much of the "just-in-time" manufacturing requires parts to be available more locally, requiring transportation logistics to be simplified and less vulnerable to energy and political and social issues.*

**Roger Conaway** discussed one particular frame of reference in focusing on the role of what management theorist Michael Porter called "clusters" as central to the issue of convergence and divergence:

*Michael Porter insightfully commented, in his writings on clusters and the economics of competition, how conventional wisdom tells us that the importance of location should diminish with global markets,*

*communication, and faster transportation. Yet Porter asserts how location matters more than ever in global markets. Multinational enterprises tend to draw on clusters, which according to Porter's definition are geographic concentrations of interconnected companies and institutions in a particular field. Thus, clusters are communication-rich environments, and global business communication is essential in these interconnected companies and institutions.*

**Sheila Sasser** sees a:

*Profound change [that] has created both convergence and divergence simultaneously providing new global versus local communication considerations.*

**Naoki Kameda** likewise found convergence in some areas and divergence in others. He explains:

*Because of the advent of ICT and global business development, as seen in the cases of Coca Cola, Starbucks, Microsoft, Apple, KFC, Sony, etc., many peoples' preferences have converged. Yet, there are in many places highly conservative indigenous local cultures and religions which will further promote divergence.*

Indeed, even in areas where convergence seems most apparent on the surface, there may well be diverging applications below the surface. In the area of Business English as Lingua Franca (BELF), for instance, one might expect to find evidence only of convergence (e.g., a shared language of choice). Yet as **Naoki Kameda** points out:

*Even if English keeps its position as a global business language, local languages, as vehicle of ethnic identity, will exercise survival power and probably change the styles of both spoken and written BELF in favor of localized, traditional communication styles.*

For **Iris Varner**, most if not all appearance of cultural convergence is arguably illusory:

*The global use of technology and the speed of communication easily trap us in the belief that cultures converge. However, this is frequently a surface convergence only. People use social media, email, video conferencing, and the same business jargon, but they still bring different viewpoints to the table. It is easy to overlook these differences since everyone seems to say the same thing. In similar cultures and similar industries there may be a greater convergence, but we cannot extrapolate from that to all cultures. For example, business people from the automobile industry in Germany and Sweden may have more in common than a German business person from the insurance industry and a Chinese manager from the automobile industry. The level of possible convergence will depend on whether people are working in technical or creative fields.*

**Banikanta Mishra** takes somewhat of an opposite position. In his view, convergence is the result of a sort of cultural domination:

*Only strong local cultures in traditional regions (say, like, rural India) would engage in a friction with the dominating foreign cultures and try to maintain some of the older styles. Though MNCs should be sensitive to the local culture and harness their marketing as well as internal communication towards a healthy respect for the local culture. But, often these companies would intentionally want to impose their culture with a belief - perhaps not misplaced - that more aligned people become to their culture, the more likely would they be to consume their products. I guess that an Indian greeting friends with a "hi" is more likely to consume pizzas or Mac-burgers.*

*When the dominating foreign culture overpowers the local one, we see more signs of convergence. On the other hand, if the local culture is well ensconced in a region over a long time, it may fight with the foreign culture to drive the latter away, thus leading to some manifested -- though, possibly ephemeral -- divergence.*

Finally, one of the panelists answered the question by reframing it. In place of the question that was asked, **Barry Thatcher** suggested that we ask a different question altogether:

*For me the most interesting and valid approach to the global/local question is what kinds of values can cross borders easily, how are these values reconfigured in the process, and what values seem to stay entrenched locally and why?*

*For example, on the U.S. side of the border, it is often difficult for many Mexican nationals to adjust to the more objective-universal-impersonal approaches to U.S. workplace encounters because the collective, particular, and diffuse Mexican values do not pass over into the United States that quickly; our legal system has a lot to say in this matter. However, I have observed that many Mexican values such as dress, language, food, music, and more interpersonal relation can cross quite easily. We need to understand how a broad array of values such as legal institutions, governments, finance systems, infrastructure, and institutions govern local versus global influences.*

**Barry Thatcher** then explains his reasoning for why he feels that the question of convergence and divergence is often oversimplified in the age of globalization:

*This question is actually a lot more complex than most people think. The general anecdotal response is that the global cultural is quickly overtaking local cultures. However, this is much evidence to the contrary—that local cultures are now strongly entrenching themselves in the face of strong globalization forces.*

*Many current globalization theories would have us believe that globalization means a significant amount of cultural blending, hybridization, glocalization, and cross-border flow of rhetorical and cultural patterns with geopolitical borders relatively meaningless, and as such, an out-dated mode of inquiry. After ten years of systematically working on both sides of the border, that's not my picture. For example, currently, El Paso, Texas is the safest city in the United States (for cities over 500,000 inhabitants) with a murder rate of three or four a year. Right across the border, Ciudad Juarez, Chihuahua, Mexico (1.5 million) is arguably the most dangerous city in the world, with an average of 12 murders a day. So much for the free flow of cultural practices across borders.*

With as wide a range of responses from the belief that convergence is illusory to the positioning of convergence as a form of cultural domination, it seems fitting to close this section with a reframing of the question entirely.

### ***ADDING VALUE ACROSS DISCIPLINES***

The final question asked of the panelists was how to provide the most value across the varied disciplines to which this journal reaches out:

***It is the position of the GABC Journal to bring together multiple fields (integrated marketing communication, business ethics, computer-mediated communication, linguistics, organizational behavior and more). How can researchers of global business communication provide the most value to other disciplines?***

In all, 10 of the 16 panelists responded.

Some of the responses cited here were actually provided in answer to the other questions. Notably, several of the panelists discussed the interdisciplinary nature of the field of global business communication elsewhere in their responses. Yet because this final question deals specifically with adding value in an interdisciplinary manner, it seemed appropriate to pull those portions of their answers together under this rubric.

The attempt of the *GABC Journal* to bring together multiple fields aligns well with the panel's widespread consensus that global business communication is interdisciplinary in its very nature.

**Claire Babanoury** indicates that:

*Sophisticated and efficient interdisciplinary programs combining business, language and culture should be needed as never before.*

As **Iris Varner** puts it:

*The field of intercultural business communication must be interdisciplinary and take into account the history, language and world view of a culture in order to be effective.*

Yet for **Iris Varner**, interdisciplinary need not mean unfocused. She advises that:

*In the future, we will need to expand our knowledge of underlying cultural priorities and understand how these priorities shape communication dynamics.*

**Iris Varner** also suggests that as global business communication grows as a field, there will be an opportunity for framing questions from more than one cultural vantage point. This, in turn, may help to extend research beyond the European and Western frames of reference that have traditionally dominated academic business research:

*As non-western businesses are gaining in importance in global business, we also need to look at culture from a non-Western point of view. We are used to using the Western approach that we frequently do not even consider that the questions we ask may be framed very differently in different cultures.*

**Bertha Du-Babcock** sees global business communication serving as a bridge connecting one discipline to another:

*Global business communication research can serve as a bridge. Business communication researchers and scholars can team with researchers and scholars from other disciplines to provide interdisciplinary perspectives. By doing so, the silo effect and the “elephant and blind man” phenomenon can be eliminated.*

*In a collaborative research setting, business communication researchers can provide their eclectic vision and knowledge of the communication process while researchers from a specific field can provide in-depth field specific knowledge. For example, business communication researchers could team with medical personnel (doctors, nurses, technicians) to study the communication in international health care organizations. In this collaboration, medical personnel would provide their understanding of medical practice while communication theorists would provide their communication understanding.*

**Barry Thatcher** observes that

*Global business communication is still in its infancy, and we need to do a better job in many ways.*

First among these ways for **Thatcher** is the:

*need to develop more systematic variables and research methodologies for culture and communication, which will move us away from lore and anecdote and into measurement and assessment. This is not just a quantitative move, but qualitative as well. This way, we can assess—and then argue for—the appropriate roles of business communicating mediating global relations. This is a difficult thing to do... Where do we add value and why? Define culture and communication validly and clearly. Define their relations validly and clearly. Define how culture affects communications validly and clearly. Then, we can define the role of communication in mediating global business. We are starting to break into this realm, but we have lots of work to do.*

**Thatcher** also emphasizes the need to combine clear definitions with application as a way to assign value to the field. He illustrates this with an illuminating example:

*Several years ago, I was at a global service provider workshop in Puerto Rico. Service providers examine services such as banking, insurance, etc. The keynote speakers defined culture so vaguely and haphazardly, from food to use of formalities, that it was a wonder we got anywhere. Further, at this*

*conference, a number of seasoned service provider researchers openly questioned the relevance of culture at all, as if it did not matter. Then I asked them: "When you arrived in the San Juan Airport, did you notice a lack of signs showing you where to go and what to do?" Why "yes, of course," they said. Then, I asked: "because of limited signage, were you forced to ask for help?" "Well, yes". Then I said, this lack of signage is a strong cultural value in Latin America, and I have seen it across most of the countries. This lack of signage corresponds to a whole host of cultural, legal, social, and communication values, which we can measure.*

For **Banikanta Mishra**, the path to adding most value is by:

*Sensitizing transnational and multinational corporations - not just from a professional perspective but also from the perspective of morality, ethics, and corporate social responsibility - and also other disciplines is a task that researchers of global business communication can undertake. They have to show others the effect of culture on communication and its converse and highlight how much more enjoyable it is to have a multicultural workplace than a monolithic corporate culture, of communication or whatever.*

**Barry Thatcher** emphasizes the need for pragmatic application. He addresses this point explicitly when he writes:

*As academics, sometimes I think we are brought up in the tradition that what we study should only matter to us; and the fact that others do not recognize what we do is because others are simply ignorant. This is not a good approach. If we are challenged as to our role, we need to face the challenge. I think we can add value, often significant value.*

**Naoki Kameda** suggests a focus on the fundamentals of General Semantics:

*They can provide the most value to other disciplines by pursuing the propositions of General Semantics (GS), based on the premise that meanings reside in people, and expand GS study into more globalized arenas. For example, international arbitration problem-solving and similar contract and legal issues across nations and cultures definitely need the help of researchers in global business communication.*

Going in a different direction, one notable concern with a multidisciplinary approach is lack of expertise in the fields being researched. **Paul Verluyten** pointedly asks:

*How can we avoid amateurism given that our field is by definition interdisciplinary and wide? Given that the field demands knowledge in a wide range of academic areas, global business communication requires those who research it and teach it to wear a generalist's hat. Yet this begs the question of whether a generalist will have adequately researched the foundational specialized knowledge of the various academic fields from which global business communication has arisen.*

To illustrate this, **Paul Verluyten** gives a personal example from his own experience:

*As a former linguist, I am occasionally appalled to hear colleagues in business communication proffer linguistic explanations that make no sense whatsoever; experts coming from other fields (anthropology, sociology; perhaps to a lesser extent management and marketing) might feel the same.*

**Bertha Du-Babcock** provides a partial answer to Verluyten's question. On the one hand, she agrees that

*The field of global business communication has been largely built upon the underlying theories and research from other disciplines such as linguistics, business administration, social psychology, and anthropology.*

Yet, significantly, she insists that the field need not remain dependent on other fields. To this end, **Du-Babcock** calls for a theoretical foundation specific to the field:

*I see global business communication developing its own theory base as its core while continuing its eclectic nature of drawing on other disciplines.*

Thus, although global business communication may be interdisciplinary in its origins, Du-Babcock argues that the need exists for a theory base specific to global business communication. Indeed, **Bertha Du-Babcock** argues that the development of such a theory base has already begun. Du-Babcock suggests the creation of global business communication as a discipline in its own right. To illustrate this she cites:

*Theoretical developments in the field as illustrated by intercultural communication process models (e.g., the work of Linda Beamer), Business English as a Lingua Franca or BELF studies (e.g., the work of Leena Louhiala-Salminen, Mirjaliisa Charles and Anne Kankaanranta; and the work of Naoki Kameda), and the language-based communication zones model [Editor's Note: The latter model is the work of Bertha Du-Babcock and Richard Babcock, 2001, 2007]*

*The field is now at the stage where it can consolidate around its own theory base.*

Finally, **Daphne Jameson** suggests that the question itself is flawed:

*Rather than drawing on other disciplines and seeking to provide value to them, the field of business communication needs to focus on itself: developing its own theories, research methods, traditions of scholarship, and overarching intellectual goals.*

With that in mind, with this inaugural issue, it is hoped that this journal may indeed follow the suggestions here to help to develop the field of global business communication in and of itself. At the same time, it is hoped that this journal may serve as an outreach to other fields and disciplines in a unifying manner.

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## ***APPENDIX: PANELISTS' BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION***

### ***CLAIRE BABANOURY***

Claire Babanoury is Director of the French Language and Culture Program at the J.H. Lauder Institute of Management and International Studies connected to the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania. She also serves as Coordinator of the Penn Business Languages Faculty Group. Her mission is to gather and share the best teaching practices in the field of language and culture education for specific purposes, and to organize events on the Penn campus for faculty and students interested in the study of languages for business communication. Her previous career was in translation. She worked many years in Brussels for the Commission of the European Union as a French/English/German translator, specializing in the fields of development economics and migrant workers' social rights. Her research interests lie in content-based foreign language instruction and assessment, cross-cultural communication, and translation.

### ***RICHARD D. BABCOCK***

Richard D. Babcock, Ph.D. is Emeritus Professor Emeritus of Management at the University of San Francisco. He also has taught at Nijenrode University (the Netherlands), Hong Kong Baptist University (Hong Kong), and Murdoch University (Australia). Along with two colleagues, he is presently writing a book on international business communication.

### ***ROGER CONAWAY***

Roger Conaway, Ph.D. is a Full Professor in the School of Business at the Instituto Tecnológico y de Estudios Superiores de Monterrey (ITESM) campus at San Luis Potosí, México, teaching courses in

International Business and the Entrepreneur Program. He is co-author of two books, *Communicating Globally: Intercultural Communication and International Business* (Sage, 2007) and *Results Oriented Interviewing* (Allyn & Bacon, 1999). His research and publications currently focus on communicating corporate social responsibility. He is currently co-authoring a book with Oliver Laasch, *Communicating Business Responsibility* (Business Expert Press, 2012) and a book with Oliver Laasch and Nick Tolhurst, *Responsibility Management: Maximizing Social and Environmental Business Performance* (Cengage, 2014), the first United Nations Principles for Responsible Management Education (PRME) textbook. Formerly a distinguished professor at the University of Texas, Tyler campus, Dr. Conaway is a past President of the Association for Business Communication. He is also a lecturer in the Master of Arts in Responsible Management Program at Steinbeis University in Berlin, Germany.

#### ***BERTHA DU-BABCOCK***

Bertha Du-Babcock, Ph.D. is Associate Professor at the City University of Hong Kong. She is Vice-President for the Asia Pacific Region of the Association for Business Communication and has won several awards from that organization, including the Kitty O Locker Outstanding Researcher Award (2008), the Meada Gibbs Outstanding Teaching Award (2004) and the ABC Distinguished Member Award (2010). She has written widely and has received the *Business Communication Quarterly's* Outstanding Article of the Year (2001) and the *Journal of Business Communication's* Outstanding Article of the Year (2007). Presently, she is working on a special issue on *Business and Professional Communication in Asia* for the *Journal of Business and Technical Communication*. The issue is scheduled to be published in October 2013.

#### ***HADINA HABIL***

Hadina Habil, Ph.D. is Associate Professor attached to the Language Academy, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, Johor, Malaysia. She teaches discourse analysis as well as business and technical communication. Her research interests are in the areas of English for Specific Purposes, Business Communication, Computer Mediated Communication, and Language and Communication. She has presented and published papers in her area of interest nationally and internationally. She is Associate Editor of the *Global Advances in Business Communication Journal*.

#### ***BANIKANTA MISHRA***

Banikanta Mishra, Ph.D. is a Full Professor of Finance at the Xavier Institute of Management – Bhubaneswar (XIMB) in India. He has also taught at New York University, the University of Florida, Emory University, the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor, the University of Houston, the University of Texas-Dallas, the Indian Institute of Management at Calcutta, and the WHU – Otto Beisheim School of Management in Vallender, Germany. Dr. Mishra has published in the *Journal of Finance* and other leading periodicals worldwide, and has presented papers in the USA, UK, Australia, India, and Malaysia. He received Jules Bogen Fellowship (given to the best doctoral student) and Sloan Foundation Fellowship while at New York University and also the “Outstanding Paper Award” from Financial Management Association of the United States. He has been a director in and consultant and advisor to various corporations as well as academic and government entities in India and the United States.

*DAPHNE A. JAMESON*

Daphne A. Jameson, Ph.D. is a Full Professor at the Cornell University School of Hotel Management in Ithaca, New York where she has created and taught courses in managerial, intercultural, and organizational communication, as well as serving as Director of Graduate Studies. Dr. Jameson is a President of the Association for Business Communication. She has received several awards for her research including the *Journal of Business Communication's* Outstanding Article of the Year (2000), the *Business Communication Quarterly's* Outstanding Article of the Year (2004) and the Association for Business Communication's Kitty O. Locker Outstanding Researcher Award (2007). Her publications include studies of management communication in the restaurant industry, discourse in public debates about convention center location and cost, narrative strategy in investment reports, and the "green" rhetoric of environmental initiatives in the hotel industry.

*NAOKI KAMEDA*

Naoki Kameda, Ph.D. is a Full Professor of International Business Communication at the Faculty of Commerce and Graduate School of Commerce, Doshisha University in Kyoto, Japan. Dr. Kameda was CEO of an international audio manufacturer in Toyo before assuming his present position in 1993. He is the author of *Business Communication toward Transnationalism: The Significance of Cross-Cultural Business English and Its Role*, which won the ABC's distinguished publication award, *Managing Global Business Communication*, and more than a dozen other books. Dr. Kameda is a past Executive Director of the Japan Business Communication Association and has been Director of the Association for Business Communication.

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Orlando R. Kelm, Ph.D. is Associate Professor of Hispanic Linguistics at the University of Texas at Austin and Associate Director of Business Language Education for the Center for International Business Education and Research (CIBER) at the McCombs School of Business. His research and publications focus on two major areas: the cultural aspects of international business and the use of innovative technologies in foreign language education. He has produced numerous Internet-based works including, among others, cultural interviews with Chinese-speaking, German-speaking, Japanese-speaking, Portuguese-speaking, Spanish-speaking and Turkish-speaking executives. co-author with Mary Risner of *Brazilians Working with Americans: Cultural Case Studies* (2007). His latest book (2011), with co-authors John N. Doggett and Haiping Tang, is entitled *When We Are The Foreigners: What Chinese Think About Working With Americans* (2011).

*LEENA LOUHIALA-SALMINEN*

Leena Louhiala-Salminen, Ph.D. is Full Professor of International Business Communication at Aalto University School of Economics (former Helsinki School of Economics) in Helsinki, Finland. She is also Program Director of the Aalto ECON Master's Program in International Business Communication. Her main research interests include the various genres of business communication, the use of English as the

business lingua franca (BELF), and corporate communication in international contexts.

#### **PRISCILLA S. ROGERS**

Priscilla S. Rogers, Ph.D. is Associate Professor of Business Communication at the Ross School of Business, University of Michigan, currently teaching in Global MBA/Executive programs and coaching international in-company projects. She has held visiting appointments at Helsinki's Aalto University and Singapore's Nanyang Business School. The Association for Business Communication recognized her contributions with its Distinguished Member Award (1997) and Kitty O. Locker Outstanding Researcher Award (1999) and Distinguished Publication Award (2005). She has twice won the *Journal of Business Communication's* Best Article Award (in 2005 and 2008). She has trained for diverse organizations including Cathay Pacific Airways, Henry Ford Medical Group, and J.P. Morgan Chase.

#### **SHEILA L. SASSER**

Sheila L. Sasser, Ph.D. is Professor of Marketing and Integrated Marketing Communications at the Eastern Michigan University College of Business. She was Editor of the *Journal of Advertising's* Creativity Special Issue and serves on the editorial boards of the *International Journal of Advertising*, *International Journal of Integrated Marketing Communications* and *Journal of Advertising Research*. Dr. Sasser has also served as a Visiting Professor or faculty member at Michigan State University, the University of Michigan – Ann Arbor, Imperial College London, Wayne State University and the University of Waikato (New Zealand). Dr. Sasser is a recipient of the American Advertising Federation Adcraft PM's Award of Excellence.

#### **JOO-SENG TAN, PHD**

Joo-Seng Tan, PhD is Associate Professor at Nanyang Technological University in Singapore. His research on cross-cultural communication, cross-cultural negotiation, and cultural intelligence has been published in journal articles, book chapters, and books. His work on cultural intelligence *CQ: Developing Cultural Intelligence at Work* (Stanford University Press, 2006) is among the very first to apply cultural intelligence in the workplace.

#### **BARRY THATCHER**

Barry Thatcher, Ph.D. is Associate Professor of Rhetoric and Professional Communication at New Mexico State University and "Profesor Asociado" at El Colegio de Chihuahua, Ciudad Juarez, Mexico. He is Founder and Editor-in-Chief of *The Journal of Rhetoric, Professional Communication, and Globalization* and Co-Editor of *La Revista Latinoamericana de Retorica*. He is also the author of *Intercultural Rhetoric and Professional Communication* (IGI Global, 2011). He has published widely in the area of intercultural professional communication and rhetoric, rhetoric in Latin America, border literacy, and research methods. He has worked in a large variety of cross-border and globalization projects, including health, transportation, security, technology transfer, and education.

#### **AYSELI USLUATA**

Ayseli Usluata, Ph.D. is a Full Professor and Department Head of the Public Relations and Publicity Department, Faculty of Communication at Yeditepe University, Istanbul, Turkey. Dr. Usluata is the co-editor of *Global Media Journal - Turkish edition* and serves on the Advisory Board of the European Communication Research Education Association. She has previously served as a member of the Executive Council of the European Communication Association and was the Project Coordinator of Turkey for the Global Project of Women in Media for two consecutive years. She is the author of a book on communication in Turkish (Iletisim), co-author (with M. Martin), of *Political Cartoons of Female Power: A Comparative Study of Canada and Turkey* (2001). She has also contributed chapters to a number of academic books published both internationally and in Turkey. . Among the classes that she teaches is one that is part of the Global Classroom Project executed by the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

#### *IRIS I. VARNER,*

Iris I. Varner, Ph.D. is Professor Emeritus from Illinois State University where she was Director of the International Business Institute and Professor of International Business. She is co-author (with Linda Beamer) of *Intercultural Communication in the Global Workplace* (McGraw-Hill, 5th ed. 2010) which is used around the globe. She is the author of *Report Writing for Business* (Dryden Press). Dr. Varner has published over 100 articles, proceedings and case studies. She is an adjunct professor at the University of Dresden, Germany; the University of Lugano, Switzerland; and Shanghai University, China. Dr. Varner is a past President of the Association for Business Communication and the 1993 recipient of that association's Meada Gibbs Outstanding Teacher Award. She serves on the editorial board of several journals.

#### *S. PAUL VERLUYTEN*

S. Paul Verluyten, Ph.D. is professor of Intercultural Business Communication at the University of Antwerp and guest lecturer at Erasmus University Rotterdam, Maastricht University, the Maastricht School of Management and Poland's University of Gdańsk. He also bears the title of Senior Lecturer at the Devawongse Varopakarn Institute of Foreign Affairs in Bangkok, and has an honorary doctorate from Romania's University of Timișoara. Dr. Verluyten has taught courses at universities and organized intercultural training seminars for organizations and corporations in a wide variety of countries and settings in Europe, Asia and North America. His main audiences belong to the world of business, and international relations and diplomacy. He is the author of books, articles and case studies in the fields of intercultural communication and of business French. His latest book, *Intercultural Skills for International Business and International Relations. A Practical Introduction with Exercises* (ACCO Publishers,2010) is widely used as a textbook for intercultural business communication courses and training seminars in several countries. is Associate Editor of the *Global Advances in Business Communication Journal*.

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