

# International Journal of Education & the Arts

Editors

**Margaret Macintyre Latta**  
University of Nebraska-Lincoln, U.S.A.

**Christine Marmé Thompson**  
Pennsylvania State University, U.S.A.

<http://www.ijea.org/>

ISSN 1529-8094

---

Volume 12 Number 10

August 4, 2011

## **Meeting Face to Face = Seeing Eye to Eye?: Interglobal Dialogue via Videoconference**

Koon Hwee Kan  
Kent State University, U.S.A.

Citation: Kan, K. H. (2011). Meeting face to face = Seeing eye to eye?: Interglobal dialogue via videoconference. *International Journal of Education & the Arts*, 12(10). Retrieved [date] from <http://www.ijea.org/v12n10/>.

### **Abstract**

Based on a series of videoconferences held between two universities, one located in China and another in the United States, this pilot curriculum study illustrates how successful interglobal communication via synchronized educational technology requires detailed planning and the use of a substantial number of pedagogical strategies. Achieving the goals of broadening participants' international experience and promoting intercultural understanding of the discussion topics requires the instructor's appreciation of the cultural identification process at the global level. The author shares and discusses personal experiences and challenges with organizing this kind of collaboration between two higher education institutions across national borders, and provides initial implementation and instructional guidelines.

## Introduction

“Can all of you feel the beauty of people’s body with defamiliarized forms?” The Chinese translator’s perfect pronunciation of every word without a trace of accent during one videoconference session impressed me and my whole class of U. S. graduate students on a dark November evening. The translator’s question accompanied a PowerPoint slide of a female’s back with intricate, ornamental patterns resembling a decorative vase from the Ming dynasty. An adjacent image on the same slide showed two well-shaped female legs also painted with colorful embellishments. At the lower left corner of the full screen was a tiny embedded screen that captured the image of our colleagues, a large classroom of energetic and attentive Chinese students facing us in broad daylight.



*Figure 1.* Videoconferencing in Action I: Establishing Connections

“Oh, yes, this reminds me of a tattoo!” one of my students at a Midwestern American university responded politely and agreeably, despite a little fatigue in her voice. During the day, the majority of my students were full-time public school art teachers, who drove miles to campus for evening classes; others squeezed in as many credit hours as possible to prepare themselves for teaching positions following graduation. My small graduate seminar focused

on the study of the history and philosophy of art and education within the contexts of social, economic, political, psychological, and cognitive dimensions from the beginnings of Western art education in ancient Greece to the present time. This seminar was my first attempt to include an interglobal dialoguing component.

“What? A tattoo! You are so superficial,” came the exasperated and challenging reply from one of our overseas counterparts. An impromptu debate erupted, lasting more than an hour. A whirlpool of heated arguments spun crazily—from objectification of the female body to controversial gender issues, from contrasting national icons to contesting cultural taboos. Unable to reach any ultimate consensus, both sides left the session exhausted, anxious, and somewhat perplexed. This close encounter had radically shifted perceptions and altered attitudes. The exchange happened quite unexpectedly and may even have been a bit painful, unintentionally forcing everyone to abandon their comfort zones. Interglobal dialoguing, just like intercultural communication, can illuminate assumptions about personal aesthetic taste, artistic judgments, and cultural values. This incident also shed light on the presuppositions people often make about how others should feel, think, behave, or respond. Yet without critical examination and acute reflexivity, an individual making such presumptions can also easily take for granted which aspect of his or her multifaceted identity could connect with or disjoin from others.

### **Overview of the Interglobal Dialogue Experience**

From a conceptual perspective, this manuscript explores the overlapping definitions of interglobal and intercultural communication that lie at the heart of “face-to-face interaction amongst those of diverse cultural background” (Jandt, 2010, p. 45). From a practical perspective, this paper illustrates how intensified communication across national borders via videoconferencing requires detailed planning and the use of a substantial number of pedagogical strategies. I will share challenges and organizational experiences I had during this project that involved two higher education institutions with the common goal of broadening the international exposure of college students and promoting intercultural understanding of the discussion topics. Implementation guidelines as well as instructional recommendations will be discussed briefly. To begin, I will try to interpret and decipher the above-mentioned drama that unfolded on the cyber platform as an intercultural social event with thick description (Holliday, Hyde, & Kullman, 2010); then, I will reconsider its multilayeredness and complexity for pedagogical implications, especially for the interglobal dialoguing approach in art education.

To return to what had happened during that session, the lively debate had ensued when one American student interpreted an art form as a tattoo. The word *tattoo*, in use by the Maori people in New Zealand long before the arrival of European settlers, denotes a cultural practice

with a significant history. Body art typically exemplifies how community heritage and culturally significant meaning are shared through an aesthetic form (Anderson, 1990) instead of through wordy discourse. When such prestigious ethnic art left its original context and was transferred to another context via the forces of globalization (e. g., colonialism, postcolonialism, consumerism), meanings, values, purposes, and functions originally associated with the art form became expansive and messy (Clifford, 1988). Even the functions of nouns and verbs were blurred across time and space. What constitutes a manifestation of identity—having a tattoo, the tattoo itself, or the act of tattooing?

In the conventional social climate of the U. S. Midwest, a tattoo could be viewed as just another favorable personal statement/icon on display on the body. For others, however, tattooing manifests as an act of rebellion against authority, even though it is legal across the United States: the state of New York legalized the tattoo trade in 1997 (Schepens, 2003), and Oklahoma was the last state to do so in 2006 (Romano, 2005). In today's U. S. college culture, tattooing is often viewed as just another trivial cultural phenomenon, although removing a tattoo is not as easy to accomplish as its imprint (Trojanowski, 2010). It is closely associated with common decoration of the human body, such as the temporarily painted faces and limbs appearing at celebrations and group activities including football games and carnivals. Despite disapproval in some preparatory or training programs and fields (e. g., nursing, teacher education, business management, law enforcement), the ideology of freedom and libertarianism associated with having a tattoo prevails.

During the videoconference, the Chinese graduate class (composed of students nominated from a few visual art disciplines) could not see the equivalence of tattooing and body art. After all, the tattoo in almost all Asian cultures has acquired its own historical documentation full of negative connotations, undesirably connected with transgression and marginal cultural groups such as underground societies, prostitutes, and criminals. Widely used as a form of penalty, the act of tattooing also belongs to a larger legal schema by which delinquents are identified. Globally, however, contemporary popular culture and mass media have capitalized on its negative connotations to arouse consumer curiosity. A change in the title of a Swedish novel *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* (originally *Men Who Hate Women*) by Stieg Larsson before publication considerably boosted its sales because the new, provocative title embodies mystery and suspense. What became marketable went beyond suggestive associations with age and gender, and the transgressive nature of this cultural practice piqued the interest of readers.

Within the field of art education in North America, the tattoo has received coverage both as body art for teenagers (Blair, 2007) and as performance of democracy (Blandy & Congdon, 1987). Advocacy of unconventional cultural artifacts and marginalized cultural phenomenon

in public school art curricula on various levels (Duncum, 2006) has been popularized in the United States along with the broadening definition of art education to include visual culture (Duncum, 2003) and material culture (Bolin & Blandy, 2003). However, new trends emerging center stage in the art world do not automatically qualify as curriculum subject matter in educational settings. School is a strong, normalizing cultural force. Art educators and practitioners especially seek deeper layers of meanings when works of art reside at the boundaries between high and low culture. This border space is where functions, meanings, and purposes of art intermingle, change, penetrate, and cross the dimensions of class, ethnicity, and locality, or one's identity, lived experience, and living culture.

The need for appropriateness of images and artifacts requires art educators to exercise systematic and careful scrutiny. A heightened intercultural competence can inform such investigation. The need for appropriateness of presentation is equally worthy of close scrutiny. Through digitalization and advanced image manipulation techniques, the unique characteristics of an image—totality and stillness—have become easily transformable (Bailey & Gardiner, 2010). In our case, this was illustrated by two images appearing together on a slide in a PowerPoint presentation shown across thousands of miles to illustrate a concept. I herein hypothesized that a partnership between arts education with the new discipline of visual studies could engender greater curiosity regarding the relationship between texts, images, presentation, representation, and meanings, thus promoting digital literacy as advocated by Snyder and Bulfin (2007).

Believing is seeing—this continued discourse testifies once again that context, language, and education disproportionately shape perception. The multiple understandings and debate that took place during our videoconferencing exposed the inadequacy of defamiliarization, articulated by the Russian aesthetician Viktor Shklovsky, as a theoretical framework to explain human perception and recognition of what art is. Instead of shielding everyone's experience of seeing so that they could partake in a disinterested examination of the aesthetic form and engage in an intellectual appreciation of its unusual and appealing qualities, participants' assumptions were shattered into numerous kaleidoscopic views during such close encounters with the others. As a result, decontextualized questionings arose, each worthy of further deconstruction and awaiting reconstruction.



*Figure 2.*      **Videoconferencing in Action II: Exchanging Ideas**

Despite its somewhat awkward manifestation, this face-to-face dialoguing in virtual space had accomplished one of its goals—impelling respective participants to pause so as to reassess cultural identification as a complex process in progress. Developing one's intercultural competence entails an expansion of self-concept, i.e., to become increasingly sensitive to what previously unknown devices could be used to encode and decode personal identity. Reflection of the self-image as perceived by others is often conveniently performed through *othering* (Holliday et. al, 2010). A broadening concept of the self and a better understanding of the self are difficult to attain without the presence of others; hence, a sharp contrast between one's self-concept and someone else's perception could be conducive to growth and speedy development. Jean Piaget's classical developmental theory has been cited to buttress the notion and value of dissonant experiences when encountering unfamiliarity abroad, and the consequent disequilibrium has been argued as necessary to accelerate change and also deepen cultural learning (Che, Spearman, & Manizade, 2009). Before our unexpected conflict, participants of the videoconferencing project, instructors and students alike, were barely aware of personal cultural identification beyond the individuals' obvious role in the classroom setting. During the debate over the meaning of the on-screen image, new roles were enacted

across the cyber platform—as learners of one another’s cultures (including that of those residing within the same classroom space) and also as performers of self-image.

### **Project Outline**

Data collected for analysis and interpretation in this curriculum project included the following: all participating students’ PowerPoints used for presentation and their accompanying scripts, mass email exchanges, my students’ journal assignments, photo-documentation of all three videoconference sessions, and partial video clips from the final session. Another set of data that served as the basis for my critical reflections were my personal journal entries kept over that semester, concept maps developed to document significant steps and problematic situations, and personal email correspondence with the Chinese instructor, students, and working technicians. The two years’ worth of correspondence that followed these videoconferences that led to another new collaborative project was also used to triangulate data.

During the fall semester of 2008, students at my university held three biweekly interglobal dialogues with students from a normal university in China (HNU) via videoconference. Participants from both universities engaged in lively discussions focusing on (a) art and aesthetics; (b) education and experience; and (c) globalization, localization, and education, all viewed through their personal cultural lenses. Before our official communication through videoconferencing, the students exchanged simple self-introductions via PowerPoint, sharing with one another their personal artistic work and scholarship. After the third videoconference, administrators and professors from both universities held their own summative evaluation session. Prior to the establishment of the virtual connection, I maintained frequent contact with my Chinese counterparts and consulted technology experts at both sites to ensure compatibility of technical support. Between the sessions, I worked closely with small groups of the Chinese students to expand their understanding of the assignment requirements.

Students at my university shared their research on local community art, such as the campus landmark *Behind the Brain*, a sculpture by Brinsley Tyrrell, and other area works by renowned architects, including the Peter B. Lewis Building designed by Frank Gehry for the Weatherhead School of Management at Case Western Reserve University. Other architectural structures in northeast Ohio featured for their unique designs and functions included the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame by I. M. Pei and the recently renovated, energy-efficient Akron Art Museum. The work of Harlem Renaissance artist Romare Bearden was introduced to illustrate one artist’s vision of the beauty of everydayness. Students at my university explained how our art education program promotes thematic and issues-based approaches as the foundation for the K–12 art education curriculum. By emphasizing the importance of artistic inquiry and creative interpretations of artworks, both past and contemporary, the teacher preparation

program at my university ensures meaningful and exciting art experiences for children and young adults.

The HNU students took a more formal approach to the common readings assigned for this videoconference, including Freeland's *But Is It Art?*, Berger's *Ways of Seeing*, and Chanda's *Bound Together: How Traders, Preachers, Adventurers, and Warriors Change Globalization*. They introduced the aesthetics of defamiliarization with exquisite examples, including the 2008 Olympic sports stadium known as "The Bird's Nest," the Terra Cotta Army of Xi'an, and Chinese calligraphy. HNU students also shared an insightful presentation on how globalization impacts the visual culture/national art of China by juxtaposing recent works from several Chinese avant-garde artists and classical artworks. They delivered a persuasive explanation of how local folk art can be transformed into motifs for fashion design, reinstituting a place for art within an economic system and permeating its invaluable historical and cultural characteristics with a market value.

### **Significance of Global Learning and Arts Education**

In this millennium, the new global community linked up through advanced technology is vulnerable and in need of more open platforms to discuss and negotiate clashing values and differences. The *clash of civilizations* (Huntington, 1996) remains an unpopular theoretical speculation for those who would prefer to ignore hard facts of emerging conflicts and rising unrest between certain regions and cultures. Even within the same culture, clashes and aggressions are ubiquitous as a result of opposing ideals, interests, and beliefs. Misunderstandings due to differences will not be easily smoothed over by pretending that nothing has happened historically. The hope for a future where reconciliations of cultural differences automatically take place in harmony seems overly optimistic. Nonetheless, interglobal dialoguing provides a means and an inception point for productively confronting contemporary global realities.

Internationalizing programs in U. S. higher education has thus become an avidly pursued institutional goal, often through various cultural exchanges and study abroad initiatives (Lewin, 2009). Kenneth Cushner (2009) asserted that early exposure to international education in teacher preparation programs lays the necessary foundation for preservice teachers to develop a global perspective on complex issues. As a result, they are more likely to transfer the cultivation of globalized citizenship to K–12 settings. Therefore, I hereby propose using dialoguing as an approach to internationalize teacher preparation programs. Dialoguing nurtures the formation of a mutually shared learning space for expanding one's scope of knowledge, polishing a variety of interaction skills, and exchanging ideas and values. It is an indispensable component for any interglobal curriculum and enhances global learning for preservice teachers, incubating a mindset receptive to eventual engagement in a global



community. Since globalization has exposed the multiple manifestations of the arts from diverse cultures that are separated by vast geographical distance and divided by varied developmental pace, dialoguing is therefore highly recommended for arts education as well.

At present, both the art world and the education enterprises are besieged by neoliberalism (i. e., the mentality of monopolizing a market for profit). An abundance of ethnic art and performances, cultural images and artifacts, identities and communities cross paths with one another as a result of globalization. Spurred by hedonism, busy transactions on *eBay* and prolific consumption patterns conveniently justify acquisitive habits with invested personal meanings. Consumerism uncritically validates individuals' reasons for purchase and collection. As a result, consumers may unconsciously trivialize the meaning of cultural sacredness and treat those from disadvantaged cultures unjustly, further marginalizing those cultures at the periphery. A disruption of this trend by critical pedagogy and postcolonialism—resistance to dominant ideologies presented as benevolent threat—is much needed. Critical reexamination of youth cultural phenomena as sites for and performance of identity (Giroux, 2001) necessitates careful reassessment of how meanings and values can be shaped and constructed through discourse (language).

Verbal discourse about aesthetic theories and concepts from opposing paradigms can easily lead to confrontational debate because aesthetic values are deeply engrained into one's taste and preferences. These aesthetic values are often unconscious, interconnected with one's upbringing, and accrued with other dimensions of one's personal value system, including social, ethical, national, and family values. Predetermined parameters may interfere with the scope and depth of coverage in a verbal or written discourse; however, additional unique characteristics of dialoguing distinguish it from a common conversation and privilege this pedagogical approach in interglobal education. Dialoguing aims to eliminate the pressure of a single authoritative voice that may dominate a conversation so as to pay extra attention to the nuances of all participants' speech content and patterns (Bakhtin, 1981), especially in terms of their unique contributions and with the goal of developing multiple perspectives from which negotiations for reciprocal meanings can emerge.

If globalization is perceived as a reshuffling of people and cultures due to advancement in transportation technology that has compacted both time and space, close encountering is eminent. With increased speed of travel and expedited migration processes (not all of which are voluntary), experiences have become less familiar and communications are more abrupt; no wonder the anxiety surrounding cultural displacement has been transformed from intellectual debate to public discourses. However, advanced communication technology is promising some comfort through videoconferencing. The objective of reaching across continents and time zones can be accomplished using a high-speed Internet connection and advanced synchronized technology that establishes a virtual platform. After several



**Figure 3. Videoconferencing in Action III: Discussing Possibilities**

generations of evolution from the videophones invented in AT&T labs during the 1960s, the maturity of technology has made such interaction easily accessible (Tomadaki, Scott, & Quick, 2010). While education professionals catch up, videoconferencing has already proliferated in business and industry because of its marvelous cost- and time-saving functions. Even James Cameron, director of the multimillion-dollar movie *Avatar*, outsourced most special effects to New Zealand while he used videoconferencing to supervise and remotely control the actualization of his vision (Goodyear, 2009). In the political domain, reports and photos of world leaders engaged in videoconferencing, as shown in *Time* or *Newsweek*, record critical worldwide negotiations carried out around the clock as well as project the image of top officers being involved in ongoing conversations about foreign policy.

With almost every newly manufactured computer and cell phone equipped with built-in video cameras, free interactive software such as SKYPE, and Wi-Fi facilities available at most venues, keeping in touch with a group or as a community has never been so convenient. In addition to exploring the possibility of desktop videoconferencing in the near future, three institutions (Singapore Nanyang Technological University, University of North Carolina, and Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Zurich) are investing in the research and

development of a telepresence system through which the virtual projection of participants' 3-D pseudo presence in the same physical space is viable (Bertha, Chng, Oo, & Ong, 2011).

### **Significance of the Project**

When conceptualizing the content and pedagogy for this graduate curriculum, special emphasis was placed on learners' engagement with the novel cultural tool of videoconferencing. I also embraced the concept that the presence of compatible, competent, and engaged peers in a particular environment (the virtual space) could be a most crucial feature of the zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978) for adult learners in mastering intercultural competence.

Students from both universities expressed enjoyment in the unique experience of interacting with one another across time zones (7 p. m. in the U. S. Midwest is already 8 a. m. the next morning in Asia). Reaching across continents in cyberspace is thrilling. Both sides quickly acknowledged the unavoidable impact of globalization on all walks of life and reconfirmed the importance of maintaining continuous dialogue. An explicit confirmation from my Chinese partners reaffirmed the purpose of such interaction:

When considering the long history of Chinese civilization (over 3,500 years), we note that the ancient Chinese knew they did not live at the center of the world. The silk route is concrete evidence. In this millennium the Internet makes all kinds of cultural exchange easier and more sophisticated. We should use it fully to promote cultural exchange and dialogue. (Videoconference participant, personal communication, 2009)

Enthusiastic participants were also able to scaffold upon the ideas and perspectives of the instructors and peers from two countries to expedite optimal learning. During one sharing, a student posted this note, which received immediate applause from both sides.

We think that globalization is an unavoidable occurrence these days with mass media's influence. . . . Globalization is inevitable because its impact happens everywhere, and everyone is connected with advance technology, just like our classes are doing right now—we are globalization in action (Videoconference participant, personal communication, 2008).

Based on the videoconference experience, I assessed that a significant degree of educational growth had taken place for all participants through such an intense engagement. My belief in the value of videoconferencing for furthering the continuity of learners' personal experiences (Dewey, 1938) was strengthened. Transformative learning took place as students questioned

the ownership of artifacts and copyrights often taken for granted: Whose art? Whose facts? Whose copy? Whose right? When students questioned the commercialization of art and education, they went a step further in challenging their inculturated system of thought, thus embarking on a journey together to deconstruct their own axioms. As one of them stated,

It seems like globalization is a double-edged sword in some respects. Because although it brings attention to national treasure and brings the world together, sometimes, such as in the case of souvenirs, it may trivialize importance of some of these treasures, such as the souvenir of the terra cotta army of China. . . . So we wonder is globalization a symptom of excessive consumerism? (Videoconference participant, personal communication, 2008)



**Figure 4. Videoconferencing in Action IV: Communicating Differences**

Although participants from both sites applauded one another's efforts to share research on local arts and cultural communities to help make meaningful connections, close proximity during meetings in cyberspace did not necessarily mean seeing eye to eye on a number of issues during discussion. Witnessing Michel Foucault's confrontation of academia and

epistemological structure (1972) enacted in real life without purposeful lecturing and explicit teaching was most captivating and satisfying for me as the instructor; however, as the organizer who initiated this videoconference, I was equally intrigued with helping students uphold a sense of respect and openness of attitude toward cultural differences during interglobal communications by demolishing the walls that result from cultural and ideological differences. I became even more inspired to further expand and develop the approach to bridge the chasm across borders in future interactions upon hearing a subtle comment from my Chinese collaboration partner after this videoconference: “In the humanities and the arts, cultural exchange, connection, and dialogue are always important even though there might be a fear that the characteristics of different cultures would be destroyed as a result of cultural exchange and interaction” (Art History Professor Sun Ningning, personal communication, 2009).

### **Challenges of Interglobal Course Delivery via Videoconference**

Being an eye witness to a paradigm shift in students’ thinking as a result of interactions made possible by videoconferencing has enhanced my faith in using this technology to facilitate interglobal curricula. However, facilitating group discussion via synchronized technology across vast distance and several time zones presents its own unique challenges. Foremost, the scheduling itself (during which time of the year? month and day? plus or minus how many hours of daylight saving time?) needs careful coordination to produce reciprocal enthusiasm. In this case, my graduate students had difficulty being cheerful at the end of their long day. During another videoconferencing project, my undergraduates became antsy about prolonging dialoging on difficult issues as it neared dinnertime, while HNU participants had difficulties remaining attentive as the body clocks for these early risers were not charged with adequate vibes at daybreak. Even the room design as perceived from the receiving end affected the psychology of the dialoging participants (Burke, Lundin, & Daunt, 1997). On one occasion, after explaining to a HNU administrator that the central heating at my university had caused everyone to dress minimally and quite casually, I sensed his tacit disapproval although I was not showing off the affluence of our surroundings. Another issue was the unpredictability of massive Internet usage between both countries that had direct impact on transmission speed and quality. In one instance, our connection was particularly slow, and our conversation was severely interrupted by pixilated images and fuzzy noise. Although both sides worked diligently to solve technological incompatibilities, we later determined that the opening of polls for the historic U. S. presidential election in 2008 might have drawn additional Internet users from both countries.

Unlike in a real-life face-to-face situation when nonverbal communication cues could substitute for spoken words and aid in gauging understanding, synchronized technology could permit only a minimal show of such attentiveness and responsiveness. Among the eight nonverbal communications discussed by Anderson (1999), the fundamental differences of

proxemics and chronemics in one's experience and perception—one's sense of time and space—embody the greatest cultural differences. In my experience, neither was firmly established during the videoconferencing, which might have skewed the perception and the experience of dialoguing. Time lags between statements and responses tested my orchestrating ability, and multitasking at times exhausted my patience. As the course instructor, I was paranoid about punctuality, starting each hour-and-a-half session on time and concluding in time for students at my university to drive long distances home on winter nights. As moderator and time-keeper, I was anxious about the coverage and pacing of each discussion topic. Unexpected moments of silence as a result of a minor technical issue may impede dialoguing, and all eyes (including those of the preassigned translators) were upon me as the translator-cum-interpreter because I am fluent in both languages.

It was virtually impossible to distinguish cultural differences in learning from the participants' outward appearance, and so it was hard to adjust accordingly. Limitations on immediate oculesic (eye) responses occurred due to time lapses during transmission; limitations on kinesic reactions took place because participants at both sites faced one another or actually faced a computer screen. Both kinds of limitations may have even projected an awkwardly confrontational atmosphere, suggesting the need for an umpire to arbitrate what was happening. Detectable vocal nuances in tone, volume, and voice qualities were also vastly distorted or delayed in electronic transmission (I realized the huge gap only after a face-to-face meeting with my Chinese counterparts during a later trip to Beijing when our conversational exchange in Mandarin went back and forth at a fast pace with no pauses). Fortunately, in this collaboration we did not encounter any echoing problem with the use of microphones, unlike what occurred in the videoconferencing projects reported by O'Brien and Alfano (2009). Finally, the high-tech virtual space completely lacked the presence of the olfactory and the tactile, unlike in a real-time meeting place. In fact, the high-tech videoconferencing venue on my campus smelled of newness, a sharp contrast with the usual shabby seminar room.

Participants in the videoconferencing platform could be severely handicapped by their partial experience, and the oppositional set-up became their immediate, perceived reality. They may have been more than likely to present a reflective self-image of what they desired the others to know about them. Just as what happens when strangers encounter each other, there is a likelihood of resorting to an intergroup style of communication in these situations (Gudykunst & Kim, 2003). Because of the obvious geographical separation, even I could not help but evaluate the performance of both groups of students through a skewed essentialist lens.



**Figure 5. Videoconferencing in Action V: Confronting Issues**

The formative structures of education and curriculum promote different mindsets that encourage varied problem-solving strategies. One of the comparisons in Hofstede's *Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind* indicated that a collectivistic culture (e. g., East Asian countries) may favor an approach to education in which traditional knowledge is extracted with new applications, while an individualistic culture (e. g., England, the United States) values challenges to the existing knowledge structure and theory. My constructivist approach to pedagogy and curriculum design that places high value on individualistic knowledge formation suffered some setbacks in this context of premeditated interaction. I did not explicitly share the social constructivist approach underlying my curriculum with HNU administrators and instructors, initially assuming their viewpoints would be similar and later fearing my views would be taken as prescriptive. My reluctance to provide conclusive remarks after each session despite urging from my Chinese partners might have been quite puzzling to them. In my idealized constructivist learning environment, students predominantly use inductive thinking to problem-solve while simultaneously constructing their personal knowledge. Applying personal effort and initiative to gather evidence from their daily lives and systematically organizing collected information are invaluable educational outcomes. To further promote meaningful and responsible applications of knowledge, I require students to present their research findings formally so as to complete their inquiry as a social endeavor.

In contrast, HNU graduate students are more accustomed to solidifying theoretical structures as learning outcomes. They demonstrated competence and understanding by employing deductive thinking and precise methodology to locate convincing examples that illustrate and buttress theories. The expectation of dialoguing in English also put them at somewhat of a disadvantage. At times, the students at my university had difficulties understanding their Chinese counterparts' accents, which also led to misinterpretation of certain terminology. Stalled interaction resulted in the tendency to revert to the translator's interpretations. Another learning obstacle facing these students, of which I was made aware after the videoconference, was the inaccessibility of up-to-date resources, including translated literature and references. In addition, the 2009 media policy of installing screening software can be especially detrimental to intellectual freedom because many Internet sites were blocked by firewalls, stifling independent research.

### **Providing an Interglobal Course via Videoconferencing**

We can locate many historical antecedents of cultural exchange in classical Chinese history even though *China* in the Chinese language means "the kingdom/country in the center." Openness, rationality, and calmness were amazing characteristics of the ancient Chinese people. Such attitudes were also clearly reflected in classical Chinese literature and the arts. (Sun Ningning, personal communication, 2009)

Julius (2009) outlined three key issues for administrators of American colleges to consider when setting up exchange programs with their Chinese counterparts: (a) goals and priorities, (b) educational system, and (c) institutional infrastructure and commitment. From this outline, I developed an understanding of what discreetly sets revenue-tapping American colleges apart from recognition-seeking Chinese universities. This understanding influences my reflections on how to navigate the uncharted waters of interglobal dialoguing via videoconference. A Chinese proverb reminds me always to be patient: "It takes tens of years to grow trees and hundreds of years to grow [educate] people."

### **Initial Planning and Organization**

Unlike the open source initiative in Stanford University's Cross-Cultural Rhetoric Project (O'Brien & Alfano, 2009), my university employed a regional, commercial-brand vendor for the equipment and the repair or replacement of all videoconferencing hardware and software. The three levels of integrating videoconferencing technology and facilities included a few



fully integrated classrooms of various sizes as well as venues and mobile facilities to accommodate medium-sized group interactions (five to eight persons) and small-group participation (two to three persons). Because the cost of equipment can range from the astronomical investment of US\$30,000–\$50,000 for a fully integrated classroom to as little as US\$100 for a simple camera mount with compatible software on a high-speed computer, convincing the administrations of HNU regarding the potential of similar alliances and investments became crucial.

A successful partnership begins with aligning priorities and establishing common goals that both parties can accomplish together in the long run, not merely with making fanciful promises to serve temporary self-interests. Capitalizing on such joint ventures to support reciprocal curriculum design or to improve instruction at both institutions may prove to be highly favorable educational outcomes. Launching long-term plans and matching funding to facilitate the establishment of mutually credited courses or programs at both institutions are equally attractive and might be more tantalizing reasons for collaboration. My optimism was boosted when I discovered that even educational policy and practice explicitly serving an economic agenda can uphold more than commercial values. Policy and practice can become interglobal endorsements that eventually serve civic purposes for mutual gain and greater benefits (Pang, 2009).

### **Implementation and Coordination**

Organizers should value the time to establish relationships and exercise patience in cultivating partnerships. In my case, I had not anticipated beginning interaction in a highly supervised atmosphere and initial operation with limited guidelines and feedback. However, patience was the only dispositional quality among four critical issues that Tu (2004) deemed indispensable when setting up online collaborative learning communities, and I did my best to practice it. For the videoconference experience to gradually increase and intensify communication, the intervals between sessions must provide sufficient time for participants from both locations to warm up to one another. More important was the off-air time that allowed both parties to reflect and prepare for the next on-air dialogue.

When approaching HNU administration with plans for collaboration, I was systematic, diplomatic, and glad that my writing skills incorporated the cultural sensitivity I had acquired through immersion in classical Chinese literature. Word choice in translation on the international stage can cause remarkable impacts, especially when word choice is attached to national pride intermingled with cultural sentimentality (Samovar & Porter, 2003). I recommend enlisting the help of key experts in order to understand emic principles governing social correspondence, such as compatibility of rank and social status, and cultural nuances such as the formality of speech needed to greet and address those senior to you. The

complicated and indirect styles and forms of communication can be quite a contrast to Western/European cultures (Kainzbauer & Haghirian, 2009).

Organizers must be cognizant of wide-ranging perceptions of intellectual property rights, work obligations, and operating ethics among those involved in such joint projects (Spencer-Oatey, 2007). Conflicting principles and especially issues pertaining to reputation require tactful negotiation and careful reframing. After all, effective intercultural communication involves successful maintenance of the cultural identity presented by all parties (Gudykunst & Kim, 2003). Moreover, the issue of face (*mian* or *lian*) in Chinese culture can be strikingly complex when interwoven with an underlying ideological framework of power and generational consciousness (Jia, 2003).

### **Behind the Scenes**

Technical support and professional consultants are imperative to capitalize on the full capacity of videoconferencing. Befriending all backstage technicians and empowering these associates to envision the meaning and purpose of interglobal adventure is essential. Often less concerned about “face” and “pride,” technicians and consultants act with a greater sense of urgency and are also extremely helpful in ensuring that the details of high-tech collaboration work well in situ. I strongly encourage selecting a panel of student participants that includes English majors who specialize in language translation; however, double-check the training of these translators as the debate I described earlier could very well have resulted from the perceptions of the translator. Because epistemology affects communication (Klyukanov, 2005), stronger emphasis placed on the appreciation of diversity within cultural identification can also readily remedy any shortcomings during face-to-face interactions.

### **Recommendations for Videoconferencing**

Recommendations for instructors interested in trying out interglobal dialoguing via videoconference in their courses include the following:

1. Interconnectedness is the foundation of interglobal dialoguing. Being able to think quickly and having an acute sense of intercultural communication developed from previous experience, whether through business, military, or communication approaches (Jandt, 2010), may aid instructors in preparing courses and even in initial troubleshooting.
2. Passively listening to presentations can be least productive during videoconferencing, while simple collaborative assignments that require group reconfiguration at both locations can improve the dynamic of interglobal dialoguing. Applying contact theory to resolve intergroup conflicts (Ellis & Maoz, 2003) promotes the formation of smaller

groupings consisting of members from both sides working toward co-established goals and jointly created meanings.

3. It is important to complement course delivery in videoconferencing with other online courseware to allow asynchronized collaborations. Devise exercises for participants to practice *dis-closure* (Klyukanov, 2005) and the sharing of cultural information in small increments. A follow-up assignment to the self-introductory PowerPoint could include sharing one's daily encounters with visual and material culture as icebreakers before delving into the identification of local resources and the presentation of information as art.
4. Parameters for using the SMARTS concept (Thomas, 2009) for better learning outcomes can be jointly determined, but flexibility is equally important to support each other arriving at intercultural competence at varying speeds. Instead of playing so many roles and becoming swamped by multitasking, I could have given participants at both sites opportunities to take over some of the responsibilities, such as keeping time or serving as session moderator.
5. Having a choice of common readings with available translation can often reduce the uneasiness of non-English speakers/students who may be most concerned that their interpretations and understanding of the content is accurate (Littrell, 2006). For reciprocity in the future, I would definitely include selected readings translated into English for my American graduate students so that they could better appreciate multiple perspectives, writing styles, and the challenges of translation. Moreover, I am certain that these additional recommended materials would only enrich my classroom and teaching as well as my own interglobal understanding in art education.

### **Acknowledgments**

My gratitude goes to Dr. Dai, Vice-president of HNU, for his full support of this videoconferencing project. I am indebted to Dr. Mary Lou Holly and the KSU Faculty Professional Development Center for twice awarding me the Moulton Scholarship and sustaining my curiosity to conduct research about educational technology and improve my teaching. Many special thanks to all participating students, faculty members, staff, and technical consultants at both universities. I am also thankful for excellent editorial assistance from Dr. Linda Meixner, Tom Gates, and Ann Priland. Any remaining weakness is mine

### **References**

- Anderson, P. A. (1999). *Nonverbal communication: Forms and functions*. Mountain View, CA: Mayfield.

- Anderson, R. (1990). *Calliope's sisters*. Eaglewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Bailey, C., & Gardiner, H. (2010). *Revisualizing visual culture*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate.
- Bakhtin, M. (1981). *The dialogic imagination*. (C. Emerson & M. Holquist, Trans.). Austin: University of Texas Press. (Original work published 1935).
- Berger, J. (1972). *Ways of seeing*. Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin.
- Bertha, H., Chng, G., Oo, G. L., & Ong, B. K. (Eds). (2011, February 2). Digital life: Every Wednesday with the Straits Times. *The Straits Times*, 6 & 20.
- Blair, L. (2007). Tattoos & Teenagers: An Art Educator's Response. *Art Education*, 60(5), 39-44.
- Blandy, D., & Congdon, K. (1987). *Art in democracy*. New York, NY: Teachers' College Press.
- Bolin, P., & Blandy, D. (2003). Beyond visual culture: Seven statements of support for material culture studies in art education. *Studies in Art Education*, 44(3), 246–263.
- Burke, C., Lundin, R., & Daunt, C. (1997). Pushing the boundaries of interaction in videoconferencing: A dialogical approach. *Distance Education*, 18(2), 350–359.
- Chanda, N. (2007). *Bound together: How traders, preachers, adventurers, and warriors shaped globalization*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Che, S., Spearman, M., & Manizade, A. (2009). Constructive disequilibrium: Cognitive and emotional development through dissonant experiences in less familiar destinations. In R. Lewin (Ed.), *The handbook of practice and research in study abroad: Higher education and the quest for global citizenship* (pp. 99–116). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Clifford, J. (1988). *The predicament of culture: Twentieth-century ethnography, literature, and art*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Cushner, K. (2009). The role of study abroad in preparing globally responsible teachers. In R. Lewin (Ed.), *The handbook of practice and research in study abroad: Higher education and the quest for global citizenship* (pp. 151–169). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Dewey, J. (1938). *Experience and education*. New York, NY: Collier.
- Duncum, P. (2003). The theories and practices of visual culture in art education. *Arts Education Policy Review*, 105(2), 19–25.
- Duncum, P. (2006). *Visual culture in the art class: Case studies*. Reston, VA: National Art Education Association.

- Ellis, D. G., & Maoz, I. (2003). Dialogue and cultural communication codes between Israeli-Jews and Palestinians. In L. A. Samovar & R. E. Porter (Eds.), *Intercultural communication: A reader* (pp. 223–230). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thomson Learning.
- Foucault, M. (1972). *The order of things: Archaeology of the human sciences*. New York, NY: Vintage Books.
- Freeland, C. (2002). *But is it art?* New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Giroux, H. (2001). *Stealing innocence: Youth, corporate power, and the politics of culture*. New York, NY: St. Martin's Press.
- Goodyear, D. (2009, October 26). Man of extremes: The return of James Cameron. *The New Yorker*, 54–67.
- Gudykunst, W., & Kim, Y. (2003). *Communicating with strangers: An approach to intercultural communication*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.
- Hofstede, G. (1996). *Cultures and organizations: Software of the mind*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.
- Holliday, A., Hyde, M., & Kullman, J. (2010). *Intercultural communication: An advanced resource book for students*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Huntington, S. P. (1996). *The clash of civilizations and the remaking of world order*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster.
- Jandt, F. E. (2010). *An introduction to intercultural communication: Identities in a global community*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Jia, W. (2003). The Chinese conceptualizations of face: Emotions, communication, and personhood. In L. A. Samovar & R. E. Porter (Eds.), *Intercultural communication: A reader* (pp. 111–123). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thomson Learning.
- Julius, D. J. (2009, September 4). Commentary: Three key issues in exchanges with China. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, pp. A53–A54.
- Kainzbauer, A., & Haghirian, P. (2009). Teaching across cultures: European teaching experiences in Asian business classrooms. In S. Ong, G. Apfelthaler, K. Hansen, & N. Tapachai (Eds.), *Intercultural communication competencies in higher education and management* (pp. 56–83). Singapore: Marshall Cavendish Academic.
- Klyukanov, I. E. (2005). *Principles of intercultural communication*. New York, NY: Pearson.
- Lewin, R. (2009). *The handbook of practice and research in study abroad: Higher education and the quest for global citizenship*. New York, NY: Routledge.

- Littrell, R. F. (2006). Learning styles of students in and from Confucian cultures. In S. Ong, G. Apfelthaler, K. Hansen, & N. Tapachai (Eds.), *Intercultural communication competencies in higher education and management* (pp. 99–142). Singapore: Marshall Cavendish Academic.
- O' Brien, A., & Alfano, C. (2009). Connecting students globally through videoconference pedagogy. *Journal of Online Learning and Teaching*, 5(4), 675-684.
- Pang, P. (2009). Strategy for the development of a global city: Study abroad in Singapore. In R. Lewin (Ed.), *The handbook of practice and research in study abroad: Higher education and the quest for global citizenship* (pp. 230–246). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Romano, L. (2005, February 20). You can't get a legal tattoo in Oklahoma. *The Washington Post*, A2.
- Samovar, L. A. & Porter, R. E. (Eds.). (2003). *Intercultural communication: A reader*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thomson Learning.
- Schepens, B. (2003). *The tattooing of New York City*. Retrieved on January 4, 2011 from <http://www.nyc24.org/2003/issue4/story4/page2.html>
- Snyder, I., & Bulfin, S. (2007). Digital literacy: What it means for arts education. In L. Bresler (Ed.), *International handbook of research in arts education* (pp. 230-246). Dordrecht, Netherlands: Springer.
- Spencer-Oatey, H. (Ed.). (2007). *E-learning initiatives in China: Pedagogy, policy and culture*. Aberdeen, Hong Kong: Kings Time Printing.
- Thomas, A. (2009). Intercultural competence: An action- and learning-theoretical concept. In S. Ong, G. Apfelthaler, K. Hansen, & N. Tapachai (Eds.), *Intercultural communication competencies in higher education and management* (pp. 36–55). Singapore: Marshall Cavendish Academic.
- Tomadaki, E., Scott, P., & Quick, K. (2010). Live virtual technologies to support extended events in online communities of practice. In N. Karacapilidis (Ed.), *Web-based learning solutions for communities of practice: Developing virtual environments for social and pedagogical advancement* (pp. 95–112). Hershey, NY: Information Science Reference.
- Trojanowski, B. (2010, September 30). Are you willing to take the risk?: Tackling tattoos in the workplace. *Daily Kent Stater*, B3.
- Tu, C-H. (2004). *Online collaborative learning communities*. Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited.

Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

An earlier version of this article was presented at the *Media, Communications, and Cultural Studies 2010* conference in London, UK.

### **About the Author**

Koon Hwee Kan is associate professor at the Kent State University School of Art. Koon received her doctoral degree from the University of Illinois at Urbana–Champaign. Her current research interests include adolescent artistic learning in the context of formal schooling, distance and continuing education for art educators through interactive technology, interglobal and transcultural education, preservice art teacher education, and qualitative methodology, especially visual narrative inquiry. She has published in *Art Education*, *Arts and Learning Journal*, *International Journal of Education and the Arts*, *Journal of Cultural Research in Art Education*, *Studies in Art Education*, and *Visual Arts Research*. Her favorite art mediums include mixed medium watercolor and digital photcollage-cum-essay.

# International Journal of Education & the Arts

## Editors

**Margaret Macintyre Latta**  
University of Nebraska-Lincoln, U.S.A.

**Christine Marmé Thompson**  
Pennsylvania State University, U.S.A.

## Managing Editors

**Alex Ruthmann**  
University of Massachusetts Lowell,  
U.S.A.

**Matthew Thibeault**  
University of Illinois at  
Urbana-Champaign, U.S.A.

## Associate Editors

**Jolyn Blank**  
University of South Florida, U.S.A.

**Chee Hoo Lum**  
Nanyang Technological University, Singapore

**Marissa McClure**  
University of Arizona, U.S.A.

## Editorial Board

<b>Peter F. Abbs</b>	<b>University of Sussex, U.K.</b>
<b>Norman Denzin</b>	<b>University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, U.S.A.</b>
<b>Kieran Egan</b>	<b>Simon Fraser University, Canada</b>
<b>Elliot Eisner</b>	<b>Stanford University, U.S.A.</b>
<b>Magne Espeland</b>	<b>Stord/Haugesund University College, Norway</b>
<b>Rita Irwin</b>	<b>University of British Columbia, Canada</b>
<b>Gary McPherson</b>	<b>University of Melbourne, Australia</b>
<b>Julian Sefton-Green</b>	<b>University of South Australia, Australia</b>
<b>Robert E. Stake</b>	<b>University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, U.S.A.</b>
<b>Susan Stinson</b>	<b>University of North Carolina—Greensboro , U.S.A.</b>
<b>Graeme Sullivan</b>	<b>Teachers College, Columbia University, U.S.A.</b>
<b>Elizabeth (Beau) Valence</b>	<b>Indiana University, Bloomington, U.S.A.</b>
<b>Peter Webster</b>	<b>Northwestern University, U.S.A.</b>