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Abstract

The current teaching methods in cross-cultural business communication have paid relatively less attention to developing students' emotional skills in cross-cultural interactions. Prior research, however, suggests that cross-cultural interactions are inherently emotional processes, since they involve a considerable amount of uncertainty and a potential for misunderstanding. With an attempt to fill this gap, this study aimed to design an easy-to-implement teaching module that brings emotions and emotional awareness more centrally into analysis of cross-cultural business communication, and to empirically assess the effectiveness of this module based on the data collected from students who participated in the process. To this end, we have initiated a collaboration between the business schools of a Hungarian university in Budapest and an American university in Northern California, by utilizing the videoconferencing and screen-capture technologies.

The results of the study suggested that the videoconferencing technology could be a viable tool to create real-time interactions between students in different countries in which they can experience, express, and observe emotions. In our video-conferencing sessions, the dynamics that emerged among the students provoked a wide-range of emotions, which helped them learn more about cross-cultural communication as reflected on why they have felt these emotions. Thus, students who participated in the teaching module not only gained a first-hand experience in cross-cultural communication, but also could build on this experience to gain knowledge by reflecting on their observations and emotions.

Key-words: emotions, cross-cultural communication, teaching

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The ability to effectively communicate with people from other cultures has become an increasingly important skill in organizational life. To remain competitive in today's business environment, characterized by an increasing trend towards international mergers and alliances, organizations rely more and more on their employees' competency in cross-cultural communication (Adler and Graham, 1989). On the other hand, thanks to the advances in information technology, such as internet and videoconferencing, employees can virtually connect with their colleagues from any part of the world to discuss task-related issues, increasing the frequency and pervasiveness of cross-cultural interactions in organizations (Orpen, 2003). Accordingly, more and more business schools are confronted with the need to operate outside the comfort-zone of their own cultural environment (Cant, 2004) as reflected, for instance, in the recent AACSB accreditation standards requiring the US business schools to cover cross-cultural issues in their both undergraduate and MBA curricula (Manuel et al., 2001).

Over the past few decades, intercultural communication topics have been incorporated into the business education curriculum through such innovative methods as in-class role-playing exercises, sensitivity training activities, interactions with guest-speakers from different cultures, and simulation games, as well as more traditional methods such as lectures and research projects, aiming to improve students' understanding of other cultures and countries (Anakwe, 2002; Milhouse, 1996). Valuable as these methods have been in improving the cross-cultural dimensions of business education curriculum, they have mostly focused on expanding students' *knowledge about other cultures* and paid relatively less attention to developing their *emotional skills in cross-cultural interactions*. For instance, although these methods help students compare

different cultures in terms of their traditions, values, geography, and economic structures, they do not really guide them how to increase their *emotional awareness* in situations where they experience a conflict with someone coming from a different culture. Prior research, however, suggests that cross-cultural interactions are inherently emotional processes, since they involve a considerable amount of uncertainty and a potential for misunderstanding (Gudykuns, 1988). With an attempt to fill this gap, this study aimed to design an easy-to-implement teaching module that brings emotions and emotional awareness more centrally into analysis of cross-cultural business communication, and to empirically assess the effectiveness of this module based on the data collected from students who participated in the process. To this end, we have initiated a collaboration between the business schools of a Hungarian university in Budapest and an American university in Northern California by utilizing the videoconferencing and screen-capture technologies, which we will describe in more detail later in the paper.

The remainder of this paper has been organized as follows: First, we will discuss about the conceptual background of this study and identify its potential contributions by drawing on the relevant literatures on cross-cultural communication, management education, and emotions. Then we will describe the design and implementation process of our teaching module. This will be followed by the presentation of an empirical study we have conducted to assess the effectiveness of this teaching module. Finally, we will discuss the results of this study and the implications of these results and the teaching module for business education.

Cross-cultural Communication, Business Education, and Emotions:

A stream of research suggests that teaching cross-cultural communication just by exposing students to the knowledge about the common customs, beliefs, and values of other

cultures may be insufficient, and sometimes even misleading, considering the intricate nature of cross-cultural interactions in business life. Osland and Bird (2000), for instance, have discussed the potential risks of sophisticated stereotyping in intercultural communication, a situation which they define to occur when people make inferences about someone from a different culture, based on their preexisting academic knowledge about this culture. The authors mention that cross-cultural communication research has mostly compared different cultures by using on a number of limited concepts and samples, which might not truly reflect the paradoxes that exist within these cultures. To illustrate one of these paradoxes, from instance, they gave an example from the U.S. culture, by posing the question: “If U.S. Americans are so individualistic and believe so deeply in self-reliance, why do they have the highest percentage of charitable giving in the world?” (p.65). Osland and Bird (2000) have argued that the business education curriculum tends to gloss over such nuances and complexities that exist in different cultures, resulting in a rather simplistic view of these cultures.

In a similar manner, Adler and Graham (1989) has criticized the research on cross-cultural negotiation by suggesting that most of the studies in this literature have focused on describing a single culture or comparing multiple cultures, rather than investigating people’s actual interactions in cross-cultural contexts. The authors argued that, as a result of the dynamics emerging from these interactions, people’s behaviors in cross-cultural negotiations can significantly differ from those in intra-cultural negotiations, and provided empirical support for their argument. In line with this argument, Millhouse (1996) has suggested that intercultural learning would be more effective if it leads to practical competency in cross-cultural interactions, which requires both a more comprehensive understanding of the other cultures and a critical reflection on one’s own culture. In the teaching module developed in this study, we aim to

achieve this goal by creating an interactive, first-hand learning environment for students in which they can experience and observe some of the potential challenges of cross-cultural communication and develop their interpersonal and analytical skills by reflecting on these experience and observations. In addition, the empirical studies we conducted to evaluate the outcomes of this teaching module will inform the literature on management education by identifying some of the challenges students might experience in cross-cultural communication processes.

While analyzing the learning outcomes and potential challenges in cross-cultural communication in our teaching module, we have especially focused on the emotions experienced and observed by the participating students. Emotion has been defined as an organized, highly structured reaction to an event that is relevant to the needs and goals of a person, which motivates the person to focus attention on a specific aspect of the environment that might require action or decision (Watson and Clark, 1994). Employees experience a wide range of emotions - joy, anger, anxiety, and enthusiasm, to name a few - with distinct psychological processes and action tendencies (Lazarus and Cohen-Charash, 2005). A growing stream of research has started to reveal the systematic influence of emotional aspects in several domains of organizational life, including motivation, leadership, interpersonal dynamics, and conflict (Brief and Weiss, 2002; Ashforth and Humphrey, 1995). It has also been suggested that people's ability to recognize and reflect on their own emotions and their capacity to empathize with others' emotions play an important role in their interpersonal relationships at work (Matthews, Zeidner, & Roberts, 2002; Salovey and Mayer, 1990).

A stream of research in the communications literature on uncertainty reduction theory suggests that emotions and emotional awareness should play an especially important role in

cross-cultural communication (Gudykuns, 1988; Gudykuns and Hammer, 1988; Berger, 1987). The central argument of the uncertainty reduction theory is that, when people communicate with others they are not familiar with, they are primarily motivated to decrease uncertainty and increase predictability regarding the behaviors and expressions of their communication partners (Berger, 1987). Applying this perspective to cross-cultural interactions, previous studies have suggested that cross-cultural interactions should evoke a significant amount of anxiety as people would experience heightened awareness and a lack of security in these interactions as a result of their need and attempts to reduce uncertainty regarding the other culture (e.g., Gudykuns, 1988; Gudykuns and Hammer, 1988). The feelings of uncertainty should be evoked in cross-cultural interactions also because cultural differences play an important role in determining the circumstances under which emotions may be expressed and the degree to which they may be expressed (Porter and Samovar, 1998), increasing the importance of emotions and emotional awareness in the effectiveness in these interactions.

Drawing on the perspectives discussed above, one can argue that cross-cultural business interactions should be inherently emotional processes. However, to date, there has been very little attempt to empirically explore how emotions influence and are influenced by cross-cultural communication processes in business interactions (Tan et al., 2005) and whether and how experiencing, observing, and reflecting on these emotions can improve people's understanding of cross-cultural communication. The teaching module developed in this study and the assessment of its outcomes give us a unique opportunity to empirically explore these important yet relatively understudied issues by conducting an in-depth analysis of cross-cultural communication processes emerging in the context of a business simulation.

Design and Implementation of the Teaching Module

The teaching module described in this study is the result of collaborative efforts between the business schools at a Hungarian university in Budapest and an American university in Northern California. We have designed and implemented the module in the Fall semester of 2006. While designing this teaching module, our major goal was to provide our students with an experiential learning opportunity to gain first-hand insights about cross-cultural communication by interacting with people from a different culture in a business simulation exercise and to develop their emotional awareness skills by reflecting on the emotions they experience and observe in this cross-cultural context. At the practical level, our goal was to come up with an engaging yet feasible module that can be easily implemented in large- as well as small-size classes.

To meet the above mentioned goals, we have developed a module in which: a) teams of four volunteer students were created in each university to gather information about the other country's culture, b) these teams negotiated a business case in videoconferencing sessions, which were video-recorded by using a screen-capture software, c) the video-recording of these sessions were watched, analyzed and discussed by students in a business communications/management course, d) the students (both role-players and the audience) reflected on their experience and observations by answering open-ended surveys, in class and at home. The students who took an active role in the different phases of the process earned extra course credit for their participation. We will now discuss the implementation of our teaching module by providing more information about each of these phases.

The first phase of our implementation process involved the recruitment of students for the Hungarian and U.S. teams. We have implemented the teaching module in two different cases so

that we could identify some overarching themes by comparing and contrasting the two cases. Thus, our study included two groups of four undergraduate students attending a business communications course at the American university and two groups of four undergraduate-level business students at the Hungarian University attending a management course. Students in all the four classes were invited to participate in the project through a written invitation informing them about the scope and goals of the project. Students interested in being a part of negotiation teams were asked to do some research about Hungarian/American business culture and submit a one-page paper summarizing their findings. Hungarian students wrote a short essay on the American business cultures while American counterparts wrote a short essay on the Hungarian business culture. The four students who participated in the negotiation team on both sides were determined by drawing a lottery among those who submitted the above mentioned essay. The students who agreed to participate in the exercise were provided information about the procedures of the study and signed a consent agreement form.

In the second phase, the Hungarian and U.S. teams held a videoconferencing session to negotiate a business case, which we will describe later, by using a real-time webcam connection (Windows Live Messenger). This technology provided us with an opportunity to create a face-to-face interaction between our students in a virtual setting so that they could communicate through both verbal and non-verbal communication. In the meantime, this session was also recorded by using a screen-capture software program called Camtasia Studio, published by the TechSmith Corporation. The end-product of this recoding work was a 30-minute video-file which simultaneously showed the U.S. and Hungarian teams on a webcam screen as they were negotiating the business case. At the end of the videoconferencing session, the students in both teams were asked to provide their observations and reflections about the process by filling out an

on-site and take-home survey, which will be discussed in this paper while presenting the studies assessing the outcomes of the teaching module.

In the third phase of the module, about three weeks after holding the video-recording sessions, the recordings of these sessions were watched and analyzed by students in a business communications course in the U.S. and those taking a management course in Hungary, along with the students who took part in these videoconferencing sessions. After video-watching sessions, we led a discussion in each class guiding students to uncover some of the cross-cultural differences and the associated emotional dynamics that influence the interactions between the teams. At the end of these classes, the students were invited to fill-out a survey in the class-room, which we used to test a model we have designed to analyze the effectiveness of the video-watching exercise, and to fill-out an open-ended survey asking them to reflect on their observations in the session.

The third phase of the teaching module provided us with a number of unique opportunities: First, the students who took part in the videoconferencing sessions had a valuable chance to further reflect on their experience by both analyzing their interactions in the recordings of the videoconferencing session and getting feedback from their peers who did not take part in the session. Second, a much larger group of students benefited from the teaching module by getting involved in an active learning process: Those students who were not part of the negotiation teams were invited to participate and to provide their reflections about what they have learned from observing the video-recording of these sessions. Third, and in relation to the previous point, the video-watching exercise in itself turned out to be an innovative and interesting teaching tool that is different from both in class-role play exercises and movie-clips, and was found to be highly engaging and effective by the students.

Description of the Role-Play Exercise

We wrote a case study for our role-play exercise, based on a real story that took place in Hungary in 1998, which helped us to create a realistic decision-making situation for our students. The story of case study could be summarized as follows:

The Battery Company (BC) owned by American shareholders has been manufacturing batteries for more than a century. It is a prestigious supplier of huge car manufacturers and famous for its quality products. The top management team has recently decided to establish a used battery processing plant in Lead Village in Hungary. The BC has been exporting batteries to Hungary for over a decade and already has a good market share in the Hungarian market. Thus it seemed logical to locate the new plant in this location. The mayor of Lead Village is glad to hear about the project, and has been advocating the plan to the public. The Battery Company has also bought an industrial site in Lead Village, which seems to be a very suitable location to establish the factory. However, Lead Village is not far from the country's most prestigious and world-famous wine producing region (20-30 km). Wine producers argue that if the company does not change its plans, they are going to protest against the hazardous plant. The Battery Company is an environmentally conscious firm, puts a strong emphasis on environmental issues (it has a strict environmental policy), and its top management does not understand why this project is attacked so vehemently by the local environmentalist groups.

We created four roles for each of the American and Hungarian teams. American students played the roles of various members of the BC top-management team, including: 1) the CEO, 2) the VP for Technical Activities, 3) the VP for Public Relations, 4) Regional Manager assigned for the production facility to be established in Hungary. Hungarian students, on the other hand,

played the roles of 1) the Major of Lead Village, 2) Wine Producers Representative, 3) Environmentalist Group Representative, 4) Representative of the Ministry for Environment. A full description of instructions provided to each role player is available upon request from the authors of this study. The major issue to be negotiated among these role players was whether or not the American company could start an investment in Lead Village.

We would like to emphasize that the focus of our teaching module was to improve our students' emotional skills in cross-cultural communication, rather than to teach them about negotiation. Thus, the purpose for our using a negotiation case in this module was to evoke sufficient challenges and emotions between students so that they get more fully engaged with their assigned roles and the communication process. Previous research suggests that the emotions negotiators experience are strongly entwined with the character and the outcomes of a cross-cultural negotiation process (George, Jones, and Gonzalez, 1998). Considering the potential conflict embedded in the negotiation case described above, the role-playing exercise prepared for this teaching module was expected to motivate our students to bring up a number of emotion-eliciting issues in their discussion and thus evoke a wide range of emotions their interactions within a cross-cultural context. Our analysis of the two videoconferencing sessions confirmed this belief, as we will discuss in the next section.

Description of the Videoconferencing Sessions

The description of the videoconferencing sessions that were implemented in this teaching module is based on both our observations in the process and an analysis of the video-recordings of these sessions. The two videoconferencing sessions yielded strikingly different outcomes. In the first videoconferencing session, the American and Hungarian teams set a collegial tone in

their interactions. At the end, the American team's decision was to accept all the conditions requested by the Hungarian team, and they were able to agree on the investment. In the second videoconferencing session, however, major tensions occurred between the two teams, which led to a breakdown in the negotiation process. The Hungarian team did not accept any of the conditions the American team has proposed to them and decided that the factory should not be opened.

Session-I. In the first videoconferencing session, the American team had two male and two female students whereas the Hungarian team had four female students. After the introduction phase, one student from each team emerged as the discussion leader, representing their teams. On the Hungarian side, the student who played the role of Mayor, a supporter of the Battery Company project, appeared to be the most active member of her team throughout the session. In the U.S. team, the most influential role-player turned out to be the one who played the VP for Public Relations, whose major concern was to protect the image of the Battery Company. The collegial relationship established between these two students set the tone for the negotiation process.

The Hungarian and American teams differed in significant ways in terms of both their team dynamics and their approach to the negotiation issues. The Mayor in the Hungarian team took an organizer role to coordinate the other players to act as a team. The American players, however, acted more independently, in a rather individualistic fashion, which could be one of the reasons why they could not discuss the costs of their actions and challenge requirements proposed by the Hungarian team. The two teams also approached the negotiation issues in distinctive ways. The American team perceived the situation as a win-win game (they insisted on the investment and did not care of the extra costs of the compensation). The Hungarian team,

however, took on a much more competitive approach and acted firm and demanding to get compensated as much as possible by the U.S. team. The American players were strongly determined to carry out the investment without damaging the public image of their company, which reflects the major motivation of the VP for Public Relations, and thus ignored the increasing costs of their concessions as they were over-compensating all the wishes of the Hungarian team. In their subsequent reflections on the process, some members of the U.S. team indicated that one of the reasons for why they were too accommodating in the process might be their somewhat subliminal concern about not being liked and getting rejected by the Hungarian culture.

Session-II: In the second videoconferencing session, the American team had four male students whereas the Hungarian team had four female students, creating a situation of “battle of sexes” and further increasing the potential for conflict in the interactions. Most students in both teams took an active role throughout the negotiation process. The American team members started the negotiation with a constructive yet straightforward attitude. They broke the ice easily, even used a few Hungarian greeting words they have learned prior to the session. On the Hungarian side, the Mayor was in support of the Battery Company’s investment plan. The Representative of the Wine Producers and the Representative of the Local Greens, however, strongly challenged the American team to prevent them from carrying out their investment, building up tension between the two teams throughout the process.

There was a turning point in the debate when the Hungarians got the impression that the Americans ignore their concerns about the drop of wine sales if they allow the investment in the neighbourhood of the wine-yards, which created a breakdown in the relationship between the two teams. The members of the Hungarian team took on a defensive and suspicious attitude

towards the American team, which in turn increased the frustration of the American team members who got more assertive to try to get their offers accepted. The session was an intriguing case of “negative emotional spirals”, described as a chain of increasingly negative emotional reaction in negotiators which escalate ill-will, hurt the negotiation process, and often bring it to an end (Adler, 1997). At the end, the Hungarian team did not accept any of the conditions the American team has proposed to them, creating disappointment and anger in the American team. To debrief the session, we hold an extra 10-minute videoconferencing session in which the members of the two teams stepped out of their role characters and discussed the session to identify the cultural misunderstanding that occurred in the negotiation process.

Taken together, these two videoconferencing sessions provided very rich material for the students, and for us, to reflect on to better understand how emotions play into the cross-cultural communication processes, which we will discuss in more detail in the next section.

Assessment of the Teaching Module

We have conducted two empirical studies to assess the effectiveness of our teaching module. The first study draws on a set of qualitative data collected from the students who participated in the two videoconferencing sessions. The second study is a combination of quantitative and qualitative research based on the data collecting data from a larger group of students who attended the “video-watching” sessions (i.e. watched, discussed, and analyzed the recordings of the videoconferencing sessions in the classroom). For the sake of brevity, we have included in this paper only the first study. However, to provide insights about the nature and effectiveness of the video-watching sessions, at the end of this section, we have also provided some excerpts from the qualitative data set of our second study.

We have analyzed the learning outcomes of the video-conferencing sessions by specifically focusing on the emotions that were experienced by students in these sessions. In specific terms, we investigated whether and how these emotions were helpful to improve our students' awareness about the emotional aspects of cross-cultural communication and to increase their level of engagement in their learning process.

Method

The students who participated in the videoconferencing sessions provided their reflections about the process via two open-ended surveys. One of these surveys (i.e., a two-page on-site survey) was completed right after the session and the other one (i.e., a five-page take-home survey) was completed a few days later.

Our goal in administering the on-site survey was to get some fresh, first-hand responses from students about their emotions, before they discuss about their experience with their peers. Since emotions are intense affective states that are relatively short in duration (Frijda, 1986), we wanted to ensure that students describe their emotions before these emotions dissipated, in order to increase the validity of our results. The on-site survey asked students to describe and discuss their emotions about: a) the members of the other team, b) technology, c) outcome of the negotiation, and d) their team and themselves. To get as much specific response as possible, we have provided the students with a list of ten positive emotions (e.g., excited, enthusiastic, proud, happy) and ten negative emotions (e.g., irritated, nervous, anxious, frustrated) in a mixed order and asked to them to refer to these emotions, or any other emotions they felt relevant, when they reflect on their experience and to explain why they have felt this way.

The take-home survey was relatively longer and asked students two sets of questions. In the first set, the students were asked to read the previous responses they have provided to the on-site survey (we have given the students a copy of their completed on-site survey along with the take-home survey), further reflect on these responses to explain why they have felt this way, and discuss what they have learned about cross-cultural communication by drawing on these reflections. The second set of questions asked students to describe their overall evaluation and feelings about the exercise. Sample questions included: “How challenging was this exercise and why?”, “How beneficial was this exercise and why?”, and “How would you compare this exercise to in-class role-playing exercises?” Our goal in asking these questions was to improve our students’ learning and skills by further reflecting on their experience in a structured format, which also provided us with a chance to collect some longitudinal data for this study.

Data Analysis

To analyze the data, the first author of this study open coded (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) the data collected via the two surveys by using “thought units” as the basic unit of analysis. This author used constant comparative analysis in coding and recoding the data as categories emerge (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998), and used qualitative comparative analysis in generating themes (Becker, 1998), based on their recurrence, repetition, and forcefulness (Owen, 1984). This process resulted in a total of 119 thought units, in 18 single-spaced pages, categorized in into six major emotion-themes by the author. To check the reliability of this categorization, the second author of the study was provided with a random order of these 119 thought units to assign them to one of the 5 categories previously identified by the first author.

The inter-rater agreement between the two researchers was 92 %, providing support for the reliability of the five emotion-themes identified in the study.

Results

Our analysis has revealed six major themes describing the emotional states experienced by students who participated in the videoconferencing sessions: a) alertness and curiosity, b) mixed emotions (i.e., a combination of anxiety and excitement), c) anger and frustration, d) pride and cohesiveness, e) pleasantness, and f) empathy. We will now discuss on each of these themes and how the emotions mentioned in these themes played into our learning processes.

a) Alertness and Curiosity: Students in both the U.S. and Hungarian teams frequently reported the emotions of *alertness* and *curiosity* in their responses. These emotions were evoked mostly because of the novelty of the situation, as reflected in the following sample quotations:

“I felt curious at first to see what they (the Hungarian team members) were going to say. I was unsure what the opposing side’s main arguments would be. When the videoconferencing began, I found myself evaluating the facial features and body language of the other team before conversation began.” (a U.S. team member)

“At the beginning I was a little alert because I thought that the Americans would be more proactive. I think being alert can be useful when I do not know the features of the other team. After I become aware of the style of the other team I can be more proactive and interested in the offer.” (an Hungarian team member)

The curiosity felt by students both increased their interest about the other culture (e.g., “This exercise makes me want to meet the Hungarian team members personally or talk more about personal stuff”) and motivated them to create empathy with this culture (e.g., “I was curious about what the Hungarian team members thought about us and how they were interpreting our discussions.”). The students seemed to experience these emotions throughout the session, as one Hungarian student has suggested: “You always have to be alert because anything

can happen in any moment.” Another student, from the American team, has noted that the process was “very engaging and interesting simply because of the uniqueness and setting of videoconferencing.”

b) *Anxiety and Excitement:* The students experienced a considerable amount of anxiety in their interactions with the other culture, supporting the perspective of uncertainty reduction theory discussed earlier (Gudykuns, 1988), as reflected in the following quotation:

“This exercise really made me anxious. I didn’t know what to expect. This was a great practice nonetheless. Once the session got going, I got more comfortable. I would be interested in doing something like this again as it is good practice for business setting.” (a U.S. team member)

In quite many cases, students also reported a level of excitement accompanying this anxiety, as the following quotes exemplify:

“At times we had to react immediately to the arguments of other culture, improvise often. It was nervous but also excited.” (a Hungarian team member)

“I was very excited and anxious by the thought of communicating with the Hungarian team. This was my first video-conferencing experience and I didn’t know what to expect. Butterflies in the stomach... A sense of uncertainty and not knowing what the Hungarian students were going to say were all distractions to what was on the task at hand. Even with these distractions, we had to keep in mind of the Hungarian culture and be polite not to come off too strong or insult them in anyway.” (a U.S. team member)

In their reflections after the exercise, students reported that, despite the anxiety, they were glad to be a part of the process, since this experience would help them be more equipped for future cross-cultural interactions (e.g., “I think we should have more projects that are similarly practical so as to prepare ourselves to real life”, a U.S. team member). As one student has also

mentioned, “these mixed emotions came together at the end to provide a unique and good learning experience for both teams”.

c) Anger and Frustration: The students felt anger, mostly resulting from the misunderstanding, misperceptions, and disagreements emerged between the team members as they were discussing different aspects of the business case, as can be seen in the sample quotations:

“I am frustrated at the lack of connection between their (Hungarian team members’) concerns and our proposed solutions. What seemed to be a fair compromise was refused, this left me quite surprised.” (a U.S. team member)

“They (the American team members) very willingly kept repeating their demagogies. This made me feel frustrated since the debate was leading to nowhere.” (an Hungarian team member)

Both the American and Hungarian students felt frustrated also as a response to their perceptions of lack of empathy in the other team:

“The US team was polite and friendly at the beginning which made me feel at ease. But as soon as we talked about the essences, I missed empathy on the US side, since it was as if our questions and concerns did not matter to them. They willingly kept repeating their demagogies. This made me frustrated.” (an Hungarian team member)

“The Hungarian team has no sympathy. It seemed that they didn’t show any feeling in their decision. It was always “no” or “we can’t do that here because it’ll affect the wine”... The Hungarian team always thinks of what is best for their entire country as a whole and not a portion. In a way that is good, but sometimes thinking of the entire country, you can actually miss out some golden opportunities as well.” (a U.S. team member)

Students also expressed anger and frustration about the technology and the outcome of the negotiation:

“Some of the suggestions that were being brought up from the other team were too greedy as far as their needs being met... I was angry at how they (the Hungarian team members) got more out of us than us out of them... I wanted to get more out of the proposal than the other team.” (a U.S. team member)

“Videoconferencing can be frustrating due to technical difficulties and being able to pick up on paralanguage and body language... I was frustrated because of minor technical inconveniences.” (a U.S. team member)

An interesting finding of this study was that the students who experienced anger and frustration about the other team also suggested that these emotions increased their motivation to reflect more about their experience and enhanced their learning about some important issues about cross-cultural communication:

“I did walk away from the exercise with a sense of what communication barriers may arise and how to conduct myself should I do any form of videoconferencing in the future. The frustration of negotiation being unsuccessful seemed to cause me to evaluate the events more than I would have had we been successful.” (a U.S. team member)

“I believe the exercise was beneficial mainly due to all of the emotions that surfaced, both in the moment and in reflection after I cooled off. Having experienced these emotions will leave a stronger impression rather than simply reading about it in the textbook.” (a U.S. team member)

d) *Pride and Cohesiveness:* The members of both Hungarian and the U.S. teams expressed considerable amount of pride and cohesiveness about their team members. The students felt proud of their teams because of their collective achievement (e.g., “I was proud of my team members’ performance... We carried out a good teamwork and we could convince each other with rational reasoning.”; an Hungarian team member), as well as because of the strength they have shown at times of challenged, as it echoes in the following quotation:

“Even with the disappointing outcome, I felt a sense of accomplishment for the team. I felt at ease knowing that I had three other people in there to back me up if I didn’t know where I was going.” (a U.S. team member)

The fact that the teams were from different countries might have played a role in the amount of pride and cohesiveness they experienced in the process. The cultural differences between the teams and associated communication gaps might have also played role in the feelings of pride in that the students might have attributed the reasons for undesirable outcomes to the other team (e.g. “they were too greedy”), rather than their own behavior. We believe that the emotions of pride and cohesiveness were especially helpful in motivating students to more strongly connect with their roles in the videoconferencing sessions, which in turn increased their creativity and spontaneity in the process, making the exercise more realistic and engaging.

e) Pleasantness: Despite their experience of some negative emotions such as anger, frustration, and anxiety, as we have described above, the students have found their overall experience in the teaching module pleasant and joyful. A Hungarian student, for instance, stated:

“The whole session was very interesting and I was very happy to take part of it. To get acquainted with another culture and its way of thinking was a very nice experience for me.” (a Hungarian team member)

These emotions were especially prevalent in the students’ take-home surveys, suggesting that further reflecting on their experience helped students appreciate the value of the negative emotions they have experienced during the videoconferencing session in their learning. As the following quotation suggests:

“After seeing this session through I see that it didn’t really matter who won or who lost. In the end, it was a pleasant, valuable learning experience. It is a once in a lifetime experience... Even though they might have won the battle, in the end both teams won the war.” (a U.S. team member)

These overall pleasant feelings seemed to increase our students’ interest in learning more about cross-cultural communication, which was one of the major goals of this teaching module:

“Experiencing emotions of enthusiasm and joy helped me learn because I was actually interested in what was going on. It is very hard to learn about a topic that you don’t really care about. Since the videoconferencing activity along with the Hungarian culture was so new to me it made me really want to learn more about the whole experience.” (a U.S. team member)

f) Empathy: Our analysis showed that, in the midst of all the positive and negative emotions they have experienced, students have also realized and appreciated the value of creating empathy with the members of other team. When they further reflected on their experience in their take-home surveys, students from both teams expressed views about the importance of creating empathy with people from other cultures in order to better communicate with them, as it can be seen in the following sample quotations:

“There can be many pitfalls in cross-cultural communication due to frame of reference differences. I found that we perceived their arguments quite differently that they were being communicated. Both sides had the best of intentions to make this a successful negotiation. In the end, we did not “hear” each other’s sides.” (a U.S. team member)

“We tried to convey our messages using the same techniques, the same logic, and same emphasis that we use on this continent. Obviously a wrong message was delivered. And it is unfair to accuse the other team of misunderstanding us when we admitted to ourselves before the debate that we know the recipe of approaching the Americans, and yet we forgot to apply any of those rules. Empathic responses are required in all debates but especially in cross-cultural communications.” (an Hungarian team member)

The students have also realized that if they do not spend enough effort to create empathy with the other party in a cross-cultural communication process, the other party would take on a biased and defensive attitude towards them:

“Reflecting on my experience, I believe that they (the Hungarian team members) based their decision of a few things that we said that turned them off. I also believe that being from a different culture and not realizing how they were going to interpret things ruined our chances for winning them over because as soon as they heard something they didn’t like I feel like they tuned us out and made their decision based on what they perceived.” (a U.S. team member)

On the other hand, the results of our analysis also suggest that some of the communication gaps that occurred as a result of lack of empathy between the teams remained to be uncovered by our students. For instance, one of these unnoticed gaps had to do with the U.S. team's gesture of speaking Hungarian words to greet the Hungarian team. A member of the U.S. team mentioned that this gesture "was received well by the Hungarian team as a token attempt to recognize their culture and opened the negotiations on good terms." The students from the Hungarian team, however, expressed quite opposing views about this gesture, such as: "The Americans' salutation in Hungarian was a nice try from their side. But what is the big deal in a few Hungarian words when we were forced to use English all the way through?"

Video-watching Sessions

Although the analysis of the video-watching sessions is beyond the scope of this paper, we have included in this section a sample of excerpts from the reflections of students who participated in these sessions to provide some insights about the nature and effectiveness of the video-conferencing sessions.

While comparing the video-watching exercise with watching a clip from a featured movie, most students mentioned that the former exercise was more effective since they could more easily identify with the story and more engaging because it was more real, spontaneous, and interactive:

"We could identify with the people in this video more easily since they were from our class. I would much rather listen and watch someone I know or whom I can identify with. Also, the fact that the four of these students were in our class, we could imagine what they went through."

"This exercise was definitely more effective than a movie-clip. I have never seen something like this done before. What made it different was that it was real. It was students from our class so I could relate better."

“This exercise was quite different. It was more realistic and not staged. In this exercise one group has no idea about what the other group is going to say and vice-versa whereas in a movie it is definitely staged.”

“I think this exercise was a lot more effective than watching a movie-clip. It was something that was easy to relate to because the people doing it were people from our own class. I liked how when something happened we could directly ask them about it. In a movie-clip, that cannot be done.”

The video-watching sessions also proved to be effective for the students who were the “actors” of the video-clips, i.e. those who participated in the videoconferencing sessions, as reflected in the comments of a student from the U.S. team:

“Watching the video made everything come together which helped me to understand more about the Hungarian team’s thoughts and ideas. Also, since we were able to see the clip on a larger screen, we could better see the facial expressions of the Hungarian team which helped me to make a better sense of the negotiation outcome.”

In contrast to the video-conferencing sessions, in which both negative and positive emotions were experienced by the students, the video-watching sessions were rather pleasant and joyful. The level of positive energy was high in all the four sessions since the students frequently responded to the story unfolding in the video-conferencing sessions, as if they were watching a live performance. This high energy set the tone for the subsequent discussion session. An interesting theme that emerged in these four sessions was that, when analyzing the reasons for the outcomes of the negotiations, both the American and Hungarian students were much more critical of the team representing their own culture. The Hungarian students, for instance criticized one of the Hungarian team to be “too greedy” and “too defensive”, whereas the American students criticized one of the American teams for “being too assertive and not responding to the emotions of Hungarian students who were really concerned about their national pride and identity”. We have found these responses as an encouraging outcome of our teaching module, since they indicate that the video-watching sessions stimulated our students to

analyze their culture from a more self-reflective, increasing their capacity to create empathy in a cross-cultural communication process.

Conclusion and Discussion

The goal of this study was to design an easy-to-implement teaching module that brings emotions and emotional awareness more centrally into teaching of cross-cultural business communication by utilizing the video-conferencing and screen-capture technologies. We also empirically assessed the effectiveness of this module based the data collected from students who participated in the process.

The results of our analysis of this data indicate that our module was effective in several respects: First, despite its challenges and limitations, the video-conferencing technology proved to be a promising tool to create real-time interactions between students in different countries in which they can experience, express, and observe emotions. In our video-conferencing sessions, the dynamics that emerged both between the Hungarian and U.S. teams and within each of these teams provoked a wide-range of emotions, as we described in the previous section, which helped students to learn more about cross-cultural communication as reflected on why they have felt these emotions. For all of our students, this exercise was the first time when they negotiated with people from another culture through the videoconferencing technology, which created a lot of excitement and anxiety. We could detect these emotional waves throughout both sessions. In both on-site survey and take-home surveys, the students expressed very intensive emotions.

Second, the reflection surveys we have designed for this study was effective in increasing our students' emotional awareness in cross-cultural communication. The responses provided by our students in these surveys were rich-in-content, including both an introspective description of

their own emotions and a self-reflective analysis of their interactions with the students from other culture. Our students not only gained a first-hand experience in cross-cultural communication, but also could build on this experience to gain knowledge by reflecting on their feelings and observations. Thus, our students were engaged in an experiential learning process, in which learning is based on active doing and reflecting on what was done (Kolb, 1984; Joplin, 1981).

Third, and related to the previous point, through experiential learning, our students gained valuable insights about the intricate nature of cross-cultural communication processes. As it could be seen in the descriptions of the two videoconferencing sessions mentioned earlier, the two sessions resulted in very different processes, dynamics, issues, and outcomes as a result of the emotions evoked in the interactions between the U.S. and Hungarian teams. Our sessions showed, for instance, that the most highly ranked player (i.e. the Mayor) did not necessarily turn out to be the most active and powerful actor in the Hungarian team in one of the sessions, although the current literature suggests that the power distance and respect for authority should be fairly high in the Hungarian culture. Indeed, the personality of players also determined the power-dynamics. As such, the students in both teams needed to go beyond their “sophisticated stereotyping” (Osland and Bird, 2000) while approaching the members of the other culture both during the sessions and after the sessions when they reflected on their experience.

Fourth, the video-watching sessions provided our students with a unique opportunity to learn about cross-cultural communication by analyzing the emotions and behaviors of a group of their class-mates as they interact with another group of students from a different culture. The product of the recording of the videoconferencing sessions was a teaching tool that was similar to a movie-clip, except that the actors in the movie were the class-mates of the students. Moreover, in their evaluation of the exercise, most students found this experience far more

interesting than watching a clip from a featured movie. Identifying closely with their class-mates who were on the screen negotiating with a team from a different culture, most students were driven to imagine what they would do in a similar situation if they were one of these actors. Those who took part in both videoconferencing and video-watching sessions, on the other hand, had a chance to further reflect on their experience in the video-conferencing sessions by discussing about their experience with their class-mates who watched the video-recording of these sessions.

Through this teaching module, both Hungarian and American students also gained some valuable experience about a prevailing technology which they might have to use pretty soon after their graduation, when they start their career. Videoconferencing is an inexpensive way to carry out negotiations between managers in different parts of the world and thus is getting more and more common in the business world. This exercise helped our students get acquainted with how this technology works and motivated them to think about which factors they should consider when the use this technology within a cross-cultural context. Overall, the results of this study suggest that video-conferencing and other related types of information technology could be a viable tool to integrate an analysis of the emotional aspects of human-interaction into the curriculum of cross-cultural business communication.

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