

‘Talking for Thinking’: Alternative Strategies for Effective Intercultural Communication in Online Discussions

“為思考而言說”：在線討論中有效跨文化交流
的替代策略

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Abstract

Globalization has made the world a ‘smaller’ place where, for all sorts of reasons, we need to communicate with people in other time zones (often from different cultures) 24 hours a day. This has catapulted English as a *lingua franca* - the language of communication used by people who do not share the same mother/native tongue(s) – to the number one language in the world. With the aid of new technologies such as chat platforms, social media and mobile apps, geographical distance is no longer a hindrance to communication; as a matter of fact, these have paved the way for instant accessibility in contacting people anytime anywhere. Recognizing the need to prepare students in facing the realities and challenges of intercultural communication in the global marketplace, many universities in Asia (indeed, in other parts of the world) have started to offer courses such as ‘Cross-Cultural Communications (Intercultural Communications)’, ‘Language and Culture’, ‘World Englishes’, etc. Some are even offering full or blended online programs where students are given the opportunity to talk to other foreign students in order to practice intercultural communication skills. But how do we assess the effectiveness of such online pedagogy? How do we know if the students are really engaged in learning and enhancing their knowledge, skills and attitudes? This presentation will present the findings of a qualitative study based on an open-ended questionnaire to gather student feedback on the effectiveness and failures

of online live sessions as part of the instructional strategy in delivering the ‘World Englishes & Miscommunication’ course in a private university in southern Taiwan. Applying De Bono’s *Parallel Thinking* when developing better communication strategies, tentative suggestions are made for creative alternatives where real communication can take place in online discussions.

Keywords: New learning technologies, online communications, cross-cultural communications, world Englishes

全球化使原本廣大的世界成為一個“較小”的地方。出於各種原因，我們需要每天與其他時區（通常來自不同文化）的人們進行溝通。這使得英語成為一種通用語言，意即英文也成為不同語言/母語的人使用的語言，而英文晉升成世界第一語言。借助聊天平台，社交媒體和行動應用程式等新技術，地理距離不再是溝通的障礙；事實上，這些軟體已經成為人們能隨時隨地即時與他人聯繫的管道。體認到需要讓學生為因應全球市場中跨文化交流的現實和挑戰做好準備，亞洲的許多大學（實際上，在世界其他地區）已經開始提供諸如“跨文化交流”，“語言與文化”等課程。有些人甚至提供完整或混合的在線課程，讓學生有機會與其他外國學生交談，以練習跨文化交際技巧。但是，我們如何評估這種在線教學法的有效性？我們如何知道學生是否真正參與學習，並從中提高他們的知識、技能和態度？本文章將呈現討論基於開放式調查問卷的質性研究結果，以在台灣南部私立大學開設“世界英語與錯誤傳播”課程的教學策略為例，收集學生對在線即時課程之有效和失效的反饋。進一步應用 De Bono 的並行思維以期製定更好的溝通策略，並在新穎的替代策略中如何落實在線討論中真正的溝通提出建議。

關鍵詞：新的學習技術，在線交流，跨文化交流，世界英語

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