



**IDENTIFYING AND UNDERSTANDING CULTURAL INFLUENCES IN BUSINESS
COMMUNICATION:
CROSS-CULTURAL E-MAIL COMMUNICATION PROJECT**

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International communication can be difficult when you have the benefit of intonation and nonverbal communication. Difficulty is increased when those aids are removed as with e-mail communication. Composing e-mails for business and recognizing cultural influences in international communication are needed skills for today's graduates. A project was developed and implemented in a junior level dress and culture class at a large Mid-western university to facilitate development of such abilities. The purpose of the cross-cultural e-mail communication project was to introduce students to international communication and the influence culture plays when using e-mail. Student groups functioned like product development teams responsible for sourcing one of their firms' products.

The project included three parts: (1) Review cultural influence in U.S. business communication, then write an e-mail targeted to a U.S. vendor. (2) Research cultural and business practices for an assigned country, then revise e-mail; attach a paper discussing revisions made. (3) Class presentation and handouts. Time and cost issues, needs and expectations, definition of their firm, introduction and quality issues, and other relevant business information needed to be discussed.

Students reacted positively to the assignment and related personal experiences from internships. In future, greater attention to linking e-mail communication as an illustrator of cultural values is needed.