

# Overcoming Disorienting Dilemmas in Global Intercultural Encounters: An Online Role-Play Simulator CMS

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**Abstract.** Breakdowns in communication between members of multi-cultural, multi-national, globally-distributed project teams represent a significant challenge for ventures such as designing and building new passenger aircraft, air traffic control systems, or space craft; or overcoming the effects of climate change, pandemics, and terrorism. An important element of the preparation of global graduates is learning how to systematically overcome disorientation that arises from the *unexpected* during global teamwork. An online role-play simulator—*Cultural Misconceptions Simulator (CMS)*—has been enhanced to allow users and authors from multiple language and cultural backgrounds to play scenarios and to write new scenarios. To date, CMS has been available in English only, with scenarios written from a *Western* perspective. The goal of this project is to make CMS available initially in Chinese, Russian, Kanji, Hindi, Arabic and English and later in many more languages. CMS comprises an SQL database for storing multiple interface elements and scenarios. Global collaborators and their students continue to test CMS. They are located at Australia, Austria, Canada, China, Germany, India, Japan, and Russia. As well as being a learning tool, CMS is also a research tool. CMS captures patterns of learning that help us to understand Intercultural Communication Competence development.

## 1. Introduction (Describe your idea)

Misunderstandings and miscommunication between people from different cultures provide a significant challenge as the world globalizes. Participants in global collaboration and communication across cultural boundaries need strategies that will allow them to routinely work in teams, whose members are distributed internationally from a changing mix of cultural backgrounds. Among the approaches to developing such strategies have been the classifications of national cultures according to a limited set of dimensions (e.g. Hofstede); or simply allowing time to develop strategies experientially. The former strategy becomes problematic when dealing with individuals from particular regions and sub-cultures within any given country. Most countries exhibit a diversity of cultures and language groups. Culture continues to evolve through interactions with other cultures and a changing environment. Often there is cross-fertilization or hybridization between cultures because of migration and inter-marriage.

The approach described here comprises some simple learning strategies that can be practiced using a role-play simulator and then applied to real situations. In 2005, a CD-based simulator was developed with only 3 different scenarios, all in English and all with a Western perspective. Based on testing with faculty, international visitors, graduate students and K-12 teachers, improvements were made. The simulator was redeveloped as an online tool and a repository of scenarios was added. This allowed the more experienced user to write their own scenario and to make it available online. Further testing was carried out in India, Mexico, Russia, Australia and different parts of the United States.

- A simulator was developed in 2005 on CD with 3 scenarios in English only
- Later put online with a repository of scenarios all in English
- Tried in India, Mexico, USA and Russia and improved based on feedback
- Need to increase the number of perspectives and allow scenarios in different languages
- New version was developed in 2009-2010
- This will allow many more people to use it and allow many more perspectives

This section should describe the background of the project and explain how your own research, essay, experiment, or creative work fits into that context. For example, you might describe the motivation for your project and then say how it is related to other similar scholarly or creative work. Remember to allow a “lay” reader to understand the fundamental aspects and current state of the subject area, as well as the significance of the project to that area.

## **2. Experiment, Results, Discussion, and Significance (Describe how you developed your idea)**

- Developed entirely with MS SQL and ASP.net
- Database stores scenarios, users, performance data and labels for interfaces in different languages
- Number tables, scripts, languages
- Collaboration with colleagues in Russia, Japan, China and Wichita to translate interface
- Can now switch between languages for interface and enter new scenarios in any language
- Screen snapshots

The bulk of the paper, this section will take on different appearances for different types of projects. For research projects, this section should describe the research methodology; the principle parts of the argument, or the stages of inquiry; the results of the research and their significance. For creative projects, this section might include a description of the composition or performance; the materials and techniques; and the significance of the piece. For both types of projects, this section may include figures (drawings, pictures, graphs, etc.), which should be included in the electronic document.

## **3. Conclusions**

- New simulator has been developed
- Will be moved to large server
- Users of different language backgrounds encouraged to contribute new scenarios
- Feedback from people of multiple languages
- Study patterns of learning and reflection about the PSPT strategies
- Next steps to develop and understanding of how people of different cultures and languages develop PSPT strategies

This section should be a short summary of the major results. In effect, it is a final brief description of the project, the statement you want readers to remember. This section should not introduce any new material.

## **4. Acknowledgements**

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