Computer-Mediated Education And Globalization
- ## A Case Study On Cross-border Course "Globalization and Media"

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Abstract

This paper studies computer mediated education in social science, in particular, communication studies. As universities in the United States build closer relationships with foreign universities, cross-border education becomes more feasible with the assistance of web technology. To illustrate how this can be done, a trial course "Globalization and Media" is offered to students in both China and US from a US university. In the first part of the online tutorial, it is mainly instructor-based as the theories in media effects and globalization are introduced to the students. In the second part, the course becomes more application-based as students are requested to accomplish two tasks: firstly, study one of their own countries' major media institutions and share their findings in the online discussion board of the course website. After intense discussions of the different structures and functions of media institutions from the two countries, students are asked to conduct content analysis of a newspaper of their own countries over one common issue, e.g., the coverage of Iraq war. Their findings are again posted on the course discussion broad. Through these exercises students are able to see both sides and have a deeper understanding of the differences of media systems from a global angle.

With computer mediated teaching, people from different countries can effectively learn from and exchange viewpoints with each other, without physically moving from one place to another. However, because only those who are computer literate and proficient in English could benefit from it, this may further deepen the gap of digital divide and exacerbate the dilution of cultures in the developing countries. Another concern is that because the instructor and the students are not in the same room, and may not even access to the course materials at the same time, although this provides convenience for the students to set their own time and pace, it also requires tremendous self-discipline from the students. At all times the instructor is open to email exchanges, but since he is not physically in front of the students to support them and answer questions, some students might quickly fall behind. But since most of the students in this course are highly motivated and interested in technology-mediated environments, the course proves to be a successful experience.

This experiment shows that with the development of global computer network and the widespread of education in both directions (both from North to South and from South to North), virtual learning will promote the understanding among cultures and improve peoples' quality over time.

I. Introduction

For thousands of years, teachers and students are in the same classrooms, where the teachers impart knowledge, showcase applications and answer students' questions. With the widespread of computer technology in today's world, and the increasing need of lifetime learning, more and more people are seeking education with the convenience of Internet. With the global reach of Internet, people in faraway places are able to access the knowledge of world top academics. However, can all the functions of traditional teaching be effectively carried out through online tutorial? As the instructor cannot detect direct facial or physical feedback from the students, special concerns must be heeded for virtual education, especially those across borders.

To understand the process, a course "Media and Globalization" is offered to students of different countries using long-distance learning methods. The course exams how recent revolutions in technology and social practice have produced a relatively new category of media, global in its scope and impact; and how traditional media have responded to a new age of rampant "globalization." Particular consideration is given to the social, cultural and political impact of cross-border media. The main purpose of this course is to guide students in their exploration of how news and entertainment vehicles have responded to the opportunities and difficulties presented by a global agenda. To serve this purpose, it is of particular relevance to put the course online for students of various cultures so that they are able to learn from one another diversified perspectives.

The experiment is conducted in US and China by two universities that are associated with each other. The instructor and half of the class are based in the United States, as US higher education remains the global leader. The other half of the class is based in China. Although the course is taught in English, since in China English is taught in secondary schools, the Chinese students who are enrolled in this course do not have much difficulty in understanding and using the language. As far as technical facilities are concerned, since computer and telecommunication infrastructure has experienced rapid development and tele-density in major cities such as Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou has been approaching advanced nations' standard, most college students have access to the Internet, either at their dorms, or in university computer labs and Internet cafés that are abundant in China.

Unlike in the United States, the Chinese education system has been emphasizing the grasp and memorization of knowledge, rather than independent thinking or application. As the percentage of total population in China that are able to obtain higher education remains in single digit, the competition of getting accepted by a university is very intense. Those who achieve high scores in the national university entrance exams and are successful in getting into a university are usually students who are very good at understanding and memorizing material, however, their capability of creative thinking, independent exploration and practical application are in great need of improvement. US education, on the other hand, focuses especially on developing the students' ability to think independently, hence becomes very useful to improve the Chinese students' overall skill set. Because most students do not have the resources of physically traveling to the United States to pursue further education, online tutorial becomes a highly welcomed alternative for them to experience US education.

II. Course Objective and Outline

The course "media and globalization" is primarily a reading, discussion and writing course, hence is very suitable to be moved online. Students are divided into six teams, three in US and three in China. Teams rotate in leading online tutorial discussions. After the mid-term, teams are required to share a team research report on a major media organization of its own country. After comparing the structure, operations and social background of major media organizations in both countries, each team is asked to conduct a content analysis on a newspaper of its own country over one common issue, i.e., the coverage of Iraq war. Their findings are again posted and discussed on the course blackboard. Teams are expected to begin their research for their final projects as early as possible.

Based on the knowledge acquired through these exercises, every student is requested to submit a 6-7-page essay of comparative analysis of the media of two particular countries of his or her choosing, yet the two countries must be those other than US or China. As a part of this assignment, students are expected to follow, using the Internet and other tools, the media in the countries they have chosen. They are free to choose any angle in conducting the comparative study, e.g., either through content analysis, or from economic, social and political perspectives, etc.

At the beginning of the term, the instructor tests the email listserv, welcomes everybody into the class and posts a brief course review and requirements on to the course blackboard. The instructor also randomly assigns students into groups, sets up group discussion forums and class discussion board, and provides access to group members to their own group forums. On the first Monday, the instructor posts the first set of readings on basic media impact theories under the section "week 1-tutorial" section on the blackboard. Each team is required to read over the reading material and begin the discussion by Wednesday. However, one team is chosen by the instructor on the merits of the substance and depth of its discussion. On Thursday the team is notified to lead class discussion on Friday. Accordingly on Friday, the team chosen will summarize their own group discussions and post their findings and questions on the class discussion board.
There is no designated team leader, thus every member of the team is equally welcomed to contribute. And at this point the whole class is able to access to the discussion board and poses replies or new threads from Friday throughout the weekend.

Meanwhile, each team is requested to discuss among team members via email or online forum to determine which major media organization of its country the team will report on and which newspaper it will conduct content analysis over. Once the team makes its choices, it can post the name of the media organization and the newspaper on the blackboard. In case of two teams' choosing the same media organization or newspaper, the team that posts earlier can keep its choices, while the other team must choose a different media organization or newspaper. All teams must finalize their choices by the end of week two.

On Monday morning of the second week, the instructor summarizes the discussions of the previous week, answers students' questions and clarifies any confusion incurred during the discussions. These comments are posted in the section "week 1- discussion summarization" which is directly under the section of "week 1-tutorial". Then he posts the second set of readings on media research method in "week 2-tutorial", and notifies every student by email about the availability of the week 2 reading material. The same procedures are followed in selecting a different team to lead the discussion at the end of the week.

For week 3, the instructor again sums up the achievements and concerns that arose from the previous week in the "week 2- discussion summarization" section and posts the third set of readings on globalization theory in the "week 3 –tutorial" section. During the week another team is chosen to lead the class discussion. As by week 3 the students have been exposed to the basic theories of both media and globalization, all students are requested to think about how to apply these theories and let the instructor know which two countries each of them has chosen to study for the final independent country research project with a short abstract via email by the end of week 4. If any student falls behind at this point, the instructor is able to quickly follow up with him or her, to clear any problem or confusion he or she may have experienced.

The week 4 reading posted is a special case study that has utilized the theories covered in the previous three tutorials. Again a different team is selected to lead the class discussion following the established procedure. On week 5 and week 6, two more cases are posted in the tutorial sections so that all the students are becoming more and more familiar with the theory applications and the last two teams are also asked to lead class discussions during these two weeks, respectively. During week 5 the instructor also provides feedbacks via email to each student regarding the abstract of final individual paper submitted by him or her in the previous week.

On week 7, an online open-book Midterm Exam is provided by the instructor in the "week 7 – midterm" section on the blackboard. To minimize information sharing about the exam among them, all students are requested to take the online exam within 24 hours after the Midterm exam is posted (students have been notified about this requirement during the previous two weeks' email summaries by the instructor). As each question is timed, students won't be able to fill in the answer while making a note of the question at the same time. The exam lasts one and a half hour, students are not allowed to stop the exam in the middle and continue it sometime after. They must set aside a two-hour period that is specially dedicated to the exam. If a student stops in the middle of the exam and steps away, all the questions he leaves unanswered will be graded as zero and he cannot have access to them later on. After finishing the one and half hour exam, students are led to a half-hour timed online survey about the course and teaching methods, which they must fill out too to get a complete grade. The purpose of this survey is to refresh the students' memory so that they won't be able to immediately run around to tell his classmates who haven't taken the exam about the exam content, in the meantime, the survey also provides important feedbacks and comments for the instructor to see where he needs to improve and which aspects the students would like to learn more about in the following class sections.

Twenty-four hours after the mid-term exam is posted, it is closed and students will no longer have access to it. Half of the exam questions are true or false questions and multiple choices questions, which the instructor has programmed the blackboard software to grade automatically and add them up for each students' grade. The other half of the exam is essay questions, which are sent to the instructor's email box to be graded manually and added to the grade book. If for some reason certain student is not able to take the exam within 24 hours that the exam is posted, he or she must write an email to the instructor specifying the reason why he or she misses the deadline of taking the exam and requests a make-up exam. The instructor considers the particular excuse and decides whether or not he will mark down the student during the make-up exam. After notifying the student, a make-up exam is set up online by the instructor for which only students who have requested the make-up exam will have access to. The content and order of the make-up exam are different from the regular mid-term exam.

On week 8, the students are able to see their grades in the online grade book (each student could only see his or her own grade using his user name and password for confidential reasons). The instructor leads the class discussion this week. He provides the standard answers for all the midterm questions, placing special emphases on questions that most students did unsatisfactorily. Students could dispute their grades by emailing the instructor. The instructor then checks back in the database of that student's answers to the exam and provides explanations to the student who disputes his or her grade. The instructor also discusses with students on the blackboard of how he can improve the learning experiences based on the feedback gathered in the mandatory survey of the previous week. Meanwhile, the instructor provides advises on the students' final team projects and individual paper progresses. Students are expected to discuss their experiences in tracking down the media scene of different countries on the discussion board. During this week, the teams are also asked to discuss among themselves and integrate their final reports on the major media companies and analysis of the content of the newspaper they had chosen.

On Monday of week 9, all teams are requested to post their reports on the major media companies by mid night US Central time. During the week students are able to read each other's report on the media companies and discuss them over the class discussion board.
Each team's effort is graded on the quality of its report and discussions. Similarly on Monday of week 10, all teams must post their

newspaper content analysis online. Students read over each other's report and discuss them on the class forum. Again the quality of report and discussion plays a significant role in the grading of teams. In the end, on Monday of Week 11, individual papers are due. Every student submits his or her 6-7 page long comparative analysis of media of two countries through the digital drop box. Meanwhile, they are also required to provide a brief summary of their findings on the class blackboard to share with the class. By the next Monday the instructor provides feedback to the students, who are able to see their final grades then. All students are able to dispute their grades during the following week with the instructor, but after that the window of appeal is closed and grades are submitted to the universities.

III.   Online Discussion and Student Assessment

As the expectations of individuals and teams are clearly specified in the course review, each student is expected to read it thoroughly at the start of the course and to refer to it regularly. The percentage of each requirement and assignment in the final grade is as follows:
1. Team Leading Online Tutorial Discussions, 10%.
2. Mid-term Exam, 20%.
3. Team Report on Major Media Companies, 20%.
4. Team Content Analysis on Newspaper Coverage, 20%.
5. Individual Paper, 30%.

As the course is heavily relied on team and class discussions, this provides a unique experience as well as a challenge for the Chinese students who are used to the lecturing type of teaching. In addition, there is room to improve for online team coordination for both American and Chinese students. Since student teams do not meet physically together, team members may not work at the same pace. There are a few who lag behind and just become a free loader in their teams. Although the instructor has been stressing the importance of communication and responding to each other via email as soon as possible, most students do the assignment as the last thing at the end of the day, when all other daily chores are taken care of. Sometimes time-constrained or exhausted, they simply procrastinate the duties for this course. Therefore, for an online learning courselike this, it is of particular significance to motivate students so that they remain active throughout the course.

One way of motivating students is to use frequent assessments. In this case, each team's capacity of leading discussions is accessed and feedbacks are provided in the following week, hence it drives the team members to read the materials and think about interesting questions. Note it is not merely the quantity of the team's comments that are evaluated; rather, it is the depth of their point. Furthermore, through these assessments, the instructor understands how well students have grasped the materials and adjusts his teaching accordingly. With tailored feedback, he also clarifies the goals that the students need to achieve. Besides team projects, the midterm exam and the final individual paper help to differentiate students' grades. Although some students who have a lot of other tasks may encounter difficulty in following up with all the assignments throughout the term, in most cases, the constant assessments on students' online activities help to engage the students, who also find the timely feedbacks on their performances very useful.

To read over all the comments of students is a heavy task for the instructor, as sometimes the online forums generate thousands of threads. However, assigning students into teams helps to elevate the work, as the students will first discuss with other team members in their own team forums and then each team will summarize its points when posting to the class discussion board, hence making the instructor's grading process more manageable. Although each team project is graded for all the members involved, that is, every member of the team gets the same grade for the team project concerned, in order to eliminate social loafer as much as possible, the instructor also asks the students to submit a peer evaluation form at the end of the term, indicating how they view each team member's efforts in the project. If some members provide significant less input than others, their grades are marked down accordingly. In this way team members

are motivated to participate actively and invest as a team in a task, and get fair rewards according to their inputs.

IV.   Course Evaluation

Since this online course is an experiment of cross-border cooperation, it provides a valuable lesson for a diverse student population and computer/Internet application in the higher education. To evaluate the course, the instructor has used the following methods: online survey, observation of online discussions and team projects to see how well the students have been able to apply knowledge learned in the real situation, as well as email exchanges with students. One disadvantage of online teaching is that the instructor cannot gather the subtle feedback of the student's interests level as in a traditional teaching setting, e.g., yawning indicates that the course material is getting boring and the instructor would then tell an interesting anecdotes to boost morale, etc. To overcome this disadvantage, the instructor has stayed pro-active in interacting with students on the discussion board to lead them to take a step further and foster critical thinking. Grades and feedbacks are sent to students in a very timely basis so that the students get a sense of progress.

As far as the course material is concerned, during the first three weeks the instructor posts the most fundamental theories of media impact and globalization studies as well as media research methods such as social experiment and content analysis. In the following three weeks of case studies, all the cases used are current and relevant to the theories covered previously. In addition to help students achieve a thorough understanding of all the theories, the instructor also encourages the students to come up with new ideas and theories, hence help to develop their ability of thinking independently. Meanwhile, the instructor posts a great number of relevant external links, so that when students carry out team or individual projects, they are able to find useful resources through these external links.

As the survey after the midterm exam shows, most students are highly satisfied with the instructor's abundant knowledge in the subjects taught and his availability in guiding the teams, explaining materials and providing feedbacks. Most of them do not find the technical skills needed to succeed in the online course challenging, but some do feel that the assignments overwhelming, especially when they are frustrated by other team members for not doing their parts of the team projects in a timely manner. Students also give substantial suggestions on what changes can be made to make the learning process more effective and enjoyable, such as uploading instructor and students' images, uploading sounds, guest speaker in the chat rooms, etc.

Generally speaking by the end of the course, most students have been able to achieve the course objectives set at the beginning of the term. Their team projects and individual work demonstrate not only understanding of the course materials but also ability to apply principles and generalizations to new problems and situations. Most teams synthesize and integrate information and ideas effectively in their final products, using innovative formats. Through team projects, students learn to work productively with others primarily through online means such as email and virtual forums, though some teams whose members are located in the same country manage to get together off line, too. But most importantly, through this experience the students develop a deep appreciation of the other culture and an informed concern about contemporary globalization issues.

V.   Global Virtual Education

This experiment demonstrates that with the development of technological capabilities, global virtual education that transcends national boundaries is feasible. Traditional collegiate life will be drastically transformed with the spread of global virtual education. With the ease and convenience of the Internet, international students can take courses from an overseas university without the need of physically moving to that country. Instead, technological-based

platforms become an inexpensive means for delivering popular high-quality US educational courses and content. American students can also benefit tremendously from the heterogeneous background of their fellow classmates.

As the following data show, technology and higher education are converging at a rapid speed. Enrollments in distance learning grew at a 35 percent CAGR from 700,000 in 1998 to 2.2 million in 2002.[1] Based on a survey by IDC, 78 percent of the higher education institutions that offer distance learning used the Internet, due to its easy-to-use interface and interactivity.[2] The student body for distance learning using Internet the global network has expanded even faster with the growing demand for continuous education in the globally spreading knowledge economy.

Although e-learning is relatively predictable within the Untied States due to more homogeneous regulations, standards and infrastructures, it may not always be the case cross-borders. As Nagi Sioufi, CEO of French language training software firm Auralog, pointed out, "There is not one international education market. There is an accumulation of local markets".[3] Each local market is different and entry into the higher education section of that market needs careful research of the local demography, local education needs and barriers.

For example, in China, though there is an urgent need for transnational education so as to close the education gap with the developed country, certain orthodoxy groups in the Chinese authority think that unrestricted cross-border education will result in the erosion of Chinese traditional culture and cultivation of a generation of young people who will thoroughly accept American influence, thus endangering the governance of the Communist Party. Negotiations between universities and authorities prove to be a long process. Nevertheless, with China's joining WTO, transnational corporation's demands for skilled workers who are familiar with international standards increase, leading to more and more people becoming interested in American education. With the restraints of American university resources and other international issues such as SARS that prevent the US universities to accept as many exchange students to physically travel to the United States to study, online education has become a popular alternative that more and more people resort to.

The development of telecommunication infrastructure in China also makes international virtual learning possible. After the first Chinese Internet facility was established in 1993, by July 2002 the number of Internet users in China had reached 45.8 millions4, making the nation one of the fastest growing countries in Internet spreading, and a quickly emerging market for e-learning. The following chart shows the rapid growth of Chinese Internet users:

[1]Gred Cappelli. "E-learning In The Postsecondary Education Market: A View From Wall Street". The Wired Tower: Perspectives on the Impact of the Internet on Higher Education. Edited by Matthew Serbin Pittinsky. New York: Financial Times Prentice Hall, Pearson Education, Inc. 2003. 53.
[2]Ibid, 56.
[3]Cited in Peter Stokes' "A Global Education Market? Global Business Building Local Markets". Eduventures White Paper. May 2001.
[4] China Internet Network Center Ninth Internet Report.
http://www.cnnic.net.cn/develst/
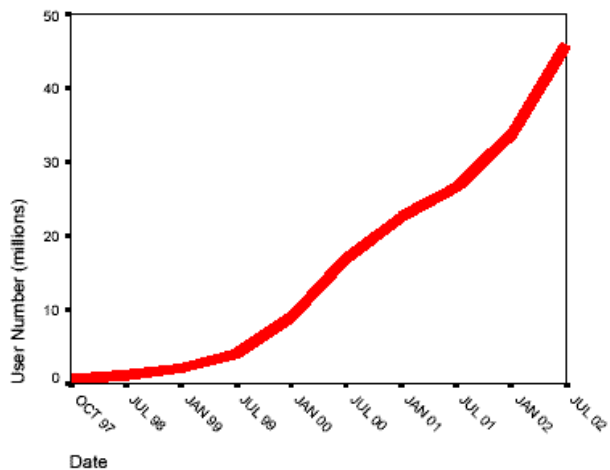
(Data source: CNNIC5)

In fact in many places, education is the driving force for the rapid adoption of computers and Internet. Since usually each family only has one child in the urban area due to the "One Child Per Family" policy promulgated by the Chinese government to control population explosion, education for that child becomes a primacy for the family, and parents save to buy a computer for the child, believing that it will help him or her achieving a better education and future.

Although computers and telephone lines are generally available in the urban area, in the rural area the situation is much direr. Around eighty percent of the nation's population (1.04 billion) are peasants, and most of them are quite poor and do not have access to computers and Internet. Education is not as emphasized as in the urban counterpart. The "One Child Per Family" policy has encountered tremendous difficulty in implementation in the rural area. Many families in the villages have more than one child, and the children frequently drop out of school to help field and house work. Even if the kid gets accepted by universities, most farming families have a hard time coming up with the tuition. (Most universities' tuitions in China are around $500 to $1,000 per year, by far exceeding the average annual household income of peasant families). In the mean time, there are rarely loans for education available in China. In remote regions, girls sometimes cannot even finish elementary school (the situation for boys is not as acute because of the traditional preferential treatment for boys over girls).

Therefore while most of the urban population is able to obtain online education, most peasants are deprived of such opportunities. This poses a serious threat of further polarization of China's social classes and widening of the digital divide. Although the mission of online education is to spread knowledge as much as possible across the world, the technological nature by itself excludes those with no or little access to the relevant technology, those who do not have sufficient economic resources, those who are illiterate in English, etc. E-learning may cultivate a class of people in China that represents the educated in the United States and other advanced countries, yet people who are currently in the lower social stratus may stay that way for a long time to come, because of their disadvantage in obtaining education of international standards.

[5] China Internet Network Information Center Reports.
http://www.cnnic.net.cn

VI. Cost and Quality Control of Computer Mediated Education

To enable more people to benefit from the Internet learning, the business model needs to be reconsidered, so as to improve the quality, increase access and reduce cost of the computer-mediated education. While access to the Internet is still comparatively limited in less developed countries, particularly in the rural areas, for young college students, computer and Internet have become more and more accessible all over the world. In China, as the government begins to break the monopoly in the telecommunication industry, market competitions begin to thrive, resulting in more affordable telephone and Internet services.

Even though for most low-income families, Internet is still a luxury, Internet cafés have become one of the most popular places for people, especially teenagers to get online. There they pay a relatively small amount of money to use the computer and Internet for several hours, while the café owners garner huge profits due to the economy of scale. However, currently most Internet cafés are focusing on attracting customers from online electronic games, pornography, etc., rather than for education purposes. There are even cases where the Internet café owners locked the door during night time when the cafés are offering illegal Internet programs such as pornography, resulting to disastrous fires and losses of lives. Due to these reasons, the government has been cracking down unscrupulous Internet cafés, and educators have been calling for kids not to go to Internet cafés. To best solve these problems and obtain the optimal benefits of the Internet, it is suggested that the government install more computers and establish more Internet terminals within the public library system – currently there are very few computers and Internet facilities in China's libraries- with these computers screened from programs that are not for education purposes, such as electronic games.

Once more people have access to the Internet, courses offered online are able to involve public lectures with large enrollment. With the assistance of technology, instructors can respond to students individually for their particular needs, instead of treating them all the same. Rather than everybody sitting in a large classroom listening to the instructor lecturing, online courses emphasize on self-paced learning and group interaction. In such a way, the students are able to attain social skills in team projects and facilitations. Moreover, to improve the application of the knowledge learned during each session, the instructor should provide online quizzes after each session. These computerized low stakes quizzes allow greater feedback, more repetition, and reinforcement of what the students have learned and not yet grasped, thus better help them to practice and crack the hard nuts in their learning processes. [6] Rather than the instructor correcting every single question in the quiz, the students learn the right way to solve the problems at hand by following automatic computer instructions, which will tremendously reduce the workload of the instructor while improving the quality of teaching. Moreover, as the students have more interaction with the materials, they become more prepared for the next online lecture or project.

VII. Conclusion

With a globally offered course, due to time difference and distance, asynchronous interaction is adopted rather than synchronous teaching/learning. Under the synchronous model, teacher and students are present at the same time in the learning environment.

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[6] Carol A. Twigg. "Quality, Cost and Access: The Case For Redesign". The Wired Tower: Perspectives on the Impact of the Internet on Higher Education. Edited by Matthew Serbin Pittinsky. New York: Financial Times Prentice Hall, Pearson Education, Inc. 2003. 126.

The advantage of this type is that the teacher has the visual clues to detect whether effective communication is occurring. Immediate comments and change of tones usually take place to motivate students to keep up with the course. While on the other hand, in an asynchronous environment, personal commitment is stressed and flexible, self-paced learning is enabled. Students who are fast in learning do not need to sit in the same classroom listening to the instructor lecturing to the whole class materials they have already mastered. Students who are slower can also go back over and work on the materials at their own pace. Besides, online learning caters to different students' time schedule- some students work best in the morning, while others, due to family or work obligations, may only have time to devote to study at midnight. Online courses allow them the convenience to integrate their learning process with their working or home environment.

As in the online course the students study independently and the teacher is not around to constantly discipline them, some students may fall behind and in most times 'lurk' –remaining in the background observing rather than actively contributing. [7] Throughout the course it is those students who are highly motivated, good at self-pacing and organization, as well as comfortable with technology-mediated environments, that obtain the optimal benefits from the course. However, because the discussion software is able to automatically count the number of messages posted by each student, the instructor is able to find out who within each team is lurking and contact him or her via email. In this way support is provided for the students who have special needs.

The success of this course is largely due to its well-designed structure. As students are assigned to groups, overloading is minimized; more importantly, the course provides students opportunities for collaborative activities, peer leadership and facilitation. The instructor has always made clear the expectations for both individuals and teams, so that students understand the specified outcome at any stage. At the end of the course, the students not only acquire the knowledge; but also gain tremendous skills such as computer skills, language skills, ability to manage multiple perspectives and voices, ability to research and find what they need from a wider range of material, as well as have the opportunity to develop self-discipline, motivation, confidence and disclosure. [8]

As e-learning stretches across borders, it also arouses suspicions from local conservatives. For example, in China, the government has been closely monitoring Internet activities. As it is commonly believed that western media disseminating the MTV culture played a significant role in disintegrating the Communist block in East Europe and the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Chinese authority has been restricting information flow in and out of the country. In October 2002, the Chinese government banned the operation of powerful search engine Google in China mainland, however, under heavy pressure from all aspects of the society, Chinese government dropped the blocking of Google after only 11 days. The orthodoxy in China is afraid that global information flow, particularly American influences, will create a bourgeoisie class and threaten the hegemony of the institutions of the national state.

However, with the end of cold war, the political and business pattern of the world has changed. In today's globalization, ideology is no longer as important as before, all nations and businesses are involved in intense competitions, each racing ahead with the quickest speed.

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[7] Greg Light and Roy Cox. "Learning: Teaching with New Technology". Learning and Teaching in Higher Education, the Reflective Professional. London: Paul Chapman Publishing, 2001. 166.
[8] Ibid, 164.

Isolating itself from modern influences will only result in the nation becoming poorer, and more and more extreme due to the social amplification effect. Such a phenomenon occurs in today's terrorist groups – most of them grew out of the least globalized corner of the world such as Afghanistan, Northwest Pakistan, etc. Even though scholars have been concerned about the widening of digital divide along with the spread of Internet – because of the cost of new technology, people from lower social status are deprived of the new vehicle of learning and information, hence falling further behind in the society; yet information and education have always been trickled down step by step from the higher stratum to lower ones – with time more and more people will have access to online learning, just as the spreading process of other technological innovations in the history- from paper, to printing, to radio, telephone, television, fax, etc. Shying away from the process for fear of change and "digital divide" will only hinder the development of human society. Therefore along with the broadening of the reach of Internet, online learning bears the mission of providing education for every one in every corner of the world, and will make significant contributions to the progress of global civilization.

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