Global Advances in Business Communication

Betweenness: Global Business Communication in a Time of Change and Questioning

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Global business communication across cultures covers a broad range of subject matter almost all of which falls into the space between clean definitions. Much of what the field covers falls outside of the silos of stratified disciplines. This issue of the Global Advances in Business Communication illustrates this sense of what in what Diana Wong-MingJi calls "boundaries contesting spaces of betweenness" in her article in this issue.

All of the articles in this issue deal with how current events are challenging concepts that were previously presumed as givens. This is evident in the questioning of globalization and its presumptions in areas as diverse as international management in the face the rise of anti-globalization forces in the politically changing landscape, the impact of pandemic on the accuracy and framing of health communication or the challenges to reorganizing and revising language instruction for specific purposes.

The global pandemic of the novel coronavirus has no counterpart as a challenge not only to global business or business communication but – quite literally – to every aspect of the way we live. Nothing in living memory has had so universal an effect, and yet very few in any field had anticipated -- let alone researched – the role of communication across cultures during a major pandemic. The COVID-19 was far from its first appearance when the GABC Journal first received the manuscript for "Magnitude matters: the impact of pandemic threat perceptions on the effectiveness of health message framing across countries." Even without the impact of the global pandemic that followed, it was evident to our reviewers that this article addressed a mostly overlooked but important area for applied cross-cultural communication. Normally when referring to a multi-authored article, it is customary to give the first author's name followed by et al. In this case, because of the prescience of the authors here and the quality of their empirical research, it seems appropriate make an exception and all five authors: Anthony Asare, Tilottama Ghosh Chowdhury. Patricia Norberg, Jun Kang and Richard Bannor. These authors indicate that their "current inquiry begins to fill the gap in the literature by examining how organizations might better motivate consumers to interact with pandemic disease information." That in itself would have merited an important subject on its own to merit our attention. Yet the authors go beyond this "because pandemics refer to worldwide infectious risks of different levels." In short, by their nature do not limit themselves to specific countries and so the framing of communication about health care threats during a pandemic quite naturally merits the "the effects across countries" with particular attention to China, Ghana and the United States.

Diana Wong-MingJi's "A Heuristic Model of Organizational Boundaries as Contesting Spaces of Betweenness in International Management" examines the presumed norms of globalization, and the artificially-set boundaries of culture and the organizations that span

those boundaries. Wong-MingJi addresses "organizational boundaries as contested spaces arises from controversies of globalization where its momentum is no longer taken for granted." The political rhetoric illustrated, for example, by immigration controversies, the US-Mexico border wall and the Brexit add to what Wong-MingJi calls "a growing chorus, albeit fragmented, from different quarters which is questioning, resisting, and opposing globalization… [coming] from wide ranging and disparate perspectives that include trade unionists, environmentalists, farmers, blue collar industrial workers, faith-based communities, human right advocates, intellectual thinkers and researchers…" These objections to globalization show that organizations working globally can no longer (in fact, arguably never could) assume a convergence of cultures in an integrated, borderless world." Wong-MingJi argues that "boundaries play a critical and central role in a turbulent age of globalization and possibly, even more so than when they were taken for granted assumptions and mutually abided by the actors involved." Yet the absence of clear boundaries creates a vacuum. Wong-MingJi offers a solution: a heuristic model of organizational boundaries. The model she lays out provides "a dynamic space" to address the complexities of what are, after all, ever-changing – rather than static – imaginary lines. We should note here that this paper, in an earlier version, was one of the Best Paper Winners at the 2019 GABC Conference in New Delhi.

Judith Ainsworth's "LSP in Canadian Higher Education: What We Can Learn from Program Reviews" provides an empirical study of university program review data for the Language for Special Purposes (LSP) programs and curricula. Changing workplace needs (in this case the need for multilingual skills) and higher education's ability (or lack thereof) to address those needs represents another area in a state of uncertainty – and thus the theme of this GABC Journal issue. Ainsworth examines in particular the role that LSP plays in Canada as a plurilingual country, but her findings suggest relevance that reaches far beyond the small sample of Canadian institutions used in her sample. The article demonstrates that higher education programs have undercut the value of LSP with language departments rarely creating LSP majors while professional disciplines rarely required language courses despite the benefit language skills provide in employment and workplace demand. The downplaying or outright dismantling of LSP programs, the article suggests, is taking place as the need for language proficiency and cross-cultural competence has grown in importance in the workplace (both within the multiple languages of the Canadian domestic workplace as well as in the global workplace). As Ainsworth notes, "The irony is that organisations are spending less time and money on training assuming that if someone has a college degree, that person is ready to go, while business schools feel they do not have time to work on soft skills and that students will somehow learn them in the real world." The demand for LSP exists in practice; the university's ability to fill the pedagogical needs and practices in a way that makes its value recognized within the university that matches the value place on such skills in the workplace outside the university.

As a follow-up to Ainsworth's LSP article, we have provided our first Op-Ed position paper: Carlos M. Coria Sánchez's "Spanish for Business: Past, Present and Future." The

article provides a general overview of the lack of growth in US academia of Spanish for Business as a major, minor or certificate.