

CROSS-CULTURAL CONNECTIONS:
INTERCULTURAL LEARNING FOR GLOBAL
CITIZENSHIP

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Abstract

This paper discusses a curriculum developed to make innovative use of collaborative digital technologies—including video conferences, collaborative blogs, writing on a Wiki, and dynamic chat—as part of an activity-based research project to foster intercultural competencies among students in globally-distributed teams. We present qualitative and quantitative data that indicate successful implementation of the curriculum for facilitating global learning via communication technology tools. By situating the curriculum within current debates in intercultural communication and digital pedagogy, we hope to offer new knowledge on how best to foster multiple perspectives through developing intercultural capital that enables world citizenship. We conclude with a projection on the scalability and sustainability of the curriculum in an international context and an argument for how such cross-cultural connections can foster greater political understanding, ethical awareness, and intercultural competencies in order to bring about improved international and social relations for emerging global citizens.

Keywords

Global Learning Curriculum
Digital Pedagogy
Intercultural Communication Competence
World Citizenship
Intercultural Capital

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Introduction: Curriculum Designed for Cross-Cultural Connections

This paper has grown out of collaboration between faculty at Stanford University, California, USA, and at Örebro University, Sweden, in a project called “Developing Intercultural Competencies through Collaborative Rhetoric”; see our website at <http://ccr.stanford.edu>. The work has been supported by the Wallenberg Global Learning Network and the Stanford Center for Innovations in Learning; it involves core contributions from faculty researchers Christine Alfano, Anders Eriksson, Andrea Lunsford, Eva Magnusson, Brigitte Mral, and Alyssa O’Brien. Over the past three years we have attempted to answer a critical educational need: the development and implementation of a curriculum designed to foster what theorists Carl Lovitt and Dixie Goswami (1999) term “intercultural competencies,” or the increasingly important skill of approaching others with consideration for and sensitivity towards diverse cultural contexts. The impetus for such a curriculum emerged from a very practical goal: how to prevent deep misunderstandings that can lead to conflagrations such as seen in the recent fury over a series of cartoons depicting the Prophet Muhammad; this incident focused worldwide attention not only on the power of images but also on the violence that can result from miscommunication stemming from narrow perspectives that fail to take into consideration intercultural contexts. In response, the international faculty team worked together on activity-based research to design a curriculum for global learning.

To make possible intercultural competency in communication, we developed a curriculum focused on the innovative use of collaborative digital technologies among students working in what we call “globally-distributed teams.” Through pedagogical activities implemented via cross-cultural and transnational connections, we challenged students to explore multiple perspectives on texts that embody cultural values—such as ads, websites, political speeches, and even everyday items such as clothing. In designing a global learning curriculum and the concrete pedagogical activities for facilitating greater sensitivity and rhetorical understanding in students through cross-cultural connections, our ultimate goal is to make possible greater political understanding, ethical awareness, and intercultural competencies in order to bring about improved relations for emerging global citizens.

In the process of sharing our work on curriculum development, we hope to offer implications for future global learning classes, for the difficult task of facilitating the development of world citizens, and for the important step of generating intercultural capital development in students across the globe. By “intercultural capital,” we mean knowledge and dispositions that have exchange value and power in the intrinsically intercultural exchanges of new social fields of teaching and learning, work, and everyday life (Luke & Goldstein, 2006). The need has never been more urgent to help students learn practical strategies for intercultural

exchanges, moving them from awareness to understanding and, finally, to competency in negotiating multiple perspectives as world citizens.

To that end, this paper discusses 1) the foundation for the curriculum which we situate within theoretical debates in intercultural communication, rhetoric, and digital pedagogy 2) the core of the curriculum, namely, the methodology and assignment sequence implemented for cross-cultural connections as a means to foster intercultural competencies, including specific teaching practices, learning objectives, and class activities (the use of video conferences, collaborative blogs, and a Wiki), 3) the results of our work, including our evaluation measures for assessment of the research protocol in the form of qualitative and quantitative data, and 4) implications, a closing argument on the significance and applicability of the curriculum to a wide range of educational contexts, including possible contributions to the theoretical canon of intercultural communication.

Theoretical Foundations for Curriculum Development

At its heart, this project builds on current theoretical literature and previous research to offer a model of cross-cultural learning using digital technologies to develop innovative classroom practices for collaborative global learning. Current work in intercultural theory, rhetoric, and digital writing pedagogy all point to the need for new empirically tested practices and scholarly sound methods for developing solutions for how best to use communication technologies to offer students hands-on learning of transnational and intercultural differences.

Our efforts to develop a curriculum in global learning considered the debates within the field of intercultural theory about how best to approach differently situated subject positions. Previous intercultural researchers have tended to emphasize common cultural traits, such as distinguishing between low-context and high-context cultures (Hall, 1959; Hall, 1976), or differentiating between individualistic and collectivistic cultures (Triandis, 1995), while other researchers have focused on describing national cultures in a taxonomic approach to intercultural understanding (Hofstede, 1990). This categorizing and generalizing research tends to overemphasize the differences between cultures; it reinscribes prevailing stereotypes, as Zhu (2004) concludes in her overview of intercultural research. A curriculum based on this type of research typically advocates deep immersion (Jandt, 2004) or learning as much about another culture as possible before initiating intercultural communication (Victor, 1992). We found that this approach to developing intercultural competencies leads to the pitfall that researchers Ronald and Suzanne Scollon (1995) describe as partial attention to specific cultural factors (such as ideology, discourse patterns, and facial features) at the expense of other interpersonal and cultural factors that influence the site of transnational exchange and understanding.

In developing our curriculum, we felt the need to instruct students in ways of understanding diverse subject positions as opposed to reinscribing stereotypes.

More recent intercultural theory insists on attention to the cultural context of the researcher, with awareness of the Eurocentric focus of the research paradigm (Moon, 2008). Current approaches to intercultural theory need to address three key issues, as Asante, Miike, and Yin (2008) point out: “(1) Eurocentric intellectual imperialism in cross-cultural communication research; (2) the neglect of indigenous perspectives in culture and communication inquiries; and (3) communication equality and mutuality in intercultural contexts” (p. 2). Thus, current approaches to intercultural communication involve a degree of *defamiliarization*, or making strange the subject position and assumptions that seem “natural” but in fact are culturally constructed and bound by geography and social position. Glyn Rimmington and Mara Alagic (2008) use the metaphor “cage painting” for this reflective inquiry where the participants gradually become aware of their own cultural perspective and the cultural perspective of the other during a process of third place learning.

Seeking a tool to enable understanding of diverse subject positions and the questioning of Eurocentric biases, we turn to rhetorical theory, since rhetoric is aimed at investigating the specific context in which communication occurs (Lovitt, 1999). We contend that instruction in rhetoric—the ancient discipline that aims to teach, in Aristotle's words, “coming to sound judgment” on any issue—is essential for addressing intercultural contexts.

In building a foundation for our curriculum, we rely on rhetorical theory for ways of understanding visual and verbal texts with attention to audience and cultural contexts in our cross-cultural connections. Specifically, five key terms in rhetorical theory are important for our curriculum: *audience*, *persona*, *decorum*, *doxa*, and *kairos* (Herrick, 2005). A key element in the rhetorical situation is the audience to whom the message is directed. The rhetorical audience is composed of people capable of being mediators of change (Bitzer, 1968). As students analyze what Sonja Foss terms rhetorical artifacts (2004), they must keep the audience in mind, and as they analyze collaboratively with students from other cultures they must keep the collaborating audience in mind as well. In the collaboration students portray themselves in certain ways; they show an image or persona that might not be the same as their person (Booth, 1961). The distinction between person and persona also is true for the many images studied in the collaboration. The celebrity in the ad purposely puts on a persona that is different from her real person. The third term, *decorum*, stands for conventions for politeness and non-offensive behaviour. In both the artifacts studied and the collaborative group work certain norms of behaviour are presupposed. An image might want to astound us by breaking the conventions of propriety or decency. In the collaboration, different norms of how we should speak to one another come to play. The hidden assumptions for the conventions are highlighted by the rhetorical term *doxa*, the things taken for granted in a group, or by primary and secondary audiences. *Doxa* therefore stands for the cultural blindspots our collaborating partners discover. The final term *kairos* is Greek for the qualitative moment in time where the communication occurs (Crowley, 1999). Cross-cultural communication is always situated in a specific time at a specific place, and thus

the learning that occurs will lead to situated knowledge. Our curriculum seeks to help students understand the precise ways in which knowledge is situated through attention to the audience, persona, *doxa*, *kairos*, and *decorum* of all communication.

In order to make possible curricular activities that will facilitate intercultural competencies via a rhetorical approach, we have developed new methods of using technology in pedagogy. To that end, we also take into account the latest theoretical conversations around digital pedagogy, such as Cynthia Selfe and Gail Hawisher's call for studies on how technology can address global needs (1999). Our research attempts to meet this call through suggesting how cross-cultural connections fostered by digital technologies can improve intercultural communication competencies and deepen the understanding of audience and context to facilitate improved international relations and generate intercultural capital. To this end, we draw on the work of scholars such as Chris Abbott (2000), who has argued persuasively for a re-evaluation of the use of digital technologies in the classroom based on their increasing prevalence as a mode of communication within an international context.

In addition, our practical applications of communication technologies in education have been largely informed by scholars such as Robert Godwin-Jones (2003; 2005), whose work centers on fostering productive collaborative exchanges through video conferencing, collaborative blogging, and writing on a Wiki. As Godwin-Jones suggests, asking students to engage with real audience through digital technologies increases their investment and sense of personal accountability in their computer-based tasks. Moreover, the work of Renate Fruchter (2003) on globally-distributed teams provided a foundation for our development of a protocol for small-group collaboration practices.

The theoretical foundation for the project thus comes from three research fields. Recent research in intercultural communication points to the need for communication across cultural barriers instead of reinscribing cultural stereotypes. This need for communication across cultures leads us to rhetoric, the discipline that studies communication in specific cultural situations. Such communication is possible through information and communication technologies, or ICTs. The use of ICTs for building a curriculum is studied in digital pedagogy. The three research fields of intercultural communication, rhetoric, and digital pedagogy thus combine to offer us a strong theoretical base for our curriculum in cross-cultural connections.

Methodology: Curriculum to Foster Intercultural Competencies

We contend that comprehensive knowledge of other cultures' languages, histories, governments, nonverbal patterns, and values is not feasible; instead, through the practical art of rhetorical analysis, writing, listening, and collaborative presentation, students develop intercultural capital in the form of discerning how

best to work across differences, how to understand even the most minor movements, and how to interact in the site of cultural exchange.

To support this claim, we designed and tested a methodology and a set of classroom practices that we could share with teachers at a range of educational settings. In developing our curriculum, our research methodology sought to meet the following initial research questions:

- How can we teach students to communicate with intercultural audiences in rhetorically effective ways?
- How do technologically-rich learning spaces facilitate or inhibit collaborative activities for globally distributed students and instructors?
- How can students best negotiate and learn about intercultural perspectives through projects that rely on technology-mediated communication and digital collaboration?

As we progressed in our curriculum development, our research questions developed in complexity to encompass the following new lines of inquiry:

- How can we extend effective intercultural collaboration practices beyond in-class settings to implement our findings for wider impact?
- How can we maximize students' self-directed learning through improved use of ICTs such as portable collaboration tools and a cross-cultural communication infrastructure for their work in pairs and teams across countries?
- How can we best share our knowledge concerning essential factors for effective technologically-mediated intercultural collaboration gained from year one with a broader community?

To address these research questions and construct a curriculum at the intersection of intercultural communication, rhetorical theory, and digital technologies, we developed a methodology based upon activities designed to apply the collaborative use of digital technologies for global learning in hands-on pedagogical settings. These technologies included webcam-enabled video conferencing, collaborative blogs for rhetorical analysis of controversial texts, webforums for peer review of research on rhetorical texts of cultural significance, and a Wiki for collaborative writing. Our methodology locates intercultural competencies within collaborative activities that can be used in a range of courses. It challenges students to examine political perspectives and cultural assumptions in order to produce positive change in social, cultural, and international relations.

Our methodology can be delineated and mapped against our goals and outcomes, as follows:

Goal 1, Exploration: Research with faculty how best to develop intercultural competencies as core skills; explore diverse solutions in terms of digital pedagogy tools.

Phase 1, Method: Identify tools, test protocol through video conference connections, identify specific courses for pilot implementation of course activities designed to foster intercultural competencies; develop, review, and approve proposed activities and lesson plans.

Outcome 1, Curricular Module: What we hope to have developed is a curriculum focused on Intercultural Competencies, a crucial learning skill proven necessary for effective communication and collaboration in global contexts—both within classroom activities involving problem solving among a diversity of students and in pre-professional contexts.

Goal 2, Implementation: Put into place specific curricular activities in targeted classes, with assistance of project staff; pilot a one-time workshop model for an interdisciplinary approach to developing intercultural competencies.

Phase 2, Method: Implement activities within targeted classes; address research questions through implementation, conduct data analysis and publish results for evaluation by larger scholarly community.

Outcome 2, Concrete Teaching Practices: What we offer the scholarly and global learning pedagogical community is a series of “best practices” or recommendations for integration of intercultural competencies in both a course-to-course and a workshop model; we have developed new approaches for the use of technology, including collaborative blogs, video conferences, and asynchronous communication to foster intercultural learning.

Goal 3, Expansion: Continue implementation; expand to include more universities in Asia, Europe, Africa, and Australia.

Phase 3, Method: Continue implementation; also conduct exit surveys and assess project work captured through video recordings; compose publications and white papers concerning research questions.

Outcome 3. Publication and Knowledge-Sharing: We will continue to disseminate research findings, best practices, white papers, guidelines for teaching intercultural competencies; post online through Wiki and accessible website all curricular materials, and hold an International Symposium, or online conference dedicated to Global Learning

Specific Teaching Practices, Learning Objectives, and Class Activities

The purpose of our research-designed curriculum was to allow students to wrestle with diverse interpretations of cultural texts. Specifically, we developed and implemented a methodology to test *different kinds of rhetorical analysis activities* such as analyzing an ad, a website, a musical group’s image, or a speech. After

our first year of activity-based research, we refined our methodology to facilitate optimal global learning based on what we learned the previous year. We learned that students developed greater intercultural competencies from small group collaboration—when working on rhetorical analysis tasks with members of diverse countries—than from faculty lectures about cross-cultural texts. Analyzing texts as a team allowed for active learning rather than passive listening with low retention rates, or what Paulo Freire (1970) disparages as the banking model of education. Thus, we designed lesson plans to reduce faculty involvement and allow increased time for collaborative work by students in what we call “globally distributed teams.” Our assignment sequence for the curriculum in global learning now centers on these small-group connections across cultural communities.

As of April 2008 we have had close to forty webcam-enabled cross-cultural connections among students using the Marratech software. Most connections have been between classes at the Program of Writing and Rhetoric at Stanford University and classes in Rhetoric at Örebro University, Sweden, although we have also successfully connected with universities in Asia (National University of Singapore), Australia (University of Sydney) and Africa/the Middle East (American University of Cairo, Egypt). In addition, we have had workshops with Uppsala University and Södertörn University College in Stockholm, Sweden.

In most cases, approximately 15 students form into 4-6 teams at each participating university; when we run a class-class connection that involves 30 students in five groups of six students (three students from each university). When we hold a workshop with participants from several universities, we have up to 45 students, with as many as 12-15 students connecting from each institution. While we began the research by designing a collaborative course with Cross-Cultural Rhetoric as the unifying theme, we have since created a curriculum in global learning that has been used in wide variety of courses, ranging from a course focused on “Laughing Matters: Humor, Race, Class & Gender” or one dedicated to “Dirty Pretty Things: Objects, Objectification and Cultural Meanings” (for a complete list of participating courses, see <http://ccr.stanford.edu/courses.htm>).

In the development of our global learning curriculum for various classes and universities, we ask students to complete a number of assignments that work progressively towards developing intercultural competencies, or traits of “sensitivity and understanding of others” (Lovitt & Goswami, 1999). Moreover, we develop smaller activities within the arc of the curriculum to make possible communication competence that is distinctly intercultural in implementation, as Chen and Starosta (2008) define it:

To alleviate the problem in defining communication competence and to apply the concept to intercultural settings, intercultural communication competence can be conceived of as the ability to negotiate cultural meanings and to execute appropriately effective communication behaviours that recognize the interactants’ multiple identities in a specific environment. This definition emphasizes that competent persons must know not only how to interact

effectively and appropriately with people and environment, but also how to fulfill their own communication goals by respecting and affirming the multilevel cultural identities with whom they interact. (p. 219)

As part of our curriculum we have developed a lesson plan that has been used for most of the cross-cultural connections. We start with a joint session where we welcome the participants, give a brief background and introduce the analytic activity for the day. Sometimes a teacher gives a short model analysis. Then we split into globally distributed teams, usually three to five students in each group. The students first get to know one another through some activity, then they analyse the rhetorical object, writing their analysis on the white board in Marratech. At the end of the session the students leave their globally distributed teams, join the closing virtual student conference where they often report back to the whole group. Sometimes the students have time to post their analysis on the project blog (<http://ccr.stanford.edu/blog>). When the connection is over we debrief at our individual universities.

Assignment Sequence for Curriculum in Global Learning

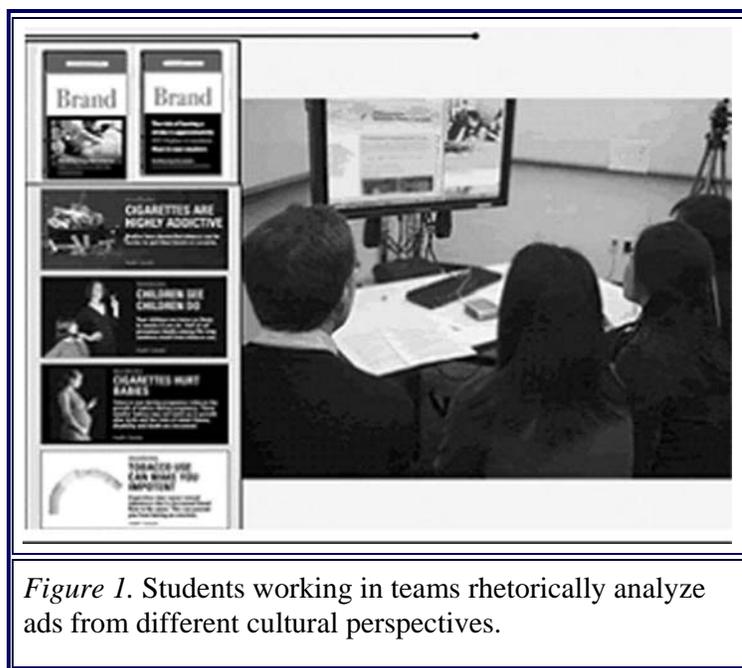
The way in which information and communication technologies (ICTs) make possible the fulfilment of the assignment sequence is as follows: our methodology uses video conference technology powered by Marratech software—as well as collaborative blogs and writing on the Wiki—in both class-to-class meetings and one-time workshops meetings. A detailed explanation of these assignments and activities follows.

The first assignment in our curriculum design is the rhetorical analysis of texts carrying intercultural values. We ask students to identify and present cultural artefacts to each other and then to compose, collaboratively, a team name based on what they learned about cultural differences and cultural similarities. Rather than confine students to digital documents such as PowerPoint slides, we ask students to think about material representations of cultural identity. Over the past two years, the artefacts that students have brought in to share as rhetorical texts ranged from pens and photos to stuffed animals. In this way, the first assignment in the curriculum works to introduce students to each other as diverse audiences and to recognize the site of intercultural exchange as one shaped by environment, materiality, and the multiple identities of people. By placing students into teams that will remain constant for the whole quarter, we seek to optimize relationships and focus on project based learning.

As part of this first assignment in the curriculum, students need to generate one collaborative group identity or persona for themselves as a cross-cultural team and come up with a name that they would use for the rest of the quarter. In the past, one group based itself on a student's stuffed animal "Velcro"; another composed a hybrid title to indicate a shared love of music, and used letters from different languages in creating its name "Muzikahölics"; a third group created a

collaborative persona based on embodied rhetoric, a green hat, and thus became known as the “Green Hat” Group; the students wore their real or simulated green hats to every subsequent virtual meeting. With this team-naming component to the cultural artefact assignment, we hope to eradicate the boundaries that separate these students as distinct audiences even as they learn to develop intercultural competencies and diverse worldviews.

For the second assignment in our sequence, we ask students to look carefully at ads published around the world (see Figure 1). In one version of this assignment, each team of students analyzed a series of advertisements posted on Canada’s anti-smoking website and targeted at over twenty countries (<http://www.smokefree.ca/warnings/research.htm>). Students worked through a lesson plan consisting of both rhetorical and cross-cultural analysis questions.



The Marratech technology enables students to open browser windows for collaborative viewing, write notes on the white board, use chat and video conference to communicate, and post their shared writing on the class wiki. At the end of class, each globally-distributed team presents their findings to the rest of the groups. What we learned in terms of intercultural competencies was that for some groups, different responses to ads occurred more strongly along gender lines than as consequences of cultural worldviews. This was particularly the case for the impotency images related to cigarette’s harmful effects. But another group argued that smoking is more accepted in Europe than in America, and they found pronounced differences in rhetorical perception based on cultural backgrounds. In this way, the second assignment made possible students’ understanding of the way in which people inhabit multiple identities or subject positions and approach

texts from situated environments. Subsequently, many students writing research papers on global advertising used what they learned to refine and shape their written arguments. This development suggests that the curriculum could help students develop as global learners even while it offers innovation in digital pedagogy and rhetorical approaches to ad analysis.

Our third assignment in the curriculum involves the examination of websites. Since our methodology for developing intercultural competencies relies on iterative pedagogical activities, we asked students to analyze cultural assumptions and values (or *doxa*) found in university websites. The students had strong reactions based on the rhetorical principles of *doxa* and *decorum*, appropriate speech and communication expressed in visual or verbal texts. For instance, Swedish students at Örebro found the Stanford website to appear “boastful” and not in line with Swedish concerns for humility. At the same time, the Stanford students viewed the Örebro website as understated and thus ineffective from their perspective. We then asked students to interrogate their findings to come to deeper cultural understanding by discussing the environment, institutional, and national factors shaping design decisions for the websites. Their collaborative task at the end was to pick a second set of websites, analyze the values shaping those online texts, and then present their findings to the rest of the class.

Building on the previous assignment in which students move from an *awareness* of difference to an *understanding* of difference, our fourth assignment asks students analyze political speeches by world leaders. We supplement the speeches with critical interpretations in scholarly articles. The students then studied the visual rhetoric of these politician’s *personas*. We use the rhetorical concept of the person, or the choice of personality that a speaker conveys to others, as a way to show that identities are multiple and shifting, dependent on context and audience. In one instance of implementing this assignment, students interrogated the rhetoric of persona and embodied rhetoric, or choice of clothing, asking why George W. Bush presented himself in military fatigues while Prime Minister Fredrik Reinfeldt showed himself in causal clothing with a family photo and a teddy bear poised on a shelf behind nearby. At the end of this session, we asked students to produce a collaborative team product: an assessment of how the leaders would each need to change their rhetorical style to address audiences in each other’s countries.

In this way, through the strategic assignment sequence of our curriculum in global learning, students worked on projects together, writing speeches collaboratively, and applying what they had learned about cross-cultural communication. These assignments have been designed not only to prevent deep misunderstandings but to foster new understanding. We found that these activities fostered the development of situated knowledge and sensitivities to the cultural contexts of others. More significantly, students experienced what Belay (1993) calls *interactive-multiculture building* such that, as Chen and Starosta explain (2008), this approach to developing intercultural competencies “aims at promoting

interactants' ability to acknowledge, respect, tolerate, and integrate cultural differences, so that they can qualify for enlightened global citizenship" (p. 221)

Collaborative Blogs and Global Learning through Cross-Cultural Writing

The curricular emphasis on project-based learning and collaborative writing necessitated our development and use of technological tools to meet the learning goals. One specific teaching practice that we developed as an integral part of our curriculum is the reliance on blogging as a way of fostering intercultural communication competencies. We have a dedicated student blog at <http://ccr.stanford.edu/blog> and a blog to host instructor reflections at <http://www.stanford.edu/group/ccr/collabblog/>.

Our methodology for blogging involves asking students to form international writing pairs, to pick a text for research and rhetorical analysis, and then to compose—collaboratively—a blog post about that cultural artefact. To complete the project, students have also initiated outside class collaboration through MSNchat or Skype-hosted video exchanges, building strong partnerships. Last winter, for instance, two students from the “Muzikaholics” group composed blog entries about the cultural rhetoric of the particular musical group’s website, and they situated the argument about the Website in newly learned understandings of cultural values and rhetorical contexts.

In addition, we conducted a dynamic exchange of research ideas on our collaborative project blog, in which students posted and received feedback from other students around the world (in Europe, Asia, and North America). Last fall, students from National University of Singapore posted research ideas about the space and place of Singapore as a cultural site of multiple identities; students from Sweden and the USA asked questions about the doxa, decorum, and traditions of various locations in Singapore, corresponding to student research topics. The blog served as a collaborative writing space for virtual discussion which was impossible by video-conference due to time zone restrictions. Yet the blog enabled cross-cultural connections that made possible new understanding of situated knowledge, open-mindedness, and both cognitive and affective sensitivity towards others.

Results: Assessment of Research Data

To assess our methodology and activity-based research, we conducted a rigorous six-part evaluation. Our curriculum evaluation consisted of the following six methods of data collection:

1. Analysis of filmed class debrief sessions captured after each video conference;

2. Quantitative and qualitative analysis of exit survey data and open responses, conducted by a team of graduate students; (for the survey questions, see <http://ccr.stanford.edu/workshopsw08/CCRevalW08.fft>)
3. Qualitative analysis of student letters to Principal Investigators, Professor Andrea Lunsford at Stanford and Professor Brigitte Mral at Örebro;
4. Review of external observer notes;
5. Qualitative analysis of 80+ hours of video and Marratech stream footage of globally-distributed teamwork; and
6. Focus groups for further mining of survey data results.

The design of each project evaluation component was carefully aligned with our research questions, which we distilled to two key assessment measures:

1. The first measure emerges from the diverse body of intercultural theory and builds on theorists Carl Lovitt's and Dixie Goswami's and definition of intercultural competencies as facilitating "sensitivity to and consideration for others" (Lovitt & Goswami, 1999)
2. The second measure, emerging from the technology and pedagogy theory of Gail Hawisher and Cynthia Selfe (1999), concerns how to develop "situated knowledge" that is global in scope; that is, "how people from different cultural contexts perceive, analyze, and produce knowledge in the form of visual, written, or spoken texts."

Overall, we found that globally-distributed team work on rhetorical analysis activities mediated by effective use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) can influence people to approach cross-cultural exchanges with greater sensitivity, understanding, and ethical awareness in order to bring about improved international relations. That is, our analysis of quantitative and qualitative data collected during evaluation (comprised of surveys, interviews, observer logs, and video footage) shows that collaboration mediated by technology benefits students by preparing them for global citizenship.

More specifically, what we found was that cross-cultural rhetoric activities mediated by technologies can provide us with the means for overcoming misunderstandings in communication across cultural barriers, overcoming intercultural communicative gaps. Stronger curricular methods can expand the sensibility of students as they encounter other voices and experiences, and it can improve their ability to listen to and learn from each other.

A exit letter from one student, taken from our sample of qualitative data (evaluation method 3, above), demonstrates the way in which our curriculum made possible student competencies in communication, or a move from awareness to understanding:

Indeed, before Rhetoric, I was unable to mix with people coming from another country and to discuss and share different points of view with them. Indeed, before, being a person coming from France, I was a little narrow-minded and I realised thanks to this class that the others could teach me a lot. Moreover I

totally changed my opinion towards the American[s] who I thought were unpleasant persons because of their mind[set] and their way of thinking! In fact, they are very tolerant, open-minded and we had very interesting dialogues during the video conversations!” (C. F. Astruc, personal communication, January 5, 2008)

The quantitative data we have from exit surveys (see, for example, <http://ccr.stanford.edu/workshops/w08/CCRevalW08.pdf>) supports this testimony. In aggregate data combining eight months of project implementation, 94% of students agree (somewhat to strongly agree) that they learned intercultural competencies through the measure “developing sensitivity to and consideration for others from diverse cultural contexts,” the precise definition of “intercultural competencies” provided us by theorists Lovitt and Goswami (1999). This question achieved a combined mean of 4.9 in the aggregate data (see Figure 2). Moreover, 96% of students agree (somewhat to strongly agree) with our second core measure for intercultural competencies concerning “situated knowledge,” namely, “developing a better understanding of how people from different cultural contexts perceive, analyze, and produce knowledge in the form of visual, written, or spoken texts.” This question achieved a combined mean of 5.04 in the aggregate data (see Figure 2).

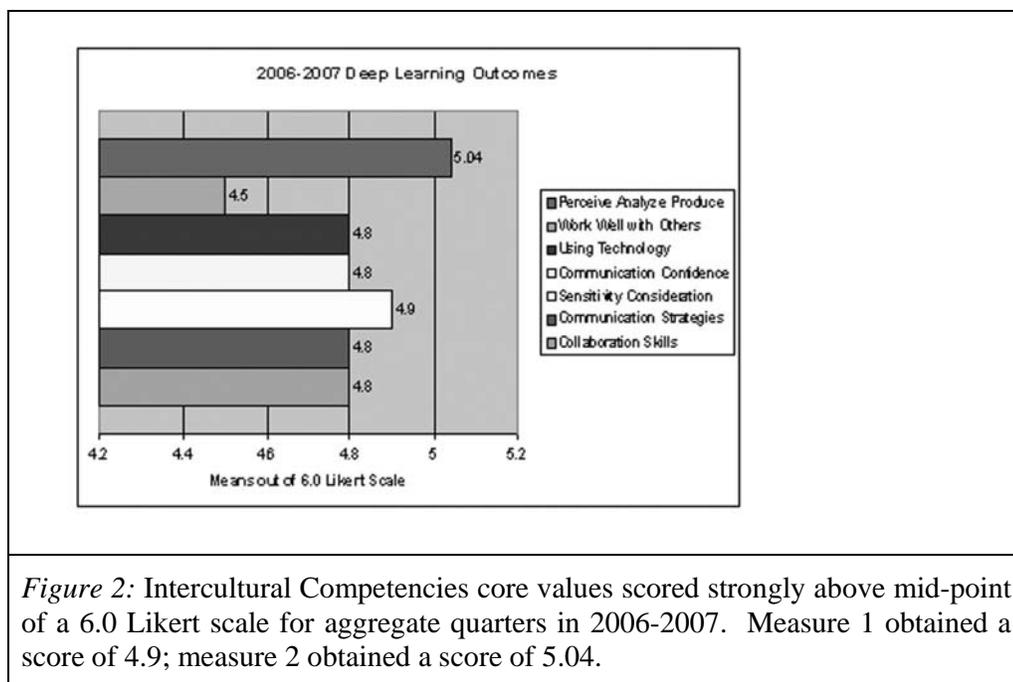


Figure 2: Intercultural Competencies core values scored strongly above mid-point of a 6.0 Likert scale for aggregate quarters in 2006-2007. Measure 1 obtained a score of 4.9; measure 2 obtained a score of 5.04.

These strong positive findings in our aggregate data suggest that the project curriculum, research methodology, and ICT-pedagogy are working to address the educational challenge outlined at the beginning of this paper.

In assessing our curriculum, we also examined the utility of assignments designed to facilitate deep learning, and we studied the implementation of technology designed to facilitate intercultural competencies and cross-cultural collaboration. Through a comparison of the different assignments (asking students to rate the value of each one for their learning of intercultural communication competencies), we learned that students achieved deep learning of intercultural competencies from collaborative rhetorical analysis of political texts (mean = 5.3), from analysis of writing (mean = 5.1) and from exchange of cultural identity artifacts (mean = 5.0), as shown in Figure 3. The qualitative data supported these exit survey results, as one student reflected in a final letter composed at the end of the course:

I liked talking about our research papers and exchange ideas. I think getting familiar with new forms of communication can help me in the future because technology is always developing. Talking with people from other cultures and solving assignments with them is a good learning aspect and I would like to see more of that in other courses. (J. Kihlman, personal communication, January 7, 2008).

In addition, data indicated that students learned most when working within a globally-distributed team across both countries mediated by effective use of Marratech video and collaborative authoring technology (mean = 5.3).

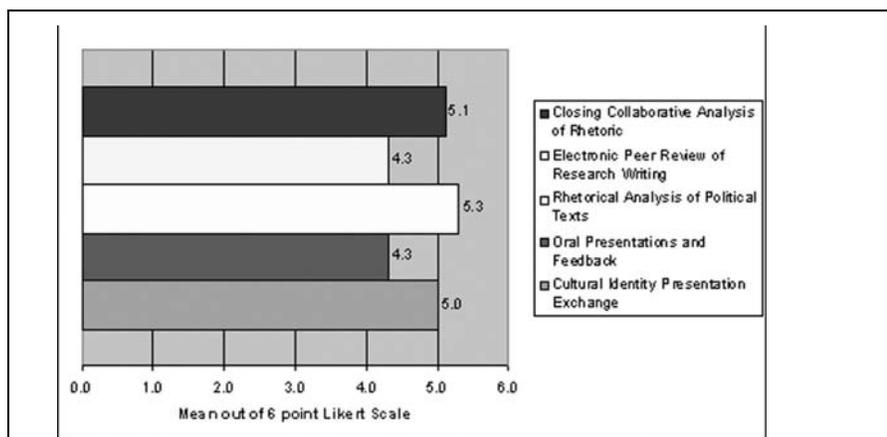


Figure 3: Evaluation of Curricular Activities, leading to Recommendations for Developing Intercultural Competencies in Global Learning; results out of a 6.0 Likert scale.

Once again, qualitative data from two years of project implementation confirm the high scores for globally-distributed teamwork made possible by effective ICT implementation. In the words of one student who emphasized the video-conference teamwork aspect of the methodology: “the interaction was the highlight of the class; [it] enabled us to deeply consider how even the most minor

movement, image choice or location in an advertisement, political speech or website might be misinterpreted by another culture” (K. Yasim, personal communication, March 15, 2007).

Another student, in a closing reflection, expressed our own aims for this curriculum in cross-cultural learning: “I hope this use of technology will further advance the realm of academic collaboration in the future so that many other students will also benefit from this type of interactive cultural exchange” (A. Dixit, Letter personal communication, March 12, 2007). These remarks show the benefit to students as future global citizens; they demonstrate the mastery of intercultural capital in the form of concrete strategies for communication and collaboration across cultures. As one student remarked,

I think it was an even give and take and we all listened to what the others had to say and gave reflections to that. We managed to see our differences, both as individuals as well as different nationalities, and managed to make the best out of them. I am proud to be able to say that I have taken part in such an innovative project as this and I am very pleased with what I have learnt. I believe that this collaboration is a great way to get to know another culture, and that is very important in the world we live in today. It is important to learn, understand and accept that different people have different cultures and different ways to interact and deal with situations. (M. Andersson, personal communication, January 10, 2008).

In summary, the data from these evaluation measures—both the statistical data from our exit surveys and the reflections of students participating in our courses—suggests to us the merit of a rhetorically-based curriculum in intercultural communication competence. Based on these findings, we recommend the methodology outlined above for application to a wide range of global learning contexts. Furthermore, we propose that discussions designed to advance learning in intercultural theory learning encompass insights from rhetorical theory. We hope that we have moved students along the continuum from awareness of cultural differences to understanding of situated knowledge, or Belay’s notion (1993) of interactive-multiculture building as preparation for enlightened global citizenship (Chen & Starosta, 2008).

Conclusions: Implications for Global Learning

Theorist R. Brislin (2000) argues that intercultural communication competencies need to be transferrable from culture to culture: “Cultural-general training deals with aspects of people’s movement across cultures that are common to virtually all intercultural experience” (p. 263). The benefit of a video-conference and collaborative-blog based methodology within a curriculum dedicated to global learning is that it develops students’ intercultural capital, or the way in which knowledge has value that is shaped by environment and power (Luke & Goldstein, 2006). In our cross-cultural curriculum, participants learn concrete skills and modes of communicating that translate into core competencies which

are in Brislin's words, "practical when individuals or group members are about to go to many different countries" (p. 264).

Our reason for basing the curriculum on rhetoric is that rhetoric offers us the art of discerning the best means of communicating in any situation or context. By applying a *rhetorical approach* to fostering intercultural communication, the dangers of selectivity and stereotype-reinscription found in immersion-based learning can be avoided. Instead, rhetoric provides training in sensitivity and empathy. Rhetoric thus enables what Chen and Starosta (2000) call "an individual's ability to develop a positive emotion towards understanding and appreciating cultural differences in order to promote appropriate and effective behavior in intercultural communication" (p. 408).

Yet what merits emphasis is that a curriculum in cross-cultural rhetoric is not, ultimately, about cultural adaptation or assimilation. Rather, it is about meeting in a space of negotiation—a new site of collaboration made possible by cross-cultural connections facilitated through digital pedagogy solutions—in order to build new relationships (such as those exemplified by globally-distributed teams). In this site, global citizenship takes on active roles in constructing new knowledge, analyzing and defamiliarizing culture, and extending global learning beyond the sphere of individual or national boundaries. In this way, students experience a *defamiliarization* of their own cultures, thus coming to realize the rhetorical concepts of *decorum* and *doxa*. We defamiliarize ourselves from our own culture when we become aware of other people's *doxa*, their hidden assumptions and things taken for granted. It is this key contribution that we hope our curriculum might offer to the fields of intercultural theory, rhetoric, and digital pedagogy: the way that a curriculum in team-based project learning of rhetorical analysis fosters intercultural competencies for that ever changing *site of intercultural communication and collaboration*.

The aim of this project has been to prevent deep misunderstanding of the kind that contributed to the repeated publication of the Muhammed cartoons and the ensuing cultural reactions. The stakes for this curriculum are high for, as Larry Samovar, Richard Porter, and Edwin McDaniel (2005) argue "successful intercultural communication is a matter of highest importance if humankind and society are to survive" (p. 2). In attempting to stem tides of violence and broaden narrow perspectives, we might do well to foster in our students global ways of thinking. As Chen and Starosta (2008) tell us, "The development of new ways of living in the world together is pivotal to further human progress; we must learn how to see things through the eyes of others and add their knowledge to our personal repertoires" (p. 215). A curriculum devoted to cross-cultural connections hopes to meet this timely need and offer human progress a chance.

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