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## Global citizenship and the Stanford Cross-Cultural Rhetoric Project

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## Abstract

Today, more than ever, in the current climate of intensified globalisation, students need the opportunity to learn concrete strategies for communicating and collaborating with others around the globe. Universities have increased mandates for internationalisation and the development of global citizens. Yet too often students lack access to technologically-mediated learning environments, and they do not have the chance to work regularly with transnational audiences. Thus, they do not learn how to work collaboratively on multimedia texts with others from diverse cultures. These, however, are the very skills and core competencies that students will need in their future professions and in their futures as global citizens. This article discusses the emergence of global citizenship as a key concern in higher education and shares lessons in classroom practice from the Stanford Cross-Cultural Rhetoric Project (CCR), a research endeavour and sustainable teaching programme connecting university students and teachers across multiple countries. The mission of the CCR project is to prepare students for effective collaboration and communication in global contexts, both within educational institutions and beyond. This article discusses the Stanford protocol, presents an overview of technology used for global connections, reviews research responses from assessment surveys, and concludes by discussing the emergent theoretical insights and recommendations for a pedagogical focus on three core competencies crucial for global citizenship in the technological age.

## INTRODUCTION

It's 4 pm at Stanford University, 8 am the next day at National University of Singapore, and two writing classes are about to connect through live video-conference technology in order for students to exchange work and engage in an international peer review session.

Today, the students meet each other through Skype connections in pairs or trios. They send their writing in real-time, read it, review it, and respond through the video-conference interface. Then they email follow-up comments on each other's work, often with warm greetings and promises to keep in touch. This is the 21<sup>st</sup> century classroom: a space situated between countries and curricula, beyond university walls in the virtual meeting room of the video-conference. The aim of the video-conference connection is to improve students' communicative abilities

and to help them expand their worldviews as future global citizens. This is the mission of the Cross-Cultural Rhetoric Project (CCR) at Stanford University.

There are many modes for CCR connections: class to class video-conferences, small group formations for project-based work, and individual connections with students pairing from universities across five continents. The connections are designed around communicative acts such as writing, speaking, collaborative composition, informal exchange of ideas, and formal group presentations. Despite the variations in implementation, the pedagogy as a whole aims to teach students communication and collaboration strategies they will need in their future academic and professional lives.

Five years ago, the CCR project set about developing and implementing a curriculum in global learning 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. As Darla K. Deardorff observes, “Interest in intercultural competence has greatly increased in recent years, with institutions seeking ways to develop ‘global-ready students’ – whether through study abroad, service learning, integrated curriculum, or extracurricular activities” (2008, p.32). CCR’s work to prepare global-ready graduates entailed not study abroad but rather virtual meetings through video-conference technology augmented by blog posts in an effort to bring students together in the third space of the shared digital classroom. Along the way, we learned that connecting students in real time with live audiences across the world helps foster not only intercultural competencies but also those qualities that resonate with current discussions of global citizenship.

As noted by Hans Schattle in his chronological overview of the term *global citizenship*, contemporary understandings of the term harken back to ancient Greece, most specifically to Socrates who “held a nonpolitical view of world citizenship that envisioned a sense of affinity with all humanity and the universe” (2009, p.4). Today, those committed to teaching global citizenship “strive to render their students competitive in the international economy, while also instilling awareness and empathy of other countries, cultures, and issues of common concern across the planet” (p.6). The qualities of awareness and empathy render global citizenship an aspect that exceeds national boundaries such that in popular discourse, Schattle observes, global citizenship entails not only awareness, responsibility, and participation, but also “cross-cultural empathy, personal achievement and international mobility” (p.10). In this way, global citizenship is more than nation-state alliance and voting rights. As Schattle argues:

For individuals who consider themselves global citizens by virtue of cross-cultural empathy, global citizenship has little to do with where a person votes, or from which country one holds a passport, and

everything to do with how an individual interacts with others and fits in wherever one should happen to be planted at any moment in time, even if only temporarily. Global citizenship, in this context, implies a readiness to cross intangible borders that others might consider all too formidable. Whether one is an outsider in unfamiliar surroundings or fully entrenched in one's place of birth, global citizenship as cross-cultural empathy depends heavily on a willingness to build personal relationships with those from other backgrounds. (p.14)

For Schattle, empathy and sensitivity emerge at the forefront of global citizenship activities: "Engagement across cultures requires levels of interest and sensitivity, as well as the willingness to absorb and contribute to communal life and include people who might otherwise feel left at the margins" (p.15).

Writing about the transformative experience of study abroad, Victor Savicki assigns the credit for such transformation to "interactions with host nationals, the shock of confronting a different set of values and attitudes, and [the] ability to sort through the myriad of cultural differences and not only survive but thrive" (2008, p.xv). The CCR project makes possible such transformations in real time, without the "expense and disruption" (Savicki, 2008, p.xv) of study abroad. By maximising the technological resources available to students and teachers in our digital age, CCR has been able to develop a protocol and research methodology for helping students develop as global citizens, even while helping students move forward with their learning as writers and researchers.

Janet M. Bennett calls for a threefold set of requirements for global citizenship: *the mindset*, or the necessary cognitive competencies, which "include cultural-general knowledge, culture-specific knowledge, identity development patterns, cultural adaptation processes, and the first priority: cultural self-awareness" (2008, p.18); *the skillset*, or behavioural competencies, which "includes such characteristics and skills as the ability to empathize, gather appropriate information, listen, perceive accurately, and manage social interactions and anxiety" (p.19); and what she calls *the heartset*, or affective competencies comprised of a set of attitudes that include "curiosity, initiative, risk taking, suspension of judgment, cognitive flexibility, tolerance of ambiguity, cultural humility, and resourcefulness" (p.20). The work of CCR aims to meet all three sets of requirements for global citizenship and make the learning experience a memorable, enjoyable one for the participants.

This work matters because today, more than ever, in the current climate of intensified globalisation, students need the opportunity to learn concrete strategies for communicating and collaborating with others around the globe. Universities have increased mandates for internationalisation and the development of global citizens. Students need to learn the newest technologies necessary for such global conversations and collaborative projects. Yet too often students lack access to

technologically-mediated learning environments, and they do not have the chance to work regularly with transnational audiences. Thus, they do not learn how to work collaboratively on multimedia texts with others from diverse cultures. These, however, are the very skills and core competencies that students will need in their future professions and in their futures as global citizens.

Within the CCR project, the fostering of intercultural communication competencies has as its pedagogical goal the transformation of students into global citizens. The mission of the CCR, found on the project website, is as follows: “At its heart, CCR believes that we need to connect students in our classes to real audiences – have them present their research, receive feedback on their writing and speeches, and learn about others through real-time video conferences and blogging.” The objective of our curriculum dedicated to intercultural communication competencies is to equip students with the communication and collaboration strategies they will need for active, ethical participation in a world community.

## **TECHNOLOGY FOR CROSS-CULTURAL CONNECTIONS**

Specifically, the CCR’s methodology of real-time e-Learning across diverse cultures offers a new opportunity for global learning that was not possible with previous iterations of e-Learning such as asynchronous peer review exchanges. The project operates through communication technologies that can be harnessed by students to maximise their own involvement and learning, including real-time video-conferences involving multimedia text authoring, asynchronous blog composition, and collaborative gaming sessions with real-time user interactions.

Viewing technology as a means to an end, as the vessel for imparting global citizenship, we have designed a range of technologically-mediated connections that can be applicable to a number of university contexts. The ideal set-up relies on small group project-based learning, where three students from each country contribute to one globally-distributed team. Ideal technological set up also involves real-time video-conferencing with chat option and a shared whiteboard for collaborative composition of project-based learning. Specific technologies meeting these requirements have included Skype and Google Documents as well as Marratech, purchased by Google in 2007. Marratech has the advantage of hosting multiple users from diverse locations in one video-conference “room” such that it is possible for all groups to report out on their work or to listen to a shared lecture. With the advent of the iPad 2, Facetime, and gchat video, there are sure to be new services on the horizon that can provide the technological means to make synchronous connections and working groups possible. The important point is that students should have proximity of field (be able to see and hear each other in real time) and collaborative composition access (be able to compose, revise, and see changes made to word or image documents in real time).

Additional modes of connection have included connecting classes through Polycom video-conference software which allows for zooming in on a subset of students in order to approximate group work. In this case, the students in the subset speak while the rest of the students listen. Polycom technology also allows for switching back and forth between the class video stream and a group's PowerPoint presentation.

Finally, we have used Skype for video-conference conversations, such as the peer review activity described at the beginning of this article. In this case, students have proximity of field and access to their work on a Google document. When two or more students connect, they share the video frame and negotiate the reading and responding to work. In this way, we form small working groups that can focus on the learning task at hand (such as peer review from diverse cultural and academic perspectives) while fostering intercultural communication about issues such as school work load, holidays, hobbies, values and views on the world. Thus, a lesson in peer review becomes an opportunity for fostering the qualities of global citizenship, with attention to cultural differences and similarities and negotiation of tasks. As Audrey Osler and Kerry Vincent assert in discussing the rise of global education, such learning entails “an education rooted in democratic practice, where learners recognize that their own world-view and many of their values are not universally shared; understand the complexity of differences and similarities; and develop the social and political skills to become effective participants in decision-making, who are able to resolve conflicts peacefully” (2002, p.21-22). The technologies – allowing for shared connection of voice, vision, and text – thereby make possible a democratic practice, in which a rhetoric of listening, responding, and contributing to a shared goal makes possible learning for global-ready graduates.

## **THE STANFORD PROTOCOL**

The specific protocol for connections sponsored by the CCR has been developed through over five years of research and nearly 120 connections. Currently, approximately 500 Stanford students a quarter participate in CCR activities, connecting with students at universities in Australia, Egypt, Russia, Singapore, and Sweden.

Connection times range from 50 minutes to 1 hour and 45 minutes, depending on the needs of the connecting universities. Connections can adhere to the one-time workshop model or extend over a series of connections, each one building on the last and allowing for rich project-based work. Moreover, the social bonds that are formed during connections are nourished with subsequent connectivity, improving depth of analysis and rigor of discussion among the students.

Typically, a CCR connection entails six components, as follows:

**Opening Remarks and Model Analysis:** First, often the students all gather in one video-conference room to hear words of welcome from instructors who explain the purpose of the connection, state the learning goals, and often perform a model analysis (such as one would do in a traditional classroom) in order to prepare students for their small group work.

**Small Group Icebreaker:** The students then connect in small groups and engage in an icebreaker activity, such as a discussion of the websites for each connecting university, or an exchange of cultural artifacts to show each students' cultural positioning. The icebreaker allows for team bonding to occur and familiarity with both the technology and the process of intercultural exchange through the medium of the video-conference. Groups that engage in icebreaker activities and conversations often have more rigorous and rewarding academic discussions in the subsequent parts of the protocol.

**Small Group Analysis:** Next comes an analysis, or work in small groups on a given intellectual task such as analysing a Website, a series of ads, a number of videos, or the writing produced by students on either side. The goal in this phase is to allow for small group work, often involving peer review, to help foster diverse perspectives on a given cultural text or to provide divergent views on student-authored texts such as proposals, written essays, or presentations. This component takes up the bulk of the time during the connection.

**Collaborative Production:** Following the analysis is a collaborative activity, related to the theme and activity of the connection and resulting in concrete learning outcomes of improved collaboration and cooperation. In this part of the protocol, the small groups work as globally-distributed teams to create a product that reflects their learning during the exchange. This can be a presentation script to share with the other groups, or it can be a multimedia text such as a storyboard, Website, visual rhetoric document, or collaborative blog post. The purpose of this part of the protocol is to ask students to work together, as a team, in coming to consensus on materials to be shared with the other teams. In the process of producing an artifact as a globally distributed team, students learn strategies of collaboration and intercultural communication that will serve them for future situations where such group work must be negotiated.

**Group Presentation:** When possible with the technology, the groups then all join in one virtual conference room and report out on their collaborative products. During this showcase of learning, listening teams can write comments in the chat box in response to the presentations. Here, accountability for collaborative work occurs, and students gain the benefits of the highest form of learning: teaching each other.

**Reflection:** After the connection, students are asked to post feedback about the connection on the CCR blog. Classes may hold a general debrief session as well or students might complete an exit survey necessary for assessment of the connection and student learning. This reflection component is essential for intercultural competence development (Deardorff, 2008, p.45).

When either technological setup or time constraints prevent the inclusion of all six components, equivalents are found, such as omitting the opening remarks but distributing a preparation page with words of welcome and an articulation of the purpose of the connection, or omitting the group presentation but asking students to post their collaborative product on the CCR blog to share their learning with other groups. In this way, the protocol offers flexibility and adaptability to respond to the needs to specific institutions, educators, lesson plans, and students.

Viewed through the lens of intercultural competence theories, this protocol meets the requirements for fostering global citizenship. According to Darla K. Deardorff's extensive study of global educators, the following steps are necessary for an international exchange experience to be valuable in terms of developing intercultural competencies: preparation, skills development, meaningful intercultural interactions, reflection, and assessment. With the six components of the CCR protocol, those elements are met. The preparation page and icebreaker allows for preparation; the analysis and collaborative production fulfill skills development and meaningful intercultural interactions; and the blog reflection and exit survey correspond to reflection and assessment respectively.

## RESEARCH INTO STUDENT SURVEY RESPONSES

To date, the Stanford CCR project has connected universities across six continents, including the countries of Australia, Egypt, Russia, Singapore, Sweden, and the USA. As recently as April and May 2011, Stanford students connected with students studying at Uppsala University in Sweden, at the University of Sydney in Australia, and Khabarovsk State Academy of Economics and Law in Russia. The following comments from the Spring 2011 exit survey testify to the learning gained through the cross-cultural rhetoric exchange. The comments can be categorised according to Bennett's three-fold requirements for global citizenship.

In terms of the mindset, or imparting cognitive competencies, students articulated a gain in culture-general and culture-specific knowledge as well as cultural self-awareness. One student wrote, "When we talked to the students in Sweden, I learned much about just how different their politics are from ours. It was interesting to see such varied perspectives from kids around the same age." Another commented that the best part of participating in the CCR was "getting to hear the views of Russian students on Medvedev, which were rather different from our

own. Additionally, I learned a lot about the leader that I didn't really know before." Both realised the difference between their own cultures and the connecting culture through the CCR exchange, leading to broader world views through knowledge gained about other countries.

As for the skillset, or behavioural competencies that include the ability to listen, perceive accurately, empathise and manage social interactions, student feedback revealed that they value open dialogue, as one wrote, "The best part was being able to ask questions of students from other countries/be asked questions. I think we learned most from the offhand comments that weren't scripted by either side." Another made a similar comment: "I really enjoyed getting to read about the CCR students' universities online and to then speak with them about their college experience and how it compared and contrasted with one's experience at American universities." A third also valued the more informal part of the exchange: "What I enjoyed most was engaging in interesting dialogue and just having fun with other young people from across the world. Although I learned a lot about the different rhetorical strategies used by foreign leaders in different cultural contexts, what was most intriguing was how similar we were." Managing social interactions often leads to a focus on shared qualities, rather than differences, which in turn leads back to the Socratic notion of being a citizen "of the world" in a shared community.

Turning to the heartset, several responses spoke to developing qualities of consideration for and sensitivity towards diverse cultural contexts. One student wrote that the best part of CCR was "talking to the kids from Australia and understanding the kind of texts they research the themes that they are interested in was very interesting. I was exposed to things I did not know before such as sensitivities in Australia about the aboriginals." In terms of the learning outcomes that relate to global citizenship, one student commented on expanding her world view and developing more self-awareness about her own cultural identity: "It completely opened my eyes to how diverse other cultures are. For instance, the Australian group was more diverse than our group, which I would never have expected. I also noticed that they had a generalized view of Americans as well." These responses indicate qualities of curiosity, suspension of judgment, tolerance of ambiguity, and cultural humility.

Others commented on the specific writing and speaking strategies they learned through connecting and collaborating with students from other countries. One learned "how to effectively communicate with somebody from a different culture and how valuable it can be to have a different culture's perspective on the same issue and how they can have a view that varies so much from one's own." A third articulated an understanding of a plurality of perspectives, an "open-mindedness" that is the hallmark of global citizenship (Oxfam, 2006, p.7): "Different cultures equals different ideas. This doesn't mean any of the sides is the true one, and each side has its own merits."

In these closing reflections, students were able to identify the value in the activity itself, as one noted: “I received some first-hand experience in communicating with international students – people with absolutely different backgrounds. I think that is the most valuable thing I’ve learned yet.” Another noted a shared commitment to civic responsibility: “I learned that students from other countries are not very different from me in terms of the objectives we have for our education. I think we are all cognizant of the responsibility we have for shaping tomorrow.” This statement reflects what Nigel Dower calls the “more ‘republican’ conception of citizenship as involving the duties of active participation in the affairs of one’s state” (2002, p.37).

Of course, the responses from the Spring 2011 connections were not all positive as some students voiced complaints that they did not learn anything related to writing or that they found components of the connection less well organised than they would have liked. Such negative outcomes are not uncommon; in study abroad for instance, “outcomes of cross-cultural experience can be confusion, dissatisfaction, or, at worst, a rekindling of xenophobia” (Davies and Pike, 2009, p.70-71). But overall, the survey responses indicate that the cross-cultural rhetoric connections help facilitate increased sensitivity, expanded world-views, empathy, and communication abilities for connecting and negotiating across cultural differences and across global subject positions.

There was an awareness that the CCR was providing an opportunity for meaningful cultural interactions that most students valued: “I liked most how I was able to talk frankly and openly with people from across the globe of similar age. That opportunity is something special and I wouldn’t trade it for anything. I also value this experience because I realized just how similar the other participants were to me.” Another echoed this sentiment, articulating the value of the virtual connections: “I really liked just talking and getting to know other people from around the globe. I’ve had very few opportunities to speak with foreign students who are not exchange students.”

In this way, the CCR connections make possible development of global citizens in the manner of study abroad programmes: the connections facilitate a defamiliarisation of the students’ own cultures, impart sensitivity and even empathy to those from diverse cultural contexts, and make tangible the situated nature of knowledge, perspectives, cultural practices, and values. But importantly, the connections in CCR differ from stays in host countries in that students are able to meet and engage with a wide variety of cultures, depending on the connecting universities. Moreover, they can connect with multiple countries at once, such as in three-way connections we established between Stanford, Örebro University in Sweden, and the American University in Cairo, Egypt. Meeting, working with, negotiating, learning from, and responding to students from three different locations at once simulates future professional work environments in the age of globalisation and offers students valuable experience as learners and as rising global citizens.

## TOWARDS NEW COMPETENCIES FOR GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP

Based on this work investigating multimedia modes of communication across cultures, we can posit a new pedagogical focus on what we might identify as three core competencies crucial for global citizenship in the technological age. These competencies, moreover, might be best understood as three forms of literacies, as follows:

- First, *technological competencies, or digital literacy*, or how to communicate across media and communication technologies;
- Second, *cross-cultural competencies, or cultural literacy*, or how to approach and understand others with greater sensitivity, empathy, and openness in a way that recognises and values diverse experiences and perspectives, particularly those emerging from divergent world-views or subject-positions, or variations emerging from culturally-situated knowledge.
- Third, *collaborative competencies, or socio-communicative literacy*, or how to negotiate across multiple perspectives from various cultural stand-points, to work through differences in approach and values in order to produce collaborative products (texts, images, project designs) that accomplish a shared goal.

The importance of the third literacy of collaboration or negotiation as a core competency for global citizenship cannot be understated. As Rhoads and Szelényi contend, “Us-and-them tensions of a global world, complexities associated with hybridization, the challenges of cultural imposition, the expansiveness of global interpenetrations all suggest the need for new forms of identity, especially new and innovative conceptions of citizenship.” One innovative conception includes a focus on collaborative competencies: working together to expand worldviews, impart perspectives from diversity, gain cultural sensitivity, and learn concrete strategies for the negotiation of shared tasks.

Current research at Stanford is now structuring CCR connections with an aim of addressing these three competencies or literacies. Activities are being designed around the core areas of technological competency, cross-cultural competency, and collaborative competency or negotiated collaborative multimedia production.

Further research might also be done by additional universities seeking to facilitate cross-cultural exchanges through video-conference and blogging technology. A wide range of technological solutions are available, on a sliding scale of accessibility and cost. The six-part protocol can be modified to meet the needs of the institution or the particular classes connecting. Pre- and post-connection assessments can be used to measure qualities related to global citizenship. The greatest response we have to these connections is that students want more experiences like them – more connections, with more countries, over more subject areas. The future is bright for virtual exchange programmes such as that initiated by the CCR project. Global citizenship demands and deserves such attention.

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