

Personal Philosophy on Global Learning

Lu Yang

NC State University

The 21st century witnesses the fact that today's students are more globally connected than ever before. The "death of distance" has changed school, work, and everyday life. The advances in transportation, communication, and political changes have allowed us to live in a world where distance no longer matters and we are connected to more people, globally, than ever before. We have seen an increase in the movement of goods, services, information and people (Zhao, 2009). Our world is now "flat" and we are living and operating within a "global village." Globalization has caused our lives to be increasingly intertwined economically, politically, and culturally (Friedman, 2005). These changes that globalization brings us have occurred quickly over the last half-century, and will more than likely continue into the foreseeable future, with many more changes to come. Facing the changes, people need to be aware of global issues, and understand and appreciate different cultures (Appiah, 2006). As educators, we have the responsibility of preparing students for a successful future. In this interconnected world, we have no choice but to integrate global learning into classrooms across all grade levels and content areas.

As a Chinese teacher, I am particularly interested in how global learning relates to a foreign language classroom. Learning a foreign language itself is a good way to discover new worlds from an insider's view of another culture, which leading to foreign language learning could bridge cultural connections, embed international perspectives and promote cross-cultural understandings. "The approaches to educating global citizens that deemphasize the role of foreign languages ultimately fall short of the goals they are intended to achieve" (Goodman, 2009). The Standards in foreign language learning, Communication, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons, Communities (The Five Cs) aims to prepare students live in a global society. Likewise, a lot of ideas of global learning initiatives could be integrated into foreign language

teaching and learning. Acquiring the global awareness and establishing cross-cultural relationship increase students' motivation in foreign language learning.

In my classroom, I feel my students learn best when they are involved in a global community. For example, doing a "Tour City" project allows them to attain maximum learning outcomes with fun. To learn about a city in China, my students do a lot of research first. They browse related information online, interview Chinese students in the community (NCSU), and explore a virtual trip on [Google Earth](#). They collaborate in groups to hold a travel show in Chinese to introduce the city in class as a final product. From this project, students not only learn vocabulary and grammar to describe a place, but also know more knowledge about geography in China and Chinese culture such as different features in different areas and the relationship between natural environment and human activities.

Besides Google Earth, there are many technology tools foreign language teachers could take advantage of in order to give learners access to global opportunities, which prepare them to become global citizens in the future. In order to establish global communication, [Skype](#), [Google Hangout](#), blogs, and [twitter](#) could be effective tools to apply in classroom; in order to acquire authentic experience and expand worldview, study abroad programs and international students exchange programs are great opportunities; in order to reach out globally with fun, online games, movies and music in target language are good resources.

According to *Educating for Global Competence: Preparing Our Youth to Engage the World*, there are four competences that globally competent students are able to perform: investigate the world, recognize perspectives, communicate ideas and take actions (Mansilla and Jackson, 11).

In Chinese as a foreign language classrooms, to prepare students with the skills they need to compete in a global world, teachers need to apply various strategies to engage Chinese learners in both Chinese language and Chinese culture. When planning units, teachers could design inquiry-based projects to foster the four competences at same time. Integrating cultural facts, cross-cultural educational experiences, international collaborations and action research in one project is good for helping students develop global competences. Learning language is only an aspect in a Chinese class, developing the global awareness, recognizing and appreciating Chinese culture and gaining global competences are more important for students.

References

Appiah, K. A. (2006). *Cosmopolitanism: Ethic in a World of Strangers*.

Friedman, T. L. (2005, April 3). *It's a flat world, after all*. Retrieved from The New York Times.

Retrieved from:

http://www.nytimes.com/2005/04/03/magazine/03DOMINANCE.html?scp=1&sq=it%20is%20a%20flat%20world%20after%20all&st=cse&_r=0

Goodman, A. E. (2009). Language learning and study abroad: The path to global citizenship. *The Modern Language Journal*, 93(4), 610-612.

Mansilla, V. B., & Jackson, A. (2011). *Educating for global competence: Preparing our youth to engage the world*.

Zhao, Y. (2009). *Catching up or leading the way: American education in the age of globalization*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.