Welcome to Our World: Using Visual Rhetoric Assignments in Globally Connected Classrooms

A Case Study from the Texas Tech University-MyongJi University Collaboration
Kelli Cargile Cook and Sokjin Jang
(Contact: kelli.cargile-cook@ttu.edu)
April 3, 2013
Presentation Overview

This presentation will explore the pedagogical value of visual rhetoric assignments in globally connected classrooms, particularly in technical communication classrooms in which students do not share a common language. Because students did not share a common language, instructors developed assignments that required students to collaborate using visual rhetoric (illustrations, photographs, and videos). The presentation will include student examples of these assignments and discuss the assignments’ demonstration of course outcomes.
What is visual rhetoric?

In this presentation, **visual rhetoric** is defined as the study of how visual elements (illustrations, photographs, videos) communicate and how these elements can be used to persuade others to perform or take actions.
What is technical communication?

Technical Writing/Technical Communication is the study of business, professional, and scientific communication, such as instruction manuals, proposals, digital media, and other supporting documents. These documents communicate complex and technical information. To create these documents, technical communicators develop, gather, and disseminate technical information among customers, designers, and manufacturers. This work is increasingly distributed and global.

For a more detailed description, see the Bureau of Labor Statistics definition (http://www.bls.gov/ooh/Media-and-Communication/Technical-writers.htm#tab-1)
Texas Tech University

Introduction to Technical Writing

• Online delivery (Moodle & Skype)
• Variety of majors
• Student population
• Introductory course
• Curriculum
• Instructor teaching load and class size
• Institutional support

MyongJi University

Technical Professional Communication and Writing

• Traditional f2f delivery with online components (Café blog)
• Variety of majors
• Student population
• Stand-alone course
• Curriculum
• Instructor teaching load and class size
• Institutional support
Planning the course—opening assumptions

Challenges we could control
— Technology
— Curriculum

Challenges beyond our control
— Language
— Calendar
Technology Plan

Course Technology Map for MU-TTU Globally Networked Classroom

MU-TTU Moodle: Moodle will include weekly assignments for TTU class. TTU class members' individual attendance and grades will also be posted locally and globally here.

MU-TTU GABLE Blog: This space will host collaborative assignments and blogs for MU-TTU GABLE assignments.

MU Cafe Blog: Cafe Blog will include weekly assignments for MU class.

Support Discussion Forums

Technology Questions (how to use CMS technologies)

Assignment Questions (how to complete collaboration assignments)

Other Questions

Collaborative Assignment Description (posted weekly by instructor)

Collaborative Assignment #1

Collaborative Assignment #2

Collaborative Assignment #3

Collaborative Assignment #4

Collaborative Assignment #5

Instructors’ Blog

Student Group #1 Blog

Student Group #2 Blog

Student Group #3 Blog

Student Group #4 Blog

Student Group #5 Blog

Student Group #6 Blog

Student Group #7 Blog

Student Group #8... Blog

YouTube/Omnet and Discussion Forums for Video Instruction Assignment

Instruction Group #1

Instruction Group #2

Instruction Group #3

Instruction Group #4

Instruction Group #5

Instruction Group #6

Instruction Group #7

Instruction Group #8...
Technology implementation

Welcome Texas Tech (TTU) and Myongji University (MJU) students and instructors!

We are about to engage in the future of technical communication instruction, a course co-taught in Lubbock (TX, USA) and Seoul (Republic of Korea).

In this course, our conversations will focus on global learning and cross-cultural business communication, and you will learn to write technical communication using collaborative tools. Students from both universities will use this blog space and its discussion forums to connect and complete assignments for their course.

Professor Sokjin Yang will teach the students at MJU, and Professor Kelli Cargile Cook will teach the students at TTU. Assisting with instruction will be Professor Carly Finneth.

We look forward to working and learning with all of you.

Welcome Texas Tech (TTU) and Myongji University (MJU) students and instructors!

We are about to engage in the future of technical communication instruction, a course co-taught in Lubbock (TX, USA) and Seoul (Republic of Korea).

In this course, our conversations will focus on global learning and cross-cultural business communication, and you will learn to write technical communication using collaborative tools. Students from both universities will use this blog space and its discussion forums to connect and complete assignments for their course.

Professor Sokjin Yang will teach the students at MJU, and Professor Kelli Cargile Cook will teach the students at TTU. Assisting with instruction will be Professor Carly Finneth.

We look forward to working and learning with all of you.
Curriculum Design--Outcomes

- Analyze the audience, purpose, and context of technical communication
- Create technical documents to solve practical problems
- Write effective technical prose
- Design convincing, effective, and usable technical documents
- Practice ethical technical communication
- Create technical documents for users in other cultural contexts
- Collaborate on technical communication projects
### Curriculum Design—Assignments/Units

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment/Deliverable</th>
<th>Group/Individual</th>
<th>Units</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blog posts</td>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>Corresponding &amp; Reflecting</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Job search correspondence | \[| PDF of resume attached to email \]
|                         | Individual       | Communicating with Employers & Corresponding |
| Lego Product Description | Group           | Instructing & Describing   |
| Documentation Project Proposal | Group         | Proposing                  |
| Documentation Project | \[| Video (1) Production \]
|                         | Individual       | Instructing                |
|                         | \[| Video (2) Reproduction \] |
| Video instructions progress report email | Individual | Corresponding                |
| Portfolio including graded and revised versions of unit deliverables and reflective essay | Individual | Reflecting                  |
| Formal presentation with visual aids on lessons learned in intercultural collaboration | Individual | Reflecting/Presenting       |
| Attendance and participation in synchronous class meetings | Individual | Participating & Attending   |
Curriculum/Assignments: Résumés

FIGURE 1: Korea résumés

FIGURE 2: US résumés

JULIE A. JACKSON

EDUCATION
Master of Arts, Technical Communication
Texas Tech University, Lubbock, TX
Anticipated graduation: Fall 2012
Minor, Instructional Technology, Multimedia Development emphasis
GPA: 4.0
Bachelor of Arts, English, Technical and Professional Writing emphasis
University of North Texas, Denton, TX
Graduation: Spring 2010
GPA: 3.78

TEACHING EXPERIENCE
Graduate Instructor
English Department, TTU, Lubbock TX
- Taught Introduction to Technical Communication
- Taught English Composition
- Met bi-weekly with writing director to discuss lesson plans, course materials, and writing assessment

WORK EXPERIENCE
Tutor
TTU Writing Center, Lubbock TX
- Design organization for Writing Center website
- Research and generate clear, usable information for site users
- Edit and write 40 page Writing Center employ manual
- Redesign education diagnostic remediation tracking form

Technical Editor Intern
ABI, Austin, TX
- Researched, wrote, designed, and edited online help articles
- Corresponded frequently with software developers to discuss needs and goals

September 2010–present

September 2010–present

May 2010–September 2010
Curriculum/Assignments: Object Description

Figure 3: Lego object description
I live in an apartment having 3 rooms. Living room and kitchen are opened. If you come to the front door, you can see the door on your left. That’s my room. I use a bed inside the room. But, there is no frame. I use only mattresses.

My room faces the kitchen. The toilet is next to the kitchen. My brother’s room is next to the toilet. He has many clothes. So when you open the door, you can see two hangers. His wall closet was already full. The room looks like a cloth shop.

Opposite his room is the parents room. This room is the biggest in my house. On the front of your sight, there is an old wardrobe. This wardrobe has been more than 20 years because when my mother was married, she brought it. So they have not abandoned it. I think that have to throw out.

Between my room and the parents room, there is the Living room. Towards the parents room, there is a sofa. Towards my room, there is a TV. And we can go to the balcony through the living room. Umm… can you imagine?

Figure 4: TTU drawing of MJU floor plan description
Visiting MyongJi
Curriculum/Assignments: Instructions Project

1. Proposal
2. Video Production
3. Progress Report
4. Video Reproduction

Technology note: We used the WordPress blog for uploading documents and links to videos, but we moved video production/reproduction to YouTube.
Curriculum/Assignments: Videos

Figure 5: TTU student video: Pot that Plant by Anna Vogler: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qcJybW7-b3g&feature=player_embedded](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qcJybW7-b3g&feature=player_embedded)

Figure 6: MJU student video: Pot that Plant by Wongyu Choi [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7uAm7-qFxHl&feature=youtu.be](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7uAm7-qFxHl&feature=youtu.be)
Expected and unexpected outcomes

- Technology was not as globally standardized or usable as we expected.
- Curricular changes are sometimes required on the fly.
- Expect cultural differences that affect assignments to appear out of nowhere.
- Visual assignments can allow students to meet course outcomes while promoting cultural knowledge and exchange.

- Calendar challenges are constant and expectable; they require flexibility and patient workarounds.
- Time and distance between classrooms was more problematic than calendar issues.
- Language was less problematic if we used visual assignments.
The Value of Visual Rhetoric Assignments

• Language challenges reduced, but not eliminated; machine-translation is viable, if not perfect.
  • Technical/technology skills move beyond the word processor and connect to social media students know and use (and can use in globally distributed workplaces.)
  • Visual rhetoric assignments afford unexpected cultural exchanges—living spaces, toys and games, cooking, employment practices
The Value of Global Collaboration

• This has proved to be a difficult course. Although there were trying times, I have learned how to write effective technical prose, including but not limited to, description of an object; analyzing my audience and writing accordingly; writing technically for other cultures; and knowing and acknowledging ethical technical writing. The class readings and discussions did teach some of these skills, but I learned most of them through the practice of completing the assignments.

• **It is another experience talk to foreigners after they had been penpal with US friends.**

• Collaboration, by its definition, requires coordination and interaction with others. Because of this, it is inherently challenging and adding different cultures and multiple technologies make it even more so.

• Collaboration is key to nearly everything we do and is the essence of communication. The opportunity to work with other students, especially cross-culturally, really requires us to improve our techniques and utilize the concepts taught in this class.

• **I feel something to interchange with them.**