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FYEX 100

Myself as a Global Citizen

In 2016, the borders of the world are disappearing. With the rapid advances in technology, the size of our world has gotten a whole lot smaller. Where it used to be easy to avoid interaction with other cultures, now it is nearly impossible. All it takes is a few keystrokes and we can converse with someone in China, or sell wares to someone in France. Even on a domestic scale, the cultures of different groups of people are being forced to mingle more than ever before to conduct business, politics, and learn. This mingling of cultures is why it is so important to become a competent global citizen. A competent global citizen is aware of themselves in their own culture, but also desires an understanding about other cultures. In my time at Minnesota State Mankato I can develop my global citizenship competency through study of a second language, by increasing my own self-awareness, and by continually working to develop my knowledge and understanding of different cultures.

It is my opinion that self-awareness and understanding of other cultures go hand in hand. I have never been able to learn about other cultures without taking a closer look at myself in contrast and in comparison. In May of 2016 I had the opportunity to visit Kenya for two weeks for humanitarian work. The slums of Nairobi were a stark contrast to my cushy suburban life and challenged me to take a look at my own culture while learning about theirs. In my time at MSU I hope to develop a deeper self-awareness by working to recognize and overcome my own cultural biases by increasing my knowledge and understanding of other cultures. I will do this by attending culture nights, interacting with people from other cultures, and by seeking out answers to questions I have about other cultures.

An additional way I will develop my global competency is through study of a second language. I have chosen to study American Sign Language (ASL) as my second language and after one semester I feel as though I have already developed a deeper understanding of Deaf culture. Before starting ASL, I always assumed that Deaf culture was the same as hearing culture, and that the only difference was that Hearing people speak and hear while Deaf people sign. However, after interacting with deaf individuals and going to deaf culture nights, I can see this is completely untrue. One example of this difference is that what hearing people would call rude, deaf people call conversation. It is not considered rude to comment on someone’s weight or appearance, and the context of the language often makes this evident.

Language is strongly tied with culture, and many studies have been done that show connections to personality and language. A research experiment conducted by Lancaster University found that “People self-report that they feel like a different person when using their different languages and that [expressing certain emotions](http://bigthink.com/ideafeed/different-languages-express-emotion-differently) carries different emotional resonance depending on the language they are using” (Athanasopoulos). My ASL professor, Tina Mowrey, is hearing but says that ASL is her chosen language because she feels more a part of deaf culture than hearing culture. As I continue to study ASL, I expect to continue deepening my understanding of deaf culture which will help me become a more globally competent citizen.

Since starting at MSU, I feel I have already grown as a global citizen simply by being surrounded by people from such a diverse range of cultures. In addition to this, I have grown through study of a second language, the Language Partner Program, and even from discussing politics with friends who have different views. Despite this growth, I know I still have a long way to go. The world is in need of more globally competent people, people who are able to put aside prejudices and understand cultural differences. Through continued study and reflection, I know I can become this type of person and contribute to society in my career.

# Works Cited

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