An Innovative Mixed Methods Approach to Investigating Intercultural Competence Development and Learning in COIL

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Agenda

• Background and Context
• Data Collection
• Data Analysis Methodology
• Findings
• Implications
• Discussion
Reflection as assessment

• It is not sufficient simply to have an experience in order to learn. **Without reflecting** upon this experience it may quickly be forgotten, or **its learning potential lost**. Reflective writing gives you the chance to think about what you are doing **more deeply** and to learn from your experience. Writing your thoughts down makes it easier for you to think about them and **make connections** between what you are thinking, what you are being taught and what you are doing. At the end of the project, when you look back on your journals, your written reflections will help you **understand the journey** you have gone through and see the progress you have made.
Pre-COIL prompts

*It is recommended that this group of prompts be assigned before COIL introductions and ice-breakers, but after the students have received the course syllabus and the local class has met at least once.*

1. The following are the Student Learning Objectives (SLOs) for this COIL collaboration. Do you understand them and how are you ready to work to achieve them? Please comment on each. (50-100 words) *Teachers post your SLOs within this question*

2. How do you think your interaction with students from another country might impact what you learn in this course? (30-50 words)

3. How do you think the way you see and understand the world might change by connecting with students in another country? (30-50 words)

4. How would you describe your cultural background? (30-50 words)

5. What do you want from this COIL experience? (30-50 words)
Mid-COIL prompts

*This set of prompts seeks to draw out the experiences that students are gaining during the COIL Module. It is recommended that these be assigned at the module midpoint. Please encourage your students to add specific evidence and examples where possible.*

1. Provide two or more observations about your interactions with your partner(s) as you work with them in the online environment. (30-50 words)

2. Describe how your course has been impacted by connecting with a class from another country. (30-50 words)

3. Now that you have connected with students from another country, how are your views of your partner(s) culture changing? (30-50 words)

4. How do you think that your cultural background impacts the way in which you interpret course content and interact with your partner(s)? (50-100 words)

5. What surprises you about the COIL experience? (30-50 words)
Post-COIL prompts

This set of prompts seeks to draw out the skills and knowledge your students have gained, what perceptions have changed, and what insights they may have as a result of this experience.

Do you believe that you have achieved the student learning objectives of this course? Why or why not? Be specific. (50-100 words)

1. What was the most important thing you learned from this collaborative course? (30-50 words)

2. Please describe how doing this course collaboratively with international partner(s) impacted your learning experience? (30-50 words)

3. Given your online interactions with students from another country, describe any key changes that occurred in how you view the world? (30-50 words)

4. How did your cultural background influence your understanding of this course material and shape your interaction with your partner(s)? (50-100 words)

5. At this point, in what way might this course and subject, as taught at your university, be a reflection of your culture? (30-50 words)

6. Was there any aspect of this COIL-enhanced course that was stressful in any way? If so, please describe this challenge and what you learned from it? (30-50 words)

7. What do you want to explore further as a result of this connection to students from another country? (50-100 words)
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### Average no. of words per student

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### Summary

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Data Analysis Methodology

• Designed to explore breadth and depth
• Diachronic – looking at change over time
• Qualitative and quantitative analysis
  – Thematic analysis with support of Nvivo software
  – Quantitative content analysis with support of LIWC, Computerized text analysis
Thematic analysis

Code data → Identify themes → Check against each other

Refine themes → Analyze

(Braun & Clarke, 2013)
Findings
What do you want from this COIL experience?
Themes in pre-COIL data

• Focus on difference
• Desire to interact with and learn from people

Right now I have no exposure to how other cultures (in terms of commercial interests or otherwise) are like. I believe that receiving first hand accounts of what the culture is like in one foreign country might help me understand what cultures are like in other countries (ADS-US-8)

• Excitement and concern/worry
Expectations

• Expectations:
  – Acquire knowledge about other cultures
  – Acquire subject-specific knowledge
  – Acquire transversal competences
  – Challenge stereotypes
  – Get to know new people
  – Have fun, a unique experience
Expectations (1)

• Acquire knowledge about other cultures and new perspectives

I want to gain perspective by collaborating with students from another country. Since the subject is "Media and Society", I want to compare my outlook on aspects of society, media and culture with theirs. I am also interested in the topic and would like to know more about it. (ADS-MA-12)
Expectations (2)

• Acquire subject-specific knowledge

Since this is an International Finance course, it is very important to interact with people studying Finance abroad. Most of the theories and concepts we take are applied, in my head, to Egypt. Seeing a different perspective on the concepts will be more beneficial and comprehensive. (PPP-EG-29)
Expectations (3)

I'm hoping to get some practice translating and working collaboratively, and to learn about USA and Moroccan cultures. My majors will probably prevent me from studying abroad (too many on-campus requirements), so it's nice to have an opportunity to learn abroad in some capacity! (FR-US-9)

• Acquire transversal competences
Expectations (4)

Unfortunately, there is a lot of counties who see Lebanon and Syria in a wrong way (people on camels) so I want to change this wrong picture. I want to know and experience more about different culture. (RIG-LB-15)

• Challenge stereotypes
• Get to know people

I think that working with students from another country will give me a unique, more tangible goal to work towards than other students have in the course beyond an "A". A practical understanding of the cross-cultural nature of the coursework is incredibly enriching to the course. (POD-US-8)

• Have a unique experience

It's my first time to be part of the COIL experience, I've never tried it before and I'm not sure if I'll achieve it or not, but I'm really looking forward to it and excited about trying something new like this out. (POD-EG-3)
Mid- and Post-COIL Data

• Were any of the expectations being met? If so, what evidence is there of this? If not, is there evidence of reasons why?
• What do students feel they learn from the experience?
• What factors support students’ positive experiences, and what are the challenges?
• Do students develop intercultural awareness over time through the exchange?
Increase in positive emotion

One observation I made when interacting with my partners was their kindness. Whenever we start a conversation it starts hi, how are you, goodnight or goodbye. Their kindness toward me was unique like I was their friend from the start like they were welcoming. (INT-US-14, mid-COIL)

My first observation is that our foreign partners are interested in interacting with us and they are respectful. My second observation is that they are all hard working and it is obvious that they love what they do (just a guess), I noticed also how they are so funny and talented from the interaction in the Facebook group. (ADS-MA-11, mid-COIL)
Working with someone in a different country in the online environment is definitely challenging...especially with the time difference and not efficient technology used to for communication. However, we managed to communicate through email and was able to finish the assignment successfully! Plus, I was worried about the language barrier but silly of me being concerned about that. Their English is very good! (PPP-US-112, mid-COIL)
... It forced me to consider my place in the system, and how it affects basic social interactions. I noticed myself feeling uncomfortable, choosing words more carefully, and recognizing that even small interactions are colored by the systems of oppression we were learning about. I think this was a key change in how I view the world, and I am very happy for it. (FR-US-9, post-COIL)
Engaging with difference
I thought that the americans people don't talk with the lebanese people or the middle east people but i don't know why but in the other hand i found that they are good people and they think like us there is a different in the country only.. (INT-LB-11, post-COIL)

We're all just people trying to get through school and trying to get the same work done. This provided a lot of awareness about how regardless of location or culture we are all part of the same humanity. (POD-US-9, post-COIL)
I think that my cultural background (I am White, middle class, and queer) causes me to steer towards the social justice and human rights-based aspects of the course. I steer towards the topics of reproductive justice, sexual health, and gender-based violence. Interpreting the course content in this manner, it was a bit jolting to realize the extent to which my partner did not interpret the assignment in this manner. A middle ground had to be reached in the content of the project, and that included avoiding discussing Egypt's policy towards homosexuality, and simply focusing on how it treats those with a "homosexual" disease. (POD-US-8, mid-COIL)

As I've mentioned before, the homosexuality part had me concerned at first because this is an unacceptable issue in Egypt. But my partner convinced me to approach it professionally because it's a very important part of our topic, which is AIDS. (POD-EG-10, mid-COIL)
Were expectations met?

I've learned to communicate with other from different countries in a professional manner and an understanding state of mind.” (CUL-US-6, post-COIL)

I was stunned of the work i did with my team that i felt the meaning of collaboration even though we faced many troubles and worked under pressure of time. (CUL-MA-1, post-COIL)
Growing up, I was taught that America is the best country on earth. I believed this stereotype that all Middle-Eastern countries are poor countries with flagrant human rights abuses and a low standard of living. This has likely led me to subconsciously perceive my partners as less intelligent than Americans in some way. I'm starting to realize this notion and correct it however. (INT-US-6, mid-COIL)

Before working with my partner, I thought that American college students might be a bit careless. However that perception has completely changed. My partner really cares a lot about this course and this project. She proved to me that many American college students are hard-working and studious. (PPP-EG-34, mid-COIL)
Were expectations met?

– Acquire knowledge about other cultures
– Acquire subject-specific knowledge
– Acquire transversal competences
– Challenge stereotypes
– Get to know new people

Post themes: Learning from people
Increased curiosity
Additional themes emerging in post-Coil analysis

• Learning from people
• Increased curiosity
• Personal growth
• No change
Inhibiting factors

- Technology and platform
- Too much project focus
- Language issues
- Lack of or limited communication
- Students not completing journals
Facilitating factors

• ‘Good’ partners
• Synchronous communication
• ‘Fun’ factor
• Teachers and partner teachers
• Novelty factor
• Project design
Implications for COIL design

• Offer structured opportunities for informal interaction
• Organize at least one synchronous encounter
• Move beyond ethnocentrism towards greater intercultural awareness
• Leverage students’ multilingual resources
Implications for COIL assessment

• Completion should be integral part of student grade
• Could be integrated into classroom activities, reflection as part of the learning process
• Post-assessment could be made into a reflection essay
  – questions as guiding prompts
  – students need to receive responses to pre- and mid-COIL assessments as one way to provide ‘evidence’ of learning
  – students should write it in their most proficient language
Limitations

• Limited number of responses from all 3 assessments
• Imbalance in responses from different courses
• All students writing in English
• Administering the assessments and gathering and analyzing the data is very time-consuming
• Learning takes time, or as one student reflected:
Well, I often think it's hard to say directly at the end of a course or experience what the most important thing I learned will be. I think that, a lot of the time, you don't realize up front what a profound impact a course has had - it sneaks up on you later. It's only in retrospect that you realize all the ways that collaborating in this way has changed your perspective on issues, and who you are as a person. But I do look forward to finding out how this course has changed me! But right now, I'd say that, more than any other course I've ever taken, this class has made me aware of my own culture and the ways it influences or shapes me. I think that I will be much more conscious of my own biases in the future, and much more self-analyzing. (FR-US-9, post-COIL)
Discussion questions

• How can we get in touch with these students months after the project?
• If each COIL project is unique is it possible to use a standardized assessment?
• Can we ask teachers to use teaching and assessment methods, i.e. reflection, that are not typically used in their courses?
• Is there inherently a cultural bias if the tool was developed by people in the US?
• Is it possible to streamline the management of diverse COIL courses? Who could do it?