SUNY COIL Stevens Initiative Assessment

FINAL REPORT
SARAH GUTH AND FRANCESCA HELM
NOVEMBER 2017
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Executive Summary

The COIL exchanges analyzed in this study offered a generally **positive, engaging experience** to students on social, cognitive and emotional levels – not a distant, impersonal technology-mediated experience. Students overwhelmingly saw COIL as an opportunity for **learning from people** rather than from the media, books or their lecturers. It was an opportunity for them to gain authentic perspectives they may have been unfamiliar with on issues related to their courses.

Students saw COIL exchanges as allowing them to develop what are often referred to as **soft skills** or **‘21st century skills’**, that is the ability to communicate effectively online with people from ‘other’ cultures and speakers of other languages, greater awareness of the existence of other perspectives, digital literacies, the ability to collaborate in international online teams and overcome the potential challenges this entails. Students from different disciplines can indeed be brought together for **interdisciplinary, intercultural COIL exchanges** through creative curriculum design and thinking ‘outside the box’.

The COIL Assessment Model, which consists of guided reflective questions for feedback before, during and after COIL exchanges, can provide insights into change over time (albeit a limited amount of time as most exchanges lasted 6-8 weeks), but completion rates and depth of reflection are limitations which need to be addressed.

**Reflection is an important part of experiential learning** and should be an integral part of the student experience and also the course assessment. Students’ reports on COIL focus very much on ‘difference’ and their **engagement with difference** – leading in some cases to the realization that they are not so different from their distant peers as they thought, and in other cases a greater understanding of difference and respect for difference – both of which are seen as initial phases of intercultural development.

Some students felt the need for **more social interaction** as much of their interaction was focused more on content and gaining international perspectives on curriculum-related topics and project-based work. For **deeper engagement** with the complexity of multiple perspectives, questioning of assumptions lying beneath our own and others’ beliefs and values greater attention needs to be paid on these issues in curriculum design, in guided reflection and activities, and more time dedicated to non-subject focused interaction.

**Additional training** on developing students’ intercultural awareness and dealing with sensitive issues may support teachers in promoting more in-depth development of intercultural awareness.
Introduction

In March 2016, the SUNY COIL Center was awarded a Stevens Initiative Grant in to further partnerships and exchange between SUNY schools and higher education institutions (HEIs) in the MENA (Middle East and North Africa) region1. As stated on the COIL Center’s website, "The goal is to enhance partnerships, facilitate scholarship, and evaluate cross-cultural dialogue and inter-dependent student projects in these credit-bearing courses."2

The 21-month long grant is organized into 3 cohorts of SUNY and MENA professors working together to develop and implement COIL projects. Each cohort participates in a professional development course involving online (the Academy) and in person (Workshop at one of the MENA institutions) components during the COIL project development stage. During implementation, participant faculty continue to receive support from the SUNY COIL Center as needed. Although the Stevens Initiative proposed survey measures to be implemented by all awardees, the now ex-director the SUNY COIL Center, Jon Rubin, wanted to develop a more in-depth assessment for participants in the COIL projects. Together with Darla Deardorff, Sarah Guth, and Allison Church he developed a COIL Assessment Model to pilot with the second cohort implementing COIL projects in the spring semester 2017. The model is based on sets of reflective questions for students to answer before, during and at the end of their COIL experience.

Experts on assessment of intercultural competence (IC) such as Deardorff (2009)3 and Fantini (2009)4 acknowledge that IC can be assessed, but recognize that the development of IC is so complex that no single tool is sufficient, rather diverse approaches and tools are necessary depending on the specific learning outcomes. The construct of IC needs to be defined and broken down into aspects which are to be prioritized and specific goals and measurable objectives should be defined for educational programs.

While the general aims of the Stevens Initiative are to develop young people’s global competence skills, which are seen to include collaboration, communication, foreign language proficiency, awareness of diverse perspectives, and civic and global engagement5, the COIL model is based on shared objectives that are negotiated between partner teachers. In their shared learning outcomes (SLOs), each of the COIL teams interpreted and appropriated the Stevens’ aims in ways that they felt best suited their specific partnerships and teaching and learning contexts. Although all partners were encouraged to include some aspect of cultural learning into their SLOs, in the end the SLOs for each partnership were quite different from

1 The project is funded by the J. Christopher Stevens Foundation, U.S. State Department, Bezos Family Foundation, the governments of the United Arab Emirates, Morocco, and Algeria, as well as LRNG, Microsoft, Twitter, and Vidyo
2 http://coil.suny.edu/index.php/node/253
5 http://www.stevensinitiative.org/vision/
Common themes which emerge in student reflections across the diversity of courses as regards general perceptions of learning;

the attitudinal component of intercultural competence that we define as intercultural awareness (ICA), which can range from the simple recognition of the existence of diverse perspectives to a deeper level of awareness which entails engagement with and exploration of assumptions and beliefs behind diverse perspectives (including one's own);

the affective component of COIL, i.e. the positive and negative emotions and feelings that were generated by this experience;

insights into the process of developing ICA by exploring change over time as regards students' cognition, engagement with difference through the COIL experience and the affective process.

The report begins with a short description of the context of data collection, the data gathering process and the mixed methods approach adopted for the analysis. The analysis first presents findings from the pre-COIL data as regards students' reflections on their cultural backgrounds and their expectations. Then, considering data from all three assessments, the analysis focuses on change over time based on different variables derived from a quantitative content analysis and what students say they learned from the COIL experiences, the challenges they faced and what evidence there is of the development of intercultural awareness. The report ends with recommendations for ways to improve COIL exchanges and suggestions for changes to the assessment protocol for the third cohort of the COIL Stevens Initiative.
Data

In Cohort 2 of the COIL Stevens Initiative, 11 teams of faculty from the US and MENA institutions participated in the SUNY COIL Center’s professional development program adapted for this Initiative to include a 3-day workshop at the American University of Cairo, Egypt and campus visits for the professors from the SUNY institutions to their institutional partners in the MENA region in addition to the 8-week online course. However, due to internal policy changes at one of the participating institutions in Lebanon and lack of enrollment in one of the partnered courses, only 8 of these partnerships actually implemented their courses. For research purposes, based on the primary content of the exchanges, the researchers assigned a name to each COIL partnership (see Table 1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SUNY Institutions</th>
<th>SUNY Course</th>
<th>MENA Institutions</th>
<th>MENA Course</th>
<th>Partnership Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SUNY Oneonta</td>
<td>Francophone Cultural Studies</td>
<td>Mohammed I, Morocco</td>
<td>Introduction to Cultural Studies</td>
<td>French</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUNY Rockland</td>
<td>Introduction to Multicultural Studies</td>
<td>Mohammed I, Morocco</td>
<td>Introduction to Cultural Studies</td>
<td>Culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fashion Institute of Technology</td>
<td>Human Rights</td>
<td>American University of Technology, Lebanon</td>
<td>Introduction to World Affairs</td>
<td>Rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fashion Institute of Technology</td>
<td>Global Finance Markets</td>
<td>American University of Cairo, Egypt</td>
<td>International Finance</td>
<td>PPP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broome Community College</td>
<td>Media and Society</td>
<td>Mohammed I, Morocco</td>
<td>English as a Foreign Language</td>
<td>Ads</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUNY New Paltz</td>
<td>Inequality and Human Health</td>
<td>American University of Cairo, Egypt</td>
<td>Audio Production</td>
<td>Podcasts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genesee Community College</td>
<td>Introduction to Sociology</td>
<td>American University of Technology, Lebanon</td>
<td>Introduction to Information Technology</td>
<td>Internet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUNY New Paltz</td>
<td>French</td>
<td>Mohammed I, Morocco</td>
<td>Physics in Life</td>
<td>Physics</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: COIL Stevens Initiative Cohort 2 Participating Institutions and names assigned to each COIL partnership for the research study.

In order to administer the COIL assessment, each student was assigned a code and provided with a link to a Google Form with the reflection questions. The answers to the reflection questions were collected by the researchers and the SUNY COIL Center, not by the teachers as it was felt this would allow students to respond more openly without worrying that their

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6 See [http://coil.suny.edu/index.php/page/academy-coil-course-development](http://coil.suny.edu/index.php/page/academy-coil-course-development) for a more detailed description of the SUNY COIL Center’s Academy for COIL Course Development.
answers might influence their grade. Tables 2, 3 and 4 list the reflection questions under analysis in this report for the pre-, mid and post-assessment respectively. As can be seen in the Tables, a suggested word length for each reply was also provided.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pre-COIL Prompts</th>
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<tr>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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) <em>Teachers post your SLOs within this question</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. How do you think your interaction with students from another country might impact what you learn in this course? (30-50 words)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. How would you describe your cultural background? (30-50 words)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. What do you want from this COIL experience? (30-50 words)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 2: Pre-COIL reflection questions.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mid-COIL Prompts</th>
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<tr>
<td>Purpose: 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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Describe how your course has been impacted by connecting with a class from another country. (30-50 words)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Now that you have connected with students from another country, how are your views of your partner(s) culture changing? (30-50 words)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. What surprises you about the COIL experience? (30-50 words)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 3: Mid-COIL reflection questions.*
Post-COIL Prompts

Purpose: 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.

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

*Teachers post your SLOs within this question*

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

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

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

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

6. 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)

7. 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)

8. What do you want to explore further as a result of this connection to students from another country? (50-100 words)

Table 4: Post-COIL assessment questions

This assessment provided by the SUNY COIL Center was not, as far as the authors know, a part of the formal assessment of any of the courses involved in this cohort. Hence, it is not a surprise that as can be seen in Table 5, the numbers of responses from the pre-COIL to the mid- and post-COIL assessments decreased in all cases. The researchers contacted the teachers to see if this drop in number might also be due to students dropping the course, but not all replied to our request. Of those who replied, the number who had dropped did not correspond to the drop in responses to the assessments.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of responses</th>
<th>Partnership</th>
<th>US Pre</th>
<th>MENA Pre</th>
<th>US Mid</th>
<th>MENA Mid</th>
<th>US POST</th>
<th>MENA POST</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>French</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
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<tr>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>12</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rights</td>
<td>21</td>
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<td>14</td>
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<tr>
<td>PPP</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5: Number of student responses to the Pre-, Mid- and Post-COIL reflection questions by partnership.

In exploring the expectations and students’ intercultural awareness at the outset of the project we explored all of the data from the pre-COIL assessment. However, in order to be able to assess change over time, which was the primary objective of the research study, the final data analysis was conducted solely on students for whom we had answers from all three assessments (N=112), a number which was even smaller than any of the totals for each assessment because many students replied to only two of the three assessments. Table 6 shows the number of students who replied to all three assessments by local course and Figure 1 by COIL partnership.

Table 6: Number of students who responded to all 3 assessments for each local class.
Despite this significant reduction in responses, as can be seen in Table 1 the average word count per respondent increased, which suggests increased engagement and/or the need or desire to write more on the issues that were addressed in the reflective questions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pre-COIL</th>
<th>Mid-COIL</th>
<th>Post-COIL</th>
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Table 7: Average word count for all questions per student.
Methodology

Research Questions

The aim of the pre-COIL questions was to provide data for comparison with the post-COIL questions regarding their learning (both content-based and cultural) and IC development. In order to do this, the pre-COIL questions aimed primarily to understand the students’ expectations of the COIL project and their partnership with peers in a distant class and try to gain an understanding of their level of cultural awareness at the outset of the project. Whereas the former could be expressed explicitly by students through their answers, the latter had to be inferred from the data gathered (above all responses to the question regarding participants’ cultural backgrounds). In order to explore these aspects, our research questions for the data from the pre-COIL reflection questions were as follows:

• What are student expectations regarding COIL? Are there differences in terms of expectations about the COIL exchange?
• How do students define their cultural backgrounds? Are there differences between regional groups (US - MENA) in how students define their cultural background? If so, what characterizes these differences? What can this tell us about their intercultural awareness?

The primary aim of the set of mid-COIL questions was to assess halfway through if and how any of the expectations reported in the pre-COIL assessment were being met and if there were any initial signs of cultural learning and intercultural awareness (ICA). Therefore, our research questions for the analysis of the mid-COIL dataset were as follows:

• How do students evaluate their interactions with their peers? (positive? negative?)
• What, if anything, do the students feel they are learning from the experience?
• Are there any differences between the partnerships?
• Is there evidence of increased ICA?

The set of post-COIL questions aimed to explore whether there was evidence of change over time compared to the pre- and mid-COIL assessments. They were designed to have the students reflect on the questions in the previous assessments in terms of achievement of SLOs, what they had learned and the influence of cultural background on intercultural interaction. Additional questions aimed to explore how the students experienced the COIL exchange and how it might have changed them and their views.

• Do the students report the COIL experience in a positive or negative way and why?
• What have the students learned from the experience?
• Are there any differences between the partnerships? Can we identify factors in the partnership which contribute to positive/negative evaluations?

• Is there evidence of increased ICA?

**A Mixed Methods Approach**

In analyzing the reflective data for COIL Stevens project we adopted a mixed methods approach. The data gathered is largely qualitative – open responses to reflective questions - and our main approach to data analysis is qualitative thematic analysis of content by reading, analysing and manually coding the diaries. However, we combine this with a form of quantitative content analysis, using the software LIWC\(^7\) in order to explore change over time expressed through the language students use in their reflections.

**Qualitative data analysis approach**

We explored the data adopting a qualitative approach recognized as thematic analysis\(^8\) which entails a comprehensive coding of the data, identification of themes which are checked against each other, refined and interpreted. To facilitate the analysis, we used a software tool for data analysis NVivo. This tool can provide word frequency lists, word clouds and word trees that indicate dominant themes of texts, but most importantly it was used to facilitate and organize the manual coding of texts which we felt would allow us to understand the nuances of the single responses. The authors read and manually coded all of the text written by students who completed all three sets of reflection questions. Each response could have multiple codes. Codes were then discussed and organized into themes, which are more central organizing concepts comprising multiple facets (defined by the codes). In Appendix 2 there is a summary of the key themes which emerged and the codes which are grouped under each theme. These will be discussed in the sections on the findings of the analysis.

**Quantitative data analysis approach**

LIWC (Linguistic Inquiry Word Count) is a tool that was developed\(^9\) to understand the psychological and sociological profiles of individuals and groups. It analyzes texts on a word-by-word basis by comparing each word in a given file to words in an internal dictionary that was developed to represent a range of psychological and linguistic dimensions\(^10\). The categories used for analysis include basic linguistic measures such as frequency of nouns, verbs, pronouns and articles as well as more complex ones that have been developed through

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\(^7\) www.liwc.net


factor analysis and other techniques in order to tap into psychological and cognitive processes such as positive and negative emotion, anxiety, and analytic thinking.

LIWC has been used to provide an index of how both individuals (e.g. politicians) and/or groups (e.g. online community formation) use language - not specific content language, but rather style or function words which are held to reveal insights into personality, social, emotional and cognitive processes. It is also used to study how individuals’ and groups’ language use changes over time – often in relation to specific events (e.g. the tragedy of 9/11), experiences and/or ‘treatments’ (e.g. trauma, anorexia, group therapy, online counselling, therapeutic writing). Indeed the program was developed in order to understand how people used language when writing about emotional upheavals in their lives and how changes in language use correlated with changes in their physical health. Although studies have been carried out in a range of fields, such as psychology, social psychology, discourse analysis, political science, few studies have been carried out in the field of intercultural communication using LIWC. Of particular relevance and interest to this research is a study that uses LIWC to analyze student reflective writing about study abroad, looking at cognition and affect before, during and after study abroad.

The categories of LIWC explored in this initial study regard affect and emotion, and cognitive processes. Intercultural encounters tap into affect and emotions, which can set students up

11 For each text file or row in a spreadsheet, approximately 90 output variables are provided as one line of data to an output file. This data record includes the file name and word count, 4 summary language variables (analytical thinking, clout, authenticity, and emotional tone), 3 general descriptor categories (words per sentence, percent of target words captured by the dictionary, and percent of words in the text that are longer than six letters), 21 standard linguistic dimensions (e.g., percentage of words in the text that are pronouns, articles, auxiliary verbs, etc.), 41 word categories tapping psychological constructs (e.g., affect, cognition, biological processes, drives), 6 personal concern categories (e.g., work, home, leisure activities), 5 informal language markers (assents, fillers, swear words, netspeak), and 12 punctuation categories (periods, commas, etc.). Numerical outputs alone mean little unless one has something to compare them with, so the LIWC developers also provide base rates of word usage from corpora of text samples they have built which consist of several different genres of writing: blogs, expressive writing, natural speech, the New York Times and Twitter. They provide mean scores for each of these corpora on each LIWC category and also a LIWC grand mean.

12 https://wordwatchers.wordpress.com


for reflective processes. The LIWC software provides output for affective processes (including words such as happy, cried...), positive emotion (love, nice, sweet...) and negative emotion (hurt, ugly, nasty...) which also includes the categories of anxiety, anger and sadness.

The way one experiences an intercultural encounter can influence the cognitive processes that the experience triggers, hence we felt it important to explore these and whether there was any significant change over time. Cognitive processes that have been found to be related to the development of intercultural awareness include reflection, which is marked linguistically by insight and causal words, e.g. acknowledge, admit, aware (insight) and because, effect (causal), and cognitively complex thinking, which is marked by differentiation (hasn’t, but, else) as it shows writers making distinction between ideas and conjunctions (also, although) which provide evidence of making relationships between ideas.

While LIWC can give an idea of the affective and cognitive processes at play, and is useful in exploring change over time, particularly with large quantities of text, it does not provide insights as to the content of written texts for it looks largely at common words, not scientific terms or proper nouns (though its dictionary does have content related to personal concerns such as work, leisure, home, money, religion and death). Furthermore, LIWC cannot provide insight into specific aspects of the COIL exchanges that influenced the students’ experiences in COIL nor can numbers convey in any way the reflective nature and insights that student reflections can convey in terms of how they make sense of their experience. Change over time was thus also explored qualitatively in the thematic analysis discussed in the previous section.

Pre-COIL Findings

The primary aim of the pre-COIL reflection questions was to establish a point of departure in order to then explore change over time. In order to do this we carried out analyses to describe the student responses at the beginning of their COIL experiences. The dataset used in the analysis included all of the student responses to the pre-COIL assessment (N= 231), a number that was much larger than the final dataset which was made up solely of students who had replied to all three assessments (N=112).

Cultural Background

In the initial analysis, we first of all explored the responses to the question: *How would you describe your cultural background?* In terms of content of the responses, we first of all explored these through a frequency count and a word cloud for the most frequent 100 words that are more than 3 letters using the content analysis NVivo (Figure 2).
Figure 2: Word cloud – most frequent words in response to the question: How would you describe your cultural background?

The word cloud shows that many students included common social identity categories, in particular those regarding country and/or heritage and/or language(s) spoken, but also religion (Christian, Muslim, Islamic) and family (mother, father, parents). Other words include traditions, history, home, school, friends - factors one might infer that are seen to influence culture.

Qualitative analysis of the words in context provide further insight into the content. The responses reflected different interpretations of the question from students in both regions, for example some interpreted culture as being knowledge - either general knowledge or knowledge about specific cultures. However, the majority interpreted the question as regarding nationality, heritage and family backgrounds. A considerable number of the students in the American classes identified themselves as international students or as
immigrants or children of immigrants. Ethnicity was also a frequently cited social category for the American students, as was information about their family and heritage for some.

First and foremost, I am an African-American woman. This is how I primarily view myself and how the world views me. But, my family composition is very diverse. My mom’s side of the family is from the Caribbean island of Dominica, with my grandma’s family originating from Spain, and my grandfather’s from Africa. On my dad’s side, his mother is Guyanese Indian, and his father is African American. (PPP-US-103)

A strong sense of pride was noted in some student responses when they talked about their cultures, in particular the students in the MENA region.

We have a such richness cultural background thanks to the many cultures which invaded in morocco in its long and varied history, also we defined by the ancient heritage of our ancestors who left to us and we keep it up to date with the attempt to keep pace with development. (FR-MA-14)

We also noted that some students, particularly in the US expressed a negative critical attitude towards their own culture, and several students expressed a belief that they lacked culture, or that their culture was in a sense inferior to other cultures.

I think that in American it is easy to forget that other world views exist, or that when they do, they are inferior, an other. I think that this experience is going to make students and colleges in other countries seem more tangible than they currently are to me. (POD-US-8)

White, fairly ignorant, I come from a republican family but I disagree with everything they think so I’m a self professed liberal (RIG-US-1)

As can be seen in the last quote above, socio-economic status and political viewpoints were mentioned by a small number of students.

While this question provided interesting insights into how students interpreted the question itself, and also how some of them viewed or reflected on their own culture, the responses do not provide sufficient data to evaluate students’ intercultural awareness. Certainly some students provided insightful answers and critical perspectives, but many replies consisted of very short texts and what appear to be hurried responses.

Expectations

The rest of the reflective questions in the pre-COIL data regarded students’ expectations about the project in terms of what they wanted to gain from it, their academic expectations, and how they think COIL might change the way they view things. The 100 most frequent

18 Student responses are coded by abbreviation name of course + country abbreviation + code given to the student, e.g. a student in the Ads partnership in Morocco who was given the code 01 would be ADS-MA-01.
words used in response to the three questions regarding expectations are illustrated in the word clouds below. These give us more insight into the actual content of student responses to the questions.

Figure 3: Top 100 words used to respond to the question: What do you want from this COIL experience?

As can be seen in the word cloud, apart from the words that were included in the question itself, the most frequent words were learn, culture, different, understanding, country and students. Common verbs are related to social interaction (collaborate, discuss, communicate, share, interact, exchange) and nouns like views, perspective, opinion, topic, background, ideas.
In terms of student responses to the question regarding the academic aspect of the exchange, the most prominent words other than those included in the question are *differing* and *cultures*, and several words relating to cognitive processes and also communication of perspectives, views, opinions. There is considerable overlap with words that appeared in the previous question.
In responses to this question the word *cultures* appears once again and *differently* (in previous response it was *differing*). The responses to all the questions seem to reflect the intercultural nature of the project, with an orientation to difference and comparing and discovering, learning from and about other cultures, connecting and interacting in order to understand perspectives, views as well as knowledge. This is clearly a reflection of how the COIL project has been presented to the students for at the time of responding they do not yet have any experience with their peers.

In exploring more closely the content and the nuances of meaning the students expressed in their responses, one of the most striking aspects was students’ desire to *learn from actual people*, fellow students in another country as opposed to from books, media or other sources they generally learnt from. It is clear that the phrasing of the question led the students to focus on interaction (*How do you think your interaction with students from another country might impact what you learn in this course?*) but what emerges from the student texts is the expectation that they would be exposed to different perspectives and points of view from...
actual interaction with people, who would provide them with 'first hand' accounts which are somehow more ‘real’ and authentic than what is mediated through books and other media.

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)

Of course students in another country can describe exactly and show you a real face of everything. They help you in learning and how to get information easily. Other thing students from other country can be considered as a guide. [...] Finally, the important thing is to make friendship with another people from other country. (PHY-MA-23)

Learn was one of the most frequent words used, and what they wanted to learn often regarded cultural knowledge. However, in many cases there was also a focus on subject content and learning about how it was taught or experienced in their partners’ countries (for example media, human rights, financial issues).

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)

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)

Some of the students, particularly in the MENA classes, also saw the COIL experience as a way of acquiring competences which would be useful for them in their future, some of which are often referred to in the literature as 21st century skills\(^\text{19}\) such as improving their communication skills, their language skills (mainly English but French was also mentioned by students from the French partnership), the ability to work in groups, using technology for collaboration, and applying the what they learn to real contexts.

I will learn how to interact with students who are from a different cultural and social region. I am looking forward to this experience as I will learn communication skills and combing ideas from different cultures to introduce the best results. (PPP-EG-33)

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)

\(^{19}\) http://www.p21.org/our-work/p21-framework
In terms of themes we identified that relate more specifically to intercultural awareness, several of the students’ responses expressed a desire to challenge stereotypes, either those that they saw themselves as holding towards other cultures or those negative stereotypes they perceived as the ‘others’ having with respect to their culture. The latter was more common in the responses from the MENA students. Some of the students were aware of the negative stereotypes they have of the other, or of the limited views they get of other cultures from the media and saw the project as an opportunity to challenge these views by learning from others and/or also for others to learn from them.

*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)

*We will have different opinions which will help me see things from different angles and to see how people on the other side of the world see my culture after being misrepresented and try to defend it for sure. I will try to help them see how my culture really is regardless of what media says about it.* (ADS-MA-2)

In many other responses students mentioned ‘getting to know new people’ and ‘having fun’ as the main expectations from the project.

*I wish to have not only a better understanding in Global Finance (which is honestly, a challenging class for me) but to also take advantage of the opportunity of being connected and actively working with students from another country. I hope to enrich my learning in a very fun and interesting way. I also hope to share with other students my points of view and reality and learn a lot from them to accomplish a good job at the end of the semester.* (PPP-US-117)

Quite a few students mention the novelty factor, that this will be a new and unique experience that neither they nor their peers have ever experienced. Although in a few cases there is a sense of anxiety or worry about this new experience and communicating in this way, the general sense is excitement.

*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)

*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)
Post-COIL Findings

Change Over Time

This part of the report begins with the quantitative data analysis that explored the differences in the respondents’ language over time in regards to their experience. It then expands on this with findings from the thematic analysis of the qualitative data. As stated in the Introduction, the number of students who completed all three assessments was much lower than those who completed the initial reflection questions, but the higher average word count reflects longer responses from those who did contribute to the mid-and then the post-COIL questions, suggesting greater engagement in the project.

Increase in affect, positive and negative emotion

There was a statistically significant increase in the percentage of words related to both positive emotion and negative emotion over time and an increase in affect overall, as can be seen in the figures which follow (where 1 indicates pre-COIL, 2 mid-COIL and 3 post-COIL). The increase in positive emotion peaked in the mid-COIL reflections, but the overall change over time is statistically significant (Figure 6). There appears to be an initial ‘honeymoon’ period marked by the excitement of actually interacting with their peers and the novelty of the experience. This is similar to what is reported to happen in study abroad experiences with very high initial positive emotions for many participants which has been recognized as a phase in ‘Culture Shock’20.

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The pattern for negative emotion was a more steady increase (Figure 7). Negative emotion words may represent the challenges faced and/or an awareness of and grappling with the complexity of online intercultural interaction.

The fact that there is an overall increase in negative emotion with time, which nonetheless remains well below the LIWC grand mean for negative emotion (1.84), should not be interpreted negatively. On the contrary, this can be seen as reflecting increased engagement both in their reflections and with the experience. Indeed, the overall increase in ‘affect’ (Figure 8), which is statistically significant, and also the increase in words related to feelings (Figure 9) reflects how the COIL experience is one which engages participants’ feelings and
emotions – the affective domain which regards how people develop values, beliefs and emotional reactions.

![Figure 8: Affect over time.](image1)

![Figure 9: Words related to 'feel' over time.](image2)

COIL is thus not perceived as a ‘neutral’ or distant experience, but something which involves or engages the participants on an emotional as well as intellectual level. Other studies have found that positive and negative emotions indicate a healthy approach to dealing with stressful or challenging situations such as study abroad\(^\text{21}\). Emotional responses can also

strengthen values and beliefs as these are seen to be inter-related according to learning theories (such as Bloom’s taxonomy).

Also looking specifically at the negative emotion words, those related with anxiety and anger increased (though they remained below the LIWC grand mean), whilst those related to sadness did not. While sadness is a passive negative emotion and does not generally foster action or agency, anger and frustration can lead to action.

On manually coding the responses from the mid-COIL assessments, some of the trends we observed were positive emotion regarding their surprise at what they were gaining from the COIL experience.

*Being from America and taking actual American history courses since I was in middle school it amazes me how I have learned so much more in my short time in this class. It's really great to hear students from other countries and their perceptions of things because they sometimes differ tremendously.* (RIG-US-12, mid-COIL)

But even more common was positive emotion regarding interactions with their partners and more generally in response to the question asking what surprised them about the COIL exchanges.

*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)

However, the logistics of the communication - the tools they are using, lack of immediate responses due to different time zones and in some cases lack of interaction at all appeared to be leading to frustration in some of the students.

*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)

*I believe we both are trying to set apart time to get to catch up on what each of us has done. Also, we interact over Facebook Messenger mainly, making it easier and more*
immediate than emailing. Yet, there are of course some issues due to the time difference. (POD-EG-2, mid-COIL)

As can be seen in this last comment, several students indicate having found ways to communicate that suited their needs beyond the technology proposed by the teachers – and most often cite various social media tools which many probably already use in their personal lives.

The final reflections reflect a weighing up of the experience, a description of both the challenges and the achievements gained from participating in this project, which also in part explains the slight drop in positive emotion and rise in negative.

*The most important thing I learned was the process of collaboration is not a simple one and it takes patience and respect for the people you are working with. I learned how to bring in my own research skills and knowledge of medical anthropology and my partner was able to bring in her knowledge of journalism and audio production to collaborate together. But due to her lack of medical anthropology knowledge and my lack of journalism knowledge this led to some miscommunications and struggles.* (POD-US-2, post-COIL)

*Well, this may seem basic, but having to work with students who are in such a different time zone makes you aware of the value of getting to interact directly with people - something you take for granted when you can go to class and sit next to other students, and ask your teachers questions directly. At another level, however, I think that, as someone in the position of a colonizer in a class where we are studying these systems of oppression, getting to interact with someone in the position of the colonized is valuable, even if we don’t directly discuss colonization. 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)

**Increase in words relating to cognitive processes**

In terms of cognition, the reflective nature of the writing is reflected in the high level of words related with cognitive processes. There is a statistically significant increase in the percentage of words related to cognitive process over time, and this is the case for words in the categories of cause, certainty and difference. Discrepancy, on the other hand reduced significantly over time (Figure 10).

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22 The LIWC grand mean for cognitive processes is 10.61 and from the outset of the project the percentage of cognitive words is above this at over 14%.
Increase in certainty and causation

We hypothesised that an increase in intercultural awareness and recognition of complexity would be reflected in a decrease in certainty and an increase in tentativeness as individuals come to terms with complexity, uncertainty and show epistemological humility, that is a form of humbleness as they recognize the co-existence of multiple perspectives. However, this was not the case. There was a significant increase in the percentage of words related to causation and certainty, but no significant difference as regards tentativeness (Figure 10). There was probably not enough time for students to engage with one another in the type of interactions that can lead to this kind of increased awareness, apart from a few individual students. We could hypothesise that the interaction did, however, lead to change in terms of more confidence in engaging with difference which, in particular for students who have not had many international exchange experiences, is an important step.

"... in the beginning I was very stressful of how should I speak in front of native speakers. I was scared by their reaction. However, as soon as I spoke to them, I forgot everything and I expressed my thoughts easily. Therefore, I learned that I should never underestimate myself, just being myself and being confident to reach my goals." (FR-MA-3, post-COIL)
Engaging with difference

The most frequently occurring word when considering all of the data from the student responses to the reflective prompts over the three time periods is ‘different’, appearing over 1000 times (Figure 13).
Even when analysing the pre-exchange prompts, the percentage of words relating to difference is significantly higher than LIWC average. There is a peak in difference-related words in the mid-COIL responses, and a slight drop from this in the post-COIL responses, but the change with time remains significant (Figure 14). This prominence of difference clearly reflects the intercultural nature of the COIL project, in which two classes come together and, perhaps inevitably, engage with explorations of difference as they reflect on the experience.

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23 The LIWC grand mean score is 2.99.
The percentage of comparison related words also, predictably, increased in the mid-COIL data, and then dropped, but remained higher than at the outset of the project (Figure 15).

What emerged from the thematic analysis of the data in relation to the theme of difference are three main sub-themes which stemmed from the codes: ‘not so different’, ‘respecting difference’ and ‘challenging stereotypes’.
Not so different after all

The code ‘not so different’ was used for student responses in which they suggest that they had expected significant differences between themselves and the ‘other’ but through COIL discovered that they actually had things in common and weren’t so different after all. This was more common amongst the US students, but was also the case for some in the MENA region.

*I came into this class knowing very little about Morocco and its people, so simply engaging in conversation with people from another country enables me to see that yes, we do have differences, but that we are also very similar in a lot of ways too.* (PHY-US-5, mid-COIL)

*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)

These extracts provide evidence for change since their starting point appears to be a lack of knowledge or lack of contact with people in different countries and an assumption of great difference, hostility or lack of interest, as the responses above highlight. This is just a first step in engaging with difference but nonetheless an important first step as it can begin to create predisposition to engaging with ‘others’ (see, for example, ‘minimization of difference’, the third step in Bennett’s Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity24).

A considerable number of respondents did not move beyond this first step by the end of the project and their focus remained on similarity and an emphasis on common humanity. This can reflect a somewhat superficial level of engagement with difference, not considering the complexity of identities and cultures.

*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)

*The most important thing I learned was how similar people can be, when they come from different cultures and countries. When I started the project I figured my partner wouldn’t know what I was talking about most of the time, but she had a clear understanding.* (ADS-US-4, post-COIL)

Respect for difference

In terms of developing intercultural awareness, a step that goes beyond the conclusion that ‘we are all the same’ is respecting difference, a theme that emerged in the mid- and post-COIL data, more so in the responses from the MENA students. While many of the US students

seemed to start with an assumption of difference and then focus on similarities in their comments and evaluations of what they were learning from the project, for some of the MENA students in particular (but also some US students) there was an acknowledgement of differences in perceptions and behavior but also a realization that they could respect or accept the differences between them, even if they disagree.

**We had to take into consideration our cultural background, yet we were able to accept other’s point of views and we’re open to accept more and more even if it’s completely different than ours.** (FR-LB-11, mid-COIL)

**It has been fruitful so far and having a lot of students commenting on each other, agreeing and disagreeing has been a great experience that thought me and keeps teaching me how to value the other’s visions and perspectives.** (ADS-MA-16, mid-COIL)

**I believe this course opened up my horizons in respect to working with, and around, other people’s belief and cultures** (ADS-US-13, post-COIL)

In some cases the students reported addressing what they perceived as difficult topics, for example homosexuality, and reported successfully navigating them in order to continue their interactions and fulfil their assignments.

**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)

**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)

The degree of reflexivity in these last posts is higher than many other reflections we have come across in the data perhaps because in this case the students were moved outside of their comfort zone and forced to engage with complexity and different modes of thinking and values systems in order to complete their activities. This will be explored in more detail in the discussion section at the end of the report.

**Challenging stereotypes**

One of the expectations expressed by some of the students in the pre-COIL surveys was that the stereotypes they had of the ‘other’ would be challenged through this project,
By connecting with students in another country, many things could happen like exploring each other, break some stereotypes, learning from each other and even creating more friendship with them etc... (CUL-US-10, pre-COIL)

Some of the responses to the mid-COIL questions provided evidence of this happening, as did some of the post-COIL reflections, with some students actually providing specific examples:

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)

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)

the main thing that have changed in me is that view about the American people. I have discovered that they are nothing like what the media shows (racists, gangs, etc.). in fact, my classmates were so tolerating, polite and easy to deal with.” (ADS-MA-16, post-COIL)

However, the degree to which students reported challenging stereotypes (in particular when these stereotypes regarded hostility towards one’s own culture or lack of interest in it) varied considerably.

**Personal Growth**

Several students reflected on their COIL experience and what they acquired from it in terms of personal growth, i.e. how it helped them to develop more as individuals and becoming, for example, more confident, less shy.

I think that the fact that we had video conversations with the American students was pretty challenging. Personally, I had to get over my shyness and speak up, I also had to make my English in use which made me see that my English is fit to hold a conversation with a native speaker. Even tough I was doubtful about my level in English, these video conversations made me realize that communication is not all about the perfect English, and that talking to a stranger is not as hard as it seems which made me become more confident and gutsy. (FR-MA-15, post-COIL)

Several participants framed the COIL experience in terms of personal growth through the metaphor of ‘opening their eyes’ to things they had been unaware of before. Exploring issues
through interactions with others exposed them to alternative ways of thinking and seeing things and thus opened the path to engaging with complexity and multiple perspectives.

I think that it shattered my progressive "bubble" a bit. Though I was very aware, theoretically, that Egypt was against homosexuality, it was a very different experience to see someone who was young, friendly, and seemingly open-minded be so opposed to discussing it and other controversial topics. (POD-US-8, post-COIL)

Personal growth was also framed in terms of becoming more aware of and interested in one’s own culture, and in a small number of cases an awareness of the extent to which our assumptions are influenced by our beliefs and cultural contexts

**Increased Curiosity**

Many of the students, including those who had negative experiences with little or no interaction with their international partners, reported that the experience had sparked their curiosity. In some cases it had sparked in them the desire to travel in a general sense, to meet their COIL partners and/or to have a study abroad experience.

I would want to go out and travel to other countries in that world that i have may not have wanted to go to before this course. (FR-US-2, post-COIL)

the COIL experience opened my eyes on many positive things, so I really hope it did the same to them, and I hope I can come to the USA one day and meet those guys personally, since I really enjoyed talking to them online. (FR-MA-2, post-COIL)

In other cases, their experience led to an interest in exploring certain issues or aspects of cultures, countries, languages, geopolitics, etc. There are several examples of courses where students were critical of the organization, the lack of communication with their peers, and the limited time allotted for the exchange but what the courses did manage to do in many cases is spark the students’ curiosity to learn more about their own culture, engage with difference, etc.

I would like to explore different places around the world and explore different cultures and cuisines. (CUL-US-13, post-COIL)

The more you learn about other cultures the more you learn about yours. (RIG-LB-3)

I’m more willing to work with international students living here in Egypt, in interest in understanding their cultural experience and relate it to mine. (POD-EG-2, post-COIL)

**No Change**

There were, however, several students who reported that the COIL experience did not have any impact on them and/or led to no or little learning or change in their world views or awareness of the complexities of our globalized world or even their subject matter. In some cases this lack of change was attributed to a lack of or limited interaction with their peers,
hence a ‘non-experience’, which is one of the challenges of COIL that will be discussed later in this report.

Expectations at the beginning were often high and quite positive so if COIL partners were unresponsive this led to great disappointment. One student expressed this sense of being let down: “I was really disappointed because I had very limited communication with Moroccan students. I did speak with 2 other students but they were not in my group.” (CUL-US-9) This comment also highlights students’ desire to interact and communicate with their partners not only to complete assignments but to learn from other people. Indeed, in the pre-COIL questions, the same student commented: “It is best to learn from the people from the country what their culture is like so you can get a personal view of how their life is and how they behave. If you were to learn about a country from a video or documentary you only get the narrators view of the country and that may not be a correct representation of the culture.”

Despite this, it would appear that in some cases simply preparing for the COIL project, working in groups locally and discussing it in class, led students who were unable to interact with their COIL partners to feel that some learning had taking place, e.g. “I started to observe my fellow Americans behavior” (CUL-US-7) from a student in the US while a student in Morocco from the same COIL exchange wrote “To be honest my interaction with my team was affecting me more than my American partner did since I didn’t spend much time in my interaction with her.” (CUL-MA-6)

Some of students taking courses whose subject matter and project assignment did not focus specifically on culture found that this aspect was missing from their interactions and hence reported little or no change in terms of awareness of different perspectives (see the section on Challenges below).

Several students feel they gained a lot of knowledge and competences, such as working in online intercultural teams, but did not feel the experience had changed their worldview or perspectives at all. For example, one student stated: “I believe I view the world in the same way as I did before. It was an enlightening experience to get to know someone from a country overseas and to exchange information about the two countries.” (POD-US-4) It is important to investigate what may be the cause of such positive learning experiences that did not, however impact students’ perspectives at all. In this student’s case, an observation that all the students in that particular project made is that time and focus was primarily on completing a complex assignment and, therefore, students did not have time to interact with one another nor was interaction and discussion about personal views and matters fully integrated into the tasks. The implications of this for COIL practice will be considered in the discussion section at the end of the report.

In other cases, no change appeared to come from a lack of epistemological humility and students’ belief that they were already ‘interculturally competent’ and had sufficient
experience, knowledge and ability to engage with difference that there was nothing more to learn and no new insights to be learnt.

My views about the world have not changed. I have always thought that people are all the same. It’s just the choices they make that make them different from someone else or how they act and think. (INT-US-16, post-COIL)

In the discussions section of this report we will suggest some ways that teachers’ involvement in class discussions about the COIL experience might help students think about why they believe they have nothing to learn.

Types of Learning

In this section we will explore in what way the COIL exchange impacted students’ engagement with new perspectives, acquiring or deepening subject knowledge, gaining knowledge about other cultures and acquiring 21st century skills such as working online in intercultural teams.

21st Century Skills

One salient aspect that emerged from the pre- and mid-COIL responses was that acquiring competences was an expectation for many of the students. Even in some cases where the students were encountering difficulties and frustration in communicating with their partners, they recognised the relevance of this experience to their future as professionals where they are likely to be required to interact with cultural ‘others’ through technology. There were different emphases in the responses of the students – some focusing more on the technological side, that is communicating online and negotiating technologies and time differences, others on the notion of communicating with different ‘others’, i.e. intercultural communicative competence. Some highlighted developing skills in communicating in a foreign language, English, or communicating in their own language with speakers of other languages. Based on this data, an additional multiple response question was added to the post-COIL assessment to see what skills students they thought they had gained (Table 8).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Below is a list of skills and competences that might help you in your future career and employment. Please indicate if you think this experience with COIL has helped you develop any of them (you may tick more than one).</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IC</td>
<td>intercultural competence (i.e. a better understanding of yourself and where you come from, greater awareness of the other, empathy, openness to diversity, etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICC</td>
<td>intercultural communicative competence (i.e. the ability to communicate effectively with people from cultures different from your own)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DIG LIT</td>
<td>digital literacy skills (e.g. how to communicate effectively online, how to use certain tools for certain types of communication, where to look for information, etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TEAMS</td>
<td>the ability to work in teams (in class and/or online)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 8: Multiple response question on skills development included in post-COIL assessment.

As can be seen in Table 8, students were provided with brief definitions of each skill/competence and attention was given to make these as broad as possible for TEAMS and LANG. In the mid-report some students indicated that they were working well in their local teams even if they were having trouble interacting with their international peers so the TEAMS option included “in class and/or online”. With regards to language development, in order to overcome the assumption that students have nothing to learn linguistically when COIL is carried out in their native language, the question was worded to highlight learning to interact with speakers of other languages.

Figure 16 shows the responses to these questions for all 112 students who completed the three assessments. More or less 75% of all students reported having developed IC, ICC and the ability to work in teams, 60% their digital literacies and 56% language skills. Figure 17 breaks this information down by region, US and MENA: we can see a larger percentage of US students chose responses than MENA students but that the trends just described above are the same for both groups. A more detailed breakdown of these results can be found in Appendix 1 where information is given for each local class.

Figure 16: Skills development for all the students in the final data analysis.
One of the primary drawbacks to using such methods of self-assessment is that there is no evidence to support students' perception of having acquired these skills. The qualitative analysis of the reflection questions, however, backs up some of the responses, though the instances of students’ reporting on acquiring these competences were certainly not the high percentages found in the figures above.

Well, the thing that surprises me the most about this experience is that it constantly makes me learn new things about different areas. In other words, I learned how to work with a partner in a different country with extreme time zone differences. I also learned to work independently. Although our professor was monitoring us, yet due to the fact that not all of the class is doing this project, it’s not always discussed in class like other course material topics. I also learned that I should be more open to deal with people of different backgrounds. (POD-EG-7, mid-COIL)

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. This experience helped me to explore my culture not only the american culture.” (CUL-MA-1, post-COIL)

Learning from People

One of the most commonly used codes was called ‘learning from people, for what a large number of respondents mentioned, even in the pre-COIL surveys – but more so in the mid- and post-COIL responses was the concept of learning from people (rather than books or their professors), having ‘first hand’ accounts and perspectives from people living in other
countries as this was seen to offer opportunities for insights and knowledge that is not usually available to them through traditional course books or mainstream media.

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, pre-COIL)

My views have become more nuanced. The variations of experiences in their lives was expected but interesting to see in practice. I didn't know before that many of them enjoyed video games, anime, and sports. They talked about their lives in a way that presented new snapshots of their perspectives. (FR-US-11, post-COIL)

This interaction had made me change many ideas about the American culture that I had only been introduced to through media channels. I got a view that is mine, direct and not influenced by media stereotypes. (ADS-MA-9, post-COIL)

This indeed is one of the defining features of COIL and it is positive to note that many of the students observe this and see it as a key aspect. Indeed, several of the students also mention COIL as being a unique experience or opportunity, unlike other educational projects they have taken part in before.

It was a one of the kind experience, i haven't experience anything like this before. Basically other classes are just learn how to do something. MCS is more towards interacting with other people (CUL-US-16, post-COIL)

Living in new York, the way this course was taught was very fitting. It was open, critical, unique and interesting, which are things that are valued in New York. We were interested to hear a point of view that may differ or support our own and hear out why this is so. (RIG-US-22, post-COIL)

COIL has delightful surprises that it brings the excitement and the ability to work in a different way. For example, the topic is right in which a participant can interact with various students. The way the task is presented is a unique style full of new questions especially the interview questions. The topic is new to me in a way which it makes a person to do some research about it and to interrogate the audience to get live answers. (CUL-MA-6, post-COIL)

New Perspectives

The main advantage of learning from people is seen as being exposed to different perspectives or views of things. This was a common expectation among participants, and for many students this expectation was largely met, from the mid-COIL responses and also post-COIL:
The class has been impacted because it really gives us different opinions on the topics we discuss. With other students being from a different county, they could have different point of views on things. (CUL-MA-6, mid-COIL)

Now that I have connected with students from another country, my views have changed in some way. I came into class with having no knowledge of their country but now that we work together that knowledge is expanding. (ADS-US-4, mid-COIL)

### Acquiring or Deepening Subject Knowledge

Acquiring or deepening subject knowledge was an expectation for many of the students at the outset of the project and in the mid-COIL surveys many of the students made comments on how the exchange was enriching their understanding of their subject and/or allowing them to apply their subject content in real and concrete ways.

Because of the information I received from participating with our partner in the first step, I now know the prices of 16 products that are available in the USA and in Egypt. I also know whether the products are overvalued or undervalued and by what percentage they are under or over valued. (PPP-EG-36 - course topic: finance)

Till now all the topics and subjects that we are discussing and dealing with in this course had already been seen in our quotidian life and it's not a taboo that we shouldn't talk about and I guess these subjects had been seen all over the world and not hidden from a specific group of people (genocide, human trafficking, ...). So I confirm that our fellow students already know about these subjects and this course is helping us debating them and discussing them profoundly. (RIG-LB-6 - course topic: human rights)

The fact that we have to compare social inequalities existing in both countries actually enforces us to interpret our cultural backgrounds through our narration or writing. We both acknowledge our countries' inequalities very well and we just needed the statistics to support them. Without doubt there are a lot of differences between each background and they obviously contradict one another. However, I think that if they weren't interpreted through our writings or narration, the podcast will end to not be neutral which should be avoided. On the other had, the cultural backgrounds never affected the way we interact with each other. We started growing a friendship due to the fact that in this generation people are more familiar with dealing with people from different cultural backgrounds and especially at AUC. Thus, these differences never affected the way we interact together. (POD-EG-7 – course topic: journalism)

My course has been impacted by connecting with my partners from another country in many ways. One way is that it opens up my eyes to different religions, ethnicity, and races. This is a good thing because my eyes have seen more and now I can accept different things. In the course we talked about how all these things affect the way
society sees that group of people. Now that I have seen new things I am able to accept some of the things they do that maybe the rest of society does not accept. In this course you learn that maybe things in life may not be as simple as it seems. (INT-US-14 – course topic: sociology)

In the post-COIL survey, the majority of students said they believed they had achieved the student outcomes in relation to their course content. Some students also commented on COIL broadening their understanding of their subject matter. The COIL exchange in some cases was seen to add not only knowledge of a topic in a specific context which is different to their own (for example prices of products in Egypt and the US for PPP), but contributed to a broader understanding and/or an awareness that there are multiple realities and ways of looking at or interpreting issues and topics or a greater self awareness in terms of understanding how what we see and experience in our own societies becomes so ‘normal’ to us that we do not notice it until we are exposed to other reactions to it.

The most important thing I learned was how obesity may impact an individual’s mental health in both America and Egypt. I am now more interested in the topic I was given after finishing the course and plan on pursuing my research in different courses.” (POD-US-4, post-COIL)

We investigated ads from our culture that acted as a sample of the large population of advertisements in our society. As a result, I was given an insight into sexualized and hyped-up ads that are prevalent in our society, and it has helped me recognize these advertising methods that I am over-exposed to to the point that I don’t realize them. (ADS-US-8, post-COIL)

Challenges

There were, of course, reports of difficulties and disappointment on the part of some students which we have organized around the theme of challenges. There are several different factors that we coded in the data.

Too Much Focus on Subject Content

Though several students were positive about the outcomes of their subject-related projects and discussions, they were disappointed that the interaction they had with their peers was very much product-oriented and there was little time or opportunity for them to engage in the type of less formal interaction that would allow them to get to know each other on a more personal level and/or engage in discussion on intercultural issues.

I don’t think there was a chance to actually have a conversation with my partner besides talking about the project. (PPP-US-110, mid-COIL)

My views have changed less than what I have liked. We have had very little conversation about each others culture. (POD-US-9, mid-COIL)
Lack of or Limited Communication

Whereas the students above felt they didn’t have enough time to have more personal conversations, several students reported having little to no communication with their partners already in the mid-COIL responses and then confirmed in the post-COIL ones. It is worth pointing out that student responses were not shared with teachers as they will be for the next cohort (see recommendations below) and that possibly had they, it might have been possible to intervene in some way to improve communication. In some cases students did not know why their peers did not communicate, but in others they indicated possible reasons such as different time zones, different schedules and problems with technology.

The whole experience actually stresses me out, more than it should, since I’m pressured by several factors every day: time difference, due dates, etc. Sometimes, I am not sure what my partner may be doing at a certain moment when I really need to get something done, and sometimes I fear late replies. Overall, the experience is unique in that it gives me a chance to execute a project with someone "virtually" rather than actually have face-to-face contact, yet it is not as easy as it may seem. (POD-EG-2, post-COIL)

Language Issues

A surprisingly small number of the students mentioned that it was difficult to communicate with their partners due to language-related issues. It is important to remember that most of the exchanges were carried out in English (though two also involved French) which introduced an imbalance in terms of power dynamics, for many of the students in the US were communicating in their first language or at least the their language of instruction, for students in the MENA countries English was their second or third language, even if it was a language of instruction in some cases. Indeed, limited communication on the part of some students may have been due to the greater amount of time communicating in a foreign language required of them, and certainly a few students expressed some anxiety at the outset of the project about communicating in English though they said this often disappeared when the project started. This anxiety was particularly strong in the cases where there was synchronous communication.

the only aspect of this COIL enhanced course that I found stressful and having to talk to others in a video chat, the experience scared me because I felt like I was waited to make mistakes, so I lost the words that were in my head and looked really stressed which I’m sure others felt it, yet I’m satisfied with the work I did and I’m proud of myself for facing my fear and talking although it was hard. (FR-MA-1, post-COIL)

Despite a few positive accounts such as this one, in analysing the qualitative data we did feel that in some cases the participants’ English level may also have had an impact on the the depth and quality of the reflections gathered as data for this analysis, as clearly it is much easier to provide detailed reflections in one’s own language and insightful reflections require
a strong linguistic repertoire. Therefore, we might also presume that at least in some cases the level of English limited the depth and quality of the discussions and collaborative work.

**Facilitating Factors**

Through our analysis of the data we were able to identify some factors which seem to contribute to students’ reporting a positive, engaging experience.

Just as one of the challenges for some students was limited or lack of communication with their distant peers, what was most commonly perceived as contributing to the success of the project and students’ positive emotion was what we coded as ‘good partners’, that is students’ reporting their partners’ enthusiasm for the exchange, their willingness to collaborate and friendliness. Since interaction with partners is the foundation of COIL exchanges, and the desire to get to know and interact with others was a primary expectation for most students, this was one of the keys to success.

*before connecting with American students, I thought it would be quite hard to communicate with them as we were from different cultures, but to my surprise, it was exactly the opposite, they were very sweet and understanding, very open-minded which made talking to them flew easily with no obstacles; it was encouraging to open a conversation with them without previous expectations.* (FR-MA-2, mid-COIL)

*I suppose it surprised me that it was so easy to talk to the students from Morocco. I don’t mean technologically or in reference to time zones, but in the sense that they are such nice people who are easy to talk to and work with. I don’t want to sound as if I expected them to be standoffish and rude but it was a pleasant surprise to get introductory messages and welcoming attitudes from them.* (FR-US-8, mid-COIL)

For many of the students who did manage to interact with their partners, there was what we coded as the ‘fun’ factor: they reported enjoying the exchange, how it added an element of fun to their academic studies in addition to exposing them to new perspectives. Some even mentioned that the class was more interesting because of the COIL component.

*I feel that the coil project had a great impact on the class by interacting drawing interest in the students of a different culture, and made the class more interesting, I would suggest continuing the coil project in future classes.* (CUL-US-11, mid-COIL)

A small number of students explicitly mentioned gratitude towards their teachers and how their support for the project, their planning and the collaboration between the partner teachers contributed to the success of the project.

*I thank both teachers for collaborating because I enjoyed working in the coil and I am very happy that I had the chance to know my coil-mates* (ADS-MA-2, post-COIL)
First thank you for everything! Really you did not let us down once, you were always there by your questionnaires to follow our collaboration. Thank you! (PHY-MA-10, post-COIL)

One way to sum up the facilitating factors and overall positive reactions to the COIL experience is with a code that emerged in the pre-COIL data as an expectation and was then confirmed in both the mid- and post-COIL responses by numerous students: ‘unique experience’.

It is a great opportunity for anyone who wants to learn in a way that is far from the academic methods. Is an out of the ordinary for me and a new way to learn and get to know people by participating in group work. (PHY-MA-2, post-COIL)

I have told my family, friends, and co-workers about this experience, and they all say that it sounds fascinating. Some of them said that they really wish they had experienced something like this while taking a language course. Also, I think this collaboration has deepened my understanding of speaking/writing/reading English as a second (or third) language, which is very important for me because I am working on a degree to become an English teacher, and because I already work as a writing tutor (primarily with ESL students) at [name of institution]. (PHY-US-5, post-COIL)

### Discussion and Recommendations

#### COIL Implementation

Expectations on the part of the students were clearly high, and what was clear from our analysis of the students’ expectations was that they saw COIL as an opportunity for engaging in interaction with peers, they fully understood the core principles of COIL and many reported being excited about the upcoming interactions. This reveals good preparation and presentation of the project to students on the part of the teachers implementing the exchange. In many cases these expectations were fully met, and the increase in positive emotion on the part of the students, as well as possible frustration as they grappled with the reality of online collaboration and communication represent student engagement, learning and a positive experience:

Doing this course with international partners has impacted my learning experience by letting me interact with an outside source. Their different personalities, perspectives and inputs made the material more interesting and enjoyable. (ADS-MA-15, post-COIL)

Although the interactions took place online without physically meeting one another, for most students the experience was an engaging one on a social and emotional level as well as the cognitive level. This highlights the value of using technology to engage young people in
online, collaborative projects where they engage with distant others. Inevitably, however, not all students’ expectations were met and the challenges these students faced need to be addressed. Below we focus on issues related to communication that we think could greatly improve students’ COIL experience.

**Addressing Communication Issues**

The most common frustration expressed by students in their responses to the assessments was the limited or lack of response from their partners. We suggest that having at least one synchronous, class to class or small group video conference at the outset of the project may motivate students to engage more in the project as they might feel more connected to their distant peers. Ideally there would be other synchronous sessions during the exchange and certainly at the end to conclude the experience. Furthermore, students should discuss with their classes and their partners the expectations as regards mode and frequency of communication – for example what they consider an appropriate time to wait for a response. These can even be negotiated together and stated explicitly on a shared document. During the exchange, time should be set aside in the local classrooms for students to collectively reflect on the progress and dynamics of their interactions (even with the partner class if synchronous sessions facilitated by both teachers are possible). They should be encouraged to discuss possible reasons for communication problems and actions they could take to improve the interactions – often students reported lack of response from their peers, but did not mention the broader dynamics of the interaction or any actions they themselves had taken to improve the dynamics.

Having students interact and collaborate in small groups is also preferable to dyadic interactions for this takes the pressure off individual partners, particularly when there are problems, and also facilitates organization for classes with divergent numbers of students, and finally allows students to engage with a wider range of perspectives than interaction with a single partner would allow for.

Encouraging student flexibility in terms of communication tools and modes (so they can use Whatsapp, Facebook Messenger, etc.) is also advised, and indeed many students reported having done just this to overcome communication challenges. However, though clearly this is up to students to negotiate as teachers should not broach on students’ private communication channels, there should be focused discussion about privacy and security issues. For example, Whatsapp requires students to share phone numbers and some may not feel comfortable with that or certain social media might be monitored by governments in some countries limiting what students feel they can or even what students should say.

**Student Learning**

In terms of learning, respondents generally reported positive impact in terms of expanding their knowledge and understanding of their subject content, and more generally, knowledge
about another culture. Furthermore, an overwhelming majority reported acquiring what are commonly referred to as global competences or 21st century skills, which include the ability to communicate with and also collaborate with people from different cultural contexts through the mediation of online technologies. Though it is often assumed that young people ‘know’ how to interact effectively online, the findings of this study reveal that many students' reported acquiring digital literacies, though these were not an explicit focus of the courses. The communication challenges mentioned above and the need to negotiate and overcome issues of communication and collaboration in working towards a common objective highlight the importance of COIL projects and also effectiveness in addressing this area of learning. Where there is perhaps room for improvement in some of the COIL projects is in supporting students’ engagement with different perspectives and an intercultural stance or predisposition which recognizes the development of intercultural awareness as a never ending journey of exploration and discovery of self and ‘other', of values, behaviours and assumptions, not just knowledge and competence that is to be mastered.

**Moving Beyond Ethnocentrism Towards Greater Intercultural Awareness**

In the findings we reported that a considerable number of students expressed change in terms of discovering that their distant peers are not so different from them and emphasised their commun humanity. While this is an important step forwards as it is necessary to recognize commun humanity in order to overcome some terrible forms of brutality, racism and sexism, it does not represent a high awareness of diverse perspectives or civic and global engagement. Asserting that there are universal values (our own values) that we are sure apply to everyone else is a position often assumed by those that speak from a position of privilege, dominant cultures who in this way deny the sometimes profound social and cultural differences that characterize us.

Acceptance of cultural difference is seen as a step further towards intercultural awareness. Acceptance does not mean agreement with different worldviews or necessarily liking other ways of organizing human existence – but rather accepting that there are multiple ways of being in and with the world. COIL inherently offers the possibility to help students develop acceptance by giving them opportunities to engage with students who will inevitably have different experiences, different perspectives, and we found many instances of students' reporting acceptance of difference. However, in order to fully exploit this opportunity, there need to be discussions on matters related to culture(s) and identity/ies in all stages, in all tasks so that the students are not merely cooperating online but rather actually getting to know one another, reflecting on their own assumptions and how these color their beliefs and values and then can begin to consider how things may be viewed through other people’s eyes. This requires more intense social interaction, asking more difficult questions and spending time on discussion and reflection, for it is not enough to have an experience, the learning comes from reflecting on this experience. COIL should be a form of ‘reflective experiential learning’, which means making time in the curriculum for social interaction not
strictly linked to project outputs and time for individual and shared reflection. One student from Morocco was aware of this:

Since it’s not only a strict group that is all about studies we got to know each other pretty close and that cleared out many things about the “other culture” that has always been mediated to us and we've rarely got the chance to learn about it by ourselves. (ADS-MA-9, mid-COIL)

In addition to increased social interaction and reflection, developing tasks that push students (and teachers) out of their comfort zone is another way to move towards developing greater intercultural and critical cultural awareness. This is perhaps the greatest challenge for teachers developing COIL courses because not only does it require finding ways to do this that fit within their existing curricula, but it means that they need to have the skills to discuss, facilitate and moderate these discussions with their students. For example, when describing their cultural background in the pre-COIL assessment, the majority of students referenced their religion, ethnicity, race and in some cases even sexual orientation. These appear to be integral aspects of students identities that were rarely the focus of or brought into students' discussions possibly because they are considered ‘uncomfortable’ or taboo topics. Class activities and discussions that focus on issues related to culture(s) and identity/ies from the outset of a course may facilitate this type of discussion online.

Integrating cultures/identities into task design may seem more obvious in some subject matters as opposed to others, e.g. a course on culture compared to a course on science and technology. However, we feel that with some creativity, it is possible to introduce such a component into any course as demonstrated by the some of the very interdisciplinary partnerships in this cohort. The more challenging issue for teachers might actually be their willingness to engage in such discussions with students and addressing their time constraints. We would therefore recommend that teachers interested in taking this additional step outside of our comfort zones engage in training activities on how to facilitate intercultural discussions on sensitive topics. Although this would require greater investment in terms of time and resources, it would offer opportunities to more fully develop intercultural awareness and understanding.

Language Issues

Language is an integral of our identity and clearly the means for communication between students engaging in COIL. There is an inherent language imbalance in any COIL project where the language of the exchange is the mother-tongue of the majority of one group and not the other (more often than not this language is English).

Students for whom English is a second, third or even fourth language (including some of the students in the US) bring with them multilingual resources and intercultural awareness that could benefit all of the students involved in the exchanges. There are several ways teachers
can leverage these multilingual resources to enhance the intercultural learning. When
students share languages with different degrees of proficiency, such as French and English,
students can be encouraged to communicate in both and also to support one another in
comprehension. Teaching their peers some basic words and expressions in their language
and/or sharing music and brief texts is a way of raising awareness of multilingualism and
the relationship between languages and cultures. It appears this happened in the French
exchange where several US students seem to appreciate having learned some words in
Arabic. Some students from other courses reported frustration about learning Arabic not
being a part of the program, e.g. “Their English is very good. I find it interesting that they
learned English and thus could communicate with us, but we didn’t ever learn Arabic.” (INT-
US-6, post-COIL). Clearly teaching Arabic is beyond the scope of the COIL Stevens Initiative,
but a few words or expressions could spark curiosity and interest in further learning. Finally,
on a very practical level, being able to function in a multilingual environment is undoubtedly
a useful skill for students’ future professional and personal lives. As one student explained:
“I think being able to understand Arabic a bit more would connect me with more of the
world.” (FR-US-11, post-COIL)

**COIL Assessment**

The analysis of the data provided by this initial implementation of the COIL Assessment
Model has allowed us to identify some areas in which changes might improve the output of
the assessment. First of all, as was stated at the beginning of this report, fewer than half of
the students who responded to the pre-COIL assessment responded to all three assessments
and to our knowledge completion of the assessment was not a part of students’ final grade
in their local courses. Since COIL does work within institutional contexts where grades are a
form of extrinsic motivation, we recommend that the COIL Assessment be included as part
of students’ overall grade. We do not suggest that responses be in any way assessed or
graded but rather that thoughtful completion be one of the more important factors
considered in their local assessment protocol.

Another reason for integrating the COIL Assessment Model into the formal assessment of
local courses is to highlight the value of reflection in the learning process. Depending on the
context, it might make sense for teachers to allow time for students to respond to the
questions in class, using their own devices or in a room equipped with computers with
Internet access. Many of the student responses were superficial and brief, which would seem
to indicate that they were ‘just getting it done’, so setting aside class time to ask students to
truly think about their responses might increase the thoughtfulness of their replies and
contribute to their learning.

We also recommend the final assessment be converted into a reflection essay or paper and
that students have a record of their responses to the pre- and mid-COIL assessments for their
final reflections. Indeed, as was stated earlier in this report, the aims of the three assessments
are different. The primary aims of the pre-COIL survey are to get students to begin reflecting on the process and to have a starting point for comparison later on in the process. The aims of the mid-COIL survey are for students to take a step back and see how things are going and reflect on their learning. The aim of the final reflection, the post-COIL assessment is to reflect on the entire process in order to see what, if any progress has been made or change taken place, and why.

We suggest leaving the questions to the post-COIL assessment as they are in order to promote reflection and as a starting point for their written reflection. We recommend the instructions be changed to encourage students to provide evidence of what they state in their final reflection from the pre- and mid-COIL assessments and their interactions with their international partners. As is clear from the partnerships in the cohort analyzed in this report, different courses have different aims and institutional constraints. Therefore, we would suggest a minimum of 300 words for the final reflection paper, a length that does not allow for in-depth engagement but that requires students to move beyond simply replying to a set of questions. Finally, students should be encouraged to write the reflection paper in the language in which they feel they can best express their thoughts and, for research purposes these can be translated.

Conclusions

This report summarizes findings from a qualitative thematic analysis of responses from 112 students from eight COIL exchanges to a pilot implementation of the COIL Assessment Model, supported by quantitative content analysis using the LIWC software. As was stated in the Introduction, as far as the authors know, this is the first such attempt to analyze the learning and experiences of students across a number of different partnerships. Our thorough analysis of the data led us to identify themes that emerged from the student data. Such themes both help describe what COIL can offer as an approach to online intercultural exchange but also which factors lead to a more successful experience for students and which ones seem to hinder learning. This information can be used to inform future COIL professional development programs and, hopefully, prove useful to all those interested in engaging in COIL from the teachers to their administrations.

As is the case with any pilot study, there are limitations to this one. First and foremost is the limited number of responses from students to all three assessments. In several cases, for example, it was unfortunate that out of 10-20 students who replied to the post-COIL assessment, only 3 had replied to all three. Therefore, the picture painted of some of the individual partnerships is skewed by the lack of a complete set of responses from one of the groups. Secondly, while the questions are English, for over half of the respondents (even some of the US students) English is their second, third or even fourth language. Although a
version of all the questions was provided in Arabic, none of the respondents chose to respond in a language other than English (with the exception of a few responses in French).

Finally, change takes time. Not only are COIL exchanges often very short, often ranging from just 5 to 7 weeks long, but the it may take weeks or months for students to process what they've experienced. Ideally, therefore, it would be useful to find a way to ask students who have engaged in COIL to reflect on if and how it has changed them several months to a year after they've completed the exchange, as expressed in the citation below. Such longitudinal research would be of great benefit to the field of virtual exchange moving forward.

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)
Appendix 1: Overview of individual COIL courses for the Spring 2017 Cohort of the SUNY COIL Stevens Initiative

Ads

The COIL course we called Ads was between students at Broome Community College in Upstate New York and students at Mohammed I University in Eastern Morocco. The focus of the COIL component of the respective courses was deconstructing advertisements in the two countries. It had two student learning outcomes:

- SLO 1: To achieve a greater level of media literacy through collaboration on deconstructing an ad and creating a counter ad.
- SLO 2: To learn to how to communicate with speakers whose language is not their own as evidenced by the collaborative creation of a video about an aspect of the other’s culture.

All three assessments were completed by 6 students from the Moroccan class and 9 in the US one (Table 9). There were more females in the Moroccan group and a majority of males in the American one (Figure 18) and all were the age of average university students, late teens to early 20s (Figure 19).

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Table 9: Responses from students who completed the pre-, mid- and post-COIL assessments (Ads).

As can be seen in Figure 20 and Figure 21, students engaged with one another asynchronously more than synchronously even if more than half do report having interacted
with their international peers one or more time during the exchange. Most students report spending 1-2 hours communicating with their peers asynchronously and 2-4 hours working on the project each week (Figure 22) indicating that they spent just as much time preparing for the communication as they did communicating.

In terms of competences development (Figure 23), all of the students from Morocco and a majority of the US students report having developed their intercultural competence (IC) and intercultural communicative competence (ICC). Nearly all students in both groups also indicated a development in their digital literacy skills (DIG LIT) and the ability to work in online intercultural teams (TEAMS). Interestingly, almost the same number of students on both sides, and not only the non-native English speakers in Morocco, also felt they had improved their ability to communicate with speakers of another language (LANG). This may be due to the fact that such a skill was an integral part of the second SLO for the course (see above).

Students’ replies to the post-COIL reflection questions indicate that students were generally pleased with the experience, only slightly more on the Moroccan side. Most students also felt
they had achieved the SLOs. Students overwhelmingly felt they had achieved the first SLO and improved their ability to be more critical with regards to not only advertisements but the media in general. In addition to this, it also appears they had some personal interactions and off-topic conversations, such as one who mentioned discussing “Mr. Trump” and they expressed having acquired competences which they see as relevant to them, such as interacting online.

For many of both the US and Moroccan students the interaction with their peers added a ‘fun’ component to the course; they enjoyed the interactions and reported becoming aware that they are not so different as they had previously thought, e.g.:

> Doing this course with international partners has impacted my learning experience by letting me interact with an outside source. Their different personalities, perspectives and inputs made the material more interesting and enjoyable. [...] The key changes that occurred in how I view the world after interacting with students from another country include opening my eyes to how big the world truly is and that there are people just like me outside of my comfort zone. (ADS-US-15)

However, it is interesting to note that in the reflections from the Moroccan students, rather than there being a focus on ‘how much we are the same’, they tended to focus on the value of becoming friends and challenging stereotypes, e.g.

> the main thing that have changed in me is that view about the American people. I have discovered that they are nothing like what the media shows (racists, gangs, etc.). in fact, my classmates were so tolerating, polite and easy to deal with. (ADS-MA-16)

A sense of ‘community’ seemed to emerge, and some students recognized the value of interacting not just with one person but with a group of individuals, e.g.

> I’ve always been more immersed within the American culture rather than ours due to my constant use of the internet, but I can say that this connection with the other students has given me a chance to be more involved and active and I almost feel like we’ve built our own little community which is nice. What surprised me about this COIL is how much I can learn from just reading the opinion of others. It gave me a huge opportunity to see things from not just one other perspectives but over 20! (ADS-MA-1)

There was some negative feedback from the American students regarding lack of communication and not learning as much as they had expected at the outset of the project, as these two students’ responses highlight.

> My partners really didn’t talk to us and didn’t do anything towards the final project. Sorry. (ADS-US-6)

> I’d like to say that my learning experience was extremely different, but I’d be lying. While our partner was wonderful, and very helpful, it still felt like an average group
project where one of our partners was absent. [...] I don’t know if my view of the world necessarily changed but I was very fascinated to hear about what the interests of our collaborators were in their life’s and how they may share interests with our class as well. (ADS-US-18)

Culture

The two courses that collaborated to create the COIL course we called Culture was between an Introduction to Cultural Studies course at Mohammed I University in Eastern Morocco and an Introduction to Multicultural Studies Course at Rockland Community College just outside of New York City. As the two teachers stated in their COIL syllabus: “The overall objective is to achieve a cross-cultural understanding and to build friendly relations between US and Moroccan students.” The COIL exchange had three student learning outcomes:

- **SLO 1:** Demonstrate a greater understanding of the complexity of one’s own identity by reading an essay or watching a video and drafting a response/critique.
- **SLO 2:** Compare and contrast similarities between American & Moroccan culture through food, traditions, holidays, music, internet, pop culture through icebreaker introductory videos uploaded on Facebook. Students will draft a reaction paper on findings.
- **SLO 3:** Compare and contrast situational experiences between American & Moroccan culture; standing waiting in line. Students will be placed in groups to conduct local interviews/take video/observations to upload on Facebook closed group. Groups will discuss the findings. Each student will draft a report of their findings and personal reaction.

All three assessments completed by 4 students from the Moroccan class and 10 from the US one (Table 1). There were more male students in both groups (Figure 24) and while the majority were the age of average university students, late teens to early 20s (Figure 25), the US group had two non-traditional students, one in their late 20s, the other in their 30s.

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<tr>
<td>US</td>
<td>10</td>
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*Table 10: Responses from students who completed the pre-, mid- and post-COIL assessments (Culture).*
Despite the uneven number of responses to all 3 assessments, the distribution of the responses to the question about synchronous communication would seem to indicate that there were some students who never communicated synchronously, several who communicated synchronously just once during the COIL project and a few who did so at least once a week (Figure 26). Compared to other courses in this study, the amount of asynchronous communication was quite limited: just one hour a week for almost all the students (Figure 27). This limited time commitment is confirmed by the responses regarding how much time students spent overall working on the COIL project every week (Figure 28). The majority of US students indicated less than one hour with a few outliers indicating more time whereas the Moroccan responses were more evenly distributed, but there are only four responses. It comes as no surprise then that the analysis of the qualitative data indicates that there were significant problems with communication and that half of the students were generally not satisfied with the COIL exchange and did not feel they had achieved the SLOs whereas. The other half felt they had enjoyed working with their classmates in local teams and had partially achieved the SLOs. Indeed, particularly on the Moroccan side, the competence acquired that received the most responses was the ability to work in teams (Figure 29) but from the responses it appears that reference to the teams is local teams, e.g. “To be honest my interaction with my [local] team was affecting me more than my american partner did since i didn't spent much time in my interaction with her.” (CUL-MA-6). Nonetheless, some partnerships did seem to work.

_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. This experience helped me to explore my culture not only the american culture._ (CUL-MA-1)
The other data on competences development would seem to further confirm this lack of communication with COIL partners as fewer students felt they had developed their intercultural communicative competence, digital literacies and language skills. Despite this, half of the Moroccan respondents and nearly all of the US respondents indicated having developed their intercultural competence.

Given the fact that both local courses were courses on culture, this partnership would seem like a natural fit for a COIL exchange, but the qualitative data suggests that the course was not particularly successful. From statistical analysis of positive and negative emotion LIWC scores, this partnership seems to be the group with most dramatic rise in negative emotion and fall in positive emotion over time. It seems that there were high expectations at the beginning and that the initial Facebook exchanges were relatively fruitful but then communication died off and international groups did not function well. Some students report having learned and changed despite these challenges but expressed frustration with the lack of communication: “I was really disappointed because I had very limited communication with..."
Moroccan students.” (CUL-US-9). Others had more tepid, sometimes contradictory evaluations of the experience. For example, in response to one question, CUL-US-13 replied: “I think the course has a greater reflection on other cultures other then my own, I can relate but I don’t feel as though the class was much of an impact personally.” And then to another question responded: “I think i am just more open minded to different cultures after doing the project.” A few, notably those who report having had some interaction, spoke very highly of the experience and seemed to indicated the experienced had changed them:

I learned I was able to understand the stand point of the people in Morocco because of their traditions, their belief, and their way of living. It shows how different people of different countries act, and carry themselves as oppose to individuals of the United States. [...] because of the interaction discussing the different viewpoints about our way of living.” (CUL-US-6)

It is interesting to note that all students, even those who had no interaction with their COIL partners seemed able to recognize the potential of COIL and several offered suggestions on how it could have worked better:

The course is right to make students work and use the English language effectively. The task is okay. The problem is the interaction with USA students. The instructor should provide the time, and it must be fixed on one date. The best day is Sunday. No school, no work, it is just free time. (CUL-US-6)

Finally, the students’ responses in all three assessments were not particularly reflective, i.e. in most cases it appears that students were ‘just getting it done’ and not really thinking about their responses. This, together with the limited amount of time students seemed to spend engaging in the project (see Figures 10 and 11 above), might be an indication that not enough time was dedicated in the class to working on and discussing the COIL exchange.

French

The COIL exchange we called French brought together a course in Francophone Cultural Studies from SUNY Oneonta in upstate New York and a course called Introduction to Cultural Studies at Mohammed I University in Eastern Morocco. The students in the US course were not all speakers of French and the course in Morocco was not carried out in English so the two teachers started from this assumption that language and translation would have to play a major role in their COIL exchange. The student learning outcomes were:

- SLO 1: A greater understanding of how different languages and images convey cultural messages and norms.
- SLO 2: Competencies in intercultural and interpersonal communication across languages and platforms, using translation and collaboration.
A balanced number of students responded to all three assessments: 6 from Morocco and 7 from the US (Table 11). Among the respondents in both groups there was a larger number of female students (Figure 30) and most were in their early 20s (Figure 31).

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<th>Morocco</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>US</td>
<td>7</td>
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Table 11: Responses from students who completed the pre-, mid- and post-COIL assessments (French).

Figure 30: Gender of students who replied to the post-COIL assessment (French).

Figure 31: Age of students who replied to the post-COIL assessment (French).

Only two of the students in this partnership indicated they never communicated synchronously with their international partners whereas the rest reported having done so several times during the exchange (Figure 32). The asynchronous participation on a weekly basis ranged primarily from 1 to 2 hours a week, with a few more Moroccans indicating having spent more time than their peers (Figure 33). The fact that overall Moroccan students reported having spent more time that their US partners may be related to the fact that they were often communicating in English even if their course was not an English course. But as one Moroccan student explained, this challenge was part of the learning experience:

*I think that the fact that we had video conversations with the American students was pretty challenging. Personally, I had to get over my shyness and speak up, I also had to make my English in use which made me see that my English is fit to hold a conversation with a native speaker. Even tough I was doubtful about my level in English, these video conversations made me realize that communication is not all about the perfect English, and that talking to a stranger is not as hard as it seems which made me become more confident and gutsy.* (FR-MA-15)

The time students spent each week on the project is, with the exception of two students, evenly distributed between 2-3 and 3-4 hours a week (Figure 34). Therefore, it would appear that students on both sides were rather engaged in the project. This engagement is further reflected in the even distribution of competences developed (Figure 35): all were indicated
by students on both sides, with the exception of digital literacies, indicated by only two Moroccan students. In other words, a majority in both classes report having developed their intercultural competence, intercultural communicative competence, ability to work in teams and ability to communicate with a speaker of a different native language.

Students’ responses to the reflection questions were very positive and indicate that there was considerable interaction. Both classes expressed their surprise and positive emotion at the enthusiasm of their partners for their interactions, and most of the students expressed strong engagement with the program. Clearly the subject matters (language and culture) lend themselves to cultural exchange and positive interactions, but it seems that in particular the way the students interacted and above all how they were encouraged to collaborate with one another on specific activities (e.g. commenting on one another’s translations) led to the positive learning outcomes and enthusiasm for the project. This is not to say that students found it easy, on the contrary there were several challenges, but these were seen as part of
the learning process. Table 12 shows one exemplary reply from students on both sides of the partnership.

*Table 12: Student responses from the ‘French’ partnership that are representative of their classmates’ responses.*

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Moroccan Student</th>
<th>American Student</th>
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<td>I’m thankful for our teacher who gave us the opportunity to enter this COIL project. I’m giving thanks for the American students and their teacher, they have been open minded and polite. Thanks for the students who made a such great comments on our translation of “On aflame been les rats”, also for the ones who wrote their own haiku poetry which allowed us to exchange and express our emotions. For my point of view, it was a successful experience because it encouraged us to think actively and more deeply, improved the interaction between student/teacher and student/student, and as I expected that this experience prepared us for life after graduating. (FR-MA-4)</td>
<td>I thought the experience overall was wonderful and challenging. I really liked the entire group and all the amazing creations and connections that were made through COIL. It was not an easy task, but it was meaningful, and I’m glad I was involved in this. I’m intending to maintain the friendships I made through this and continue to expand my knowledge even as the summer has arrived. I attend a liberal arts college where there is a focus on trying to make connections with others who are unlike you and being sensitive to cultural differences. I think the improvisational nature of the course structure and respectful treatment of the material results from that. (FR-US-11)</td>
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**Internet**

The COIL exchange we called Internet, was interdisciplinary bringing together an Introduction to Sociology course at a community college in upstate New York with an Introduction to Information Technology course in Lebanon. There was a significant drop in the number of responses in the American group to 3 in the post-COIL assessment from 9 in the pre-COIL assessment, and to 9 from 18 in the Lebanese course (Table 13). The student learning outcomes that brought these two disparate courses together for a COIL exchange were:

- **SLO 1:** Identify and analyze the impact of digital culture on your daily life and discuss it with your partner.
- **SLO 2:** Contrast the nature of prejudice and discrimination, and apply it to the digital society (National vs. International).
Among the respondents in both groups there was a larger number of female students (Figure 36) and most were in their early 20s (Figure 37).

Table 13: Responses from students who completed the pre-, mid- and post-COIL assessments (Internet).

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<td>US</td>
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As can be seen in Figure 36 and Figure 37, of those who responded to all three assessments, there was a slightly larger number of males than females and all but one were in their late teens.

Figure 36: Gender of students who replied to the post-COIL assessment (Internet).

Figure 37: Age of students who replied to the post-COIL assessment (Internet).

The data seen in Figure 38, Figure 39, and Figure 40 would seem to indicate that the students in Lebanon dedicated more time to the project than the American students, but this could certainly be skewed by the limited response rate from the US. However, it is interesting to note that the responses to the reflection questions indicate that it was the American students who felt a sense of frustration that considerable time was spent on the exchange but this did not lead to what they saw as significant learning: “I suppose I see that technology is bringing the world’s cultures into one bigger culture, as they were very similar to us. But really that was sort of obvious and didn’t take an entire course and God-knows-how-much-money to learn.” (INT-US-6)
If we look at Figure 41, a majority of the students in both groups report having developed all five of the suggested competences. However, it is hard to assess whether this is actually true from the qualitative data because although more students in Lebanon responded to the survey, their responses were generally vague and did not provide significant insights into learning or intercultural awareness. In general, the students’ reflections were relatively positive but not particularly reflective, as can be seen in the example in Table 14.

**Table 14: Student responses from the ‘Internet’ partnership that are representative of their classmates’ responses.**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Lebanese Student</th>
<th>American Student</th>
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<td>I believe that I have achieved the objectives of this course. In fact, everybody was working on the project with enthusiasm</td>
<td>The most important thing I learned is that even though there is a lot of negatives to the internet, I’m happy to have it because it has</td>
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and at the end, we analysed multiple point of view of the subject. It was interesting because everybody should give his own opinion about the effect of technology on our social life. (INT-LB-2)

helped all of us in some great way. The stories that were shared were very important to some of the people because of the way it affected their lives. (INT-US-16)

Especially in the case of the Lebanese students, it would seem that English language competence could have played a role in how they expressed themselves in the reflection. The lack of in-depth reflection may be related to task design and the types of conversations that took place in the respective classrooms regarding the experience. It is worth pointing out, however, that what may seem like superficial developments in intercultural learning may actually be progress depending on a person’s starting point in terms of intercultural awareness. This comment by one American student highlights this:

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)

For this student, simply becoming aware of how one's own background can impact how they see the world should be considered a first step to becoming more interculturally aware.

Physics

Physics was the only COIL exchange in this cohort that was not carried out primarily in English as it brought together a group of students in the US studying French with students in Morocco studying Physics at Mohammed I where the languages of instruction are French and Arabic. It was also the only one carried out in the summer term. From the response rate to the pre-survey, it appears that the class in Morocco was much larger than the one in the US, 26 to 7, so the response rate for students who completed all three assessments for the class in the US is slightly larger than the Moroccan course even if it is still very few, 3 in the US and 7 in Morocco (Table 15). The shared student learning outcomes for this interdisciplinary COIL exchange were:

- SLO 1: To learn a foreign language using a study of physics phenomena
- SLO 2: To communicate and collaborate to achieve a project where writing and speaking skills language will be developed

There were 3 female and 4 male respondents from Morocco and 2 female and 1 male from the US (Figure 42). Regarding age, both groups had students within the 21-25 range and a few slightly older ones as well (Figure 43).
Table 15: Responses from students who completed the pre-, mid- and post-COIL assessments (Physics).

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<td>US</td>
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Figure 42: Gender of students who replied to the post-COIL assessment (Physics).

Figure 43: Age of students who replied to the post-COIL assessment (Physics).

Figure 44 shows that all but one of the respondents communicated with their peers synchronously, two Moroccan students even more than twice a week during the COIL exchange. From Figure 45 and Figure 46 it would appear that students were engaged in the project with most dedicating two or more hours a week to asynchronous communication and some up to 6+ hours a week spent on COIL.
With regards to competences development (Figure 47), the three respondents from the US indicated having developed all five of the suggested competences. It might be difficult to determine whether these were honest self-assessments or student simply ticking boxes on a survey, but the quantitative data would seem to indicate that there was certainly intercultural and language development as these two reflections indicate:

*Having a better understanding of the culture of my international partners facilitated some discussions about different religious beliefs and also allowed me to clarify some practices of the Muslim religion to friends and family as a result of the connections that I made through the collaboration.* (PHY-US-4)

*I have told my family, friends, and co-workers about this experience, and they all say that it sounds fascinating. Some of them said that they really wish they had experienced something like this while taking a language course. Also, I think this collaboration has deepened my understanding of speaking/writing/reading English as a second (or third) language, which is very important for me because I am working on a degree to become an English teacher, and because I already work as a writing tutor (primarily with ESL students) at [my school].* (PHY-US-5)
And the third American student was one of the few out of all respondents who replied to this question with other competences learned writing: “independent working, and time management”. The Moroccan students also reported having developed many of the competences listed with six out of seven indicating ICC, and 5 out of 7 IC, working in teams (TEAMS) and communicating with speakers of other languages (LANG). Indeed, language was seen by many as a challenge, but also an opportunity to practice the language they are studying (French in the US) and a language they needed during the exchange when communication in French broke down and in life (English in Morocco).

Overall students seem to report the experience in a positive way as can be seen in Table 16 below:

Table 16: Student responses from the ‘French’ partnership that are representative of their classmates’ responses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Moroccan Student</th>
<th>American Student</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cette expérience m'était vraiment intéressante, j’ai parlé de cette expérience avec mes amis et à leur tour ils ont aimé l'idée de faire une collaboration avec des étudiants dérivant d’une autre culture et qui ont un mode de vie différent du nôtre ! à vrai dire j'ai tout aimé dans cette collaboration. (PHY-MA-5)</td>
<td>Being able to discuss the lifestyle and culture in Morocco allowed me to understand both the similarities and differences between our countries. It also gave me the opportunity to learn how our country is perceived in that part of the world which was very interesting. (PHY-US-4)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

At the same time, the student responses also acknowledge some minor difficulties and challenges in communication:

I learned that group work poses the same challenges when it is cross-cultural, cross-continental, and when communicating in languages that neither group is intimately familiar with. My group and I certainly ran into some struggles because of the time difference and because of the language barrier, but we were all patient, kind, and understanding with one another and I think that goes a long way when you all have a common goal. (PHY-US-5)

Though the topic was Physics, students also engaged in interaction and research about a music festival which many of them appreciated and which led to an increased interest and curiosity to learn more on the part of students both in the US and Morocco.

**Podcasts**

The COIL exchange Podcasts brought together two very different courses: an anthropology course in an institution in upstate New York called “Inequality and Human Health” and a
A course at an institution in Cairo, Egypt on Audio Production. There was greater responses from the US students, but within the unfortunately low average for the cohort: 4 (down from 10 in the pre-COIL assessment) in Egypt and 6 (down from 11) in the US (Table 17). This exchange was interdisciplinary and complementary as the Egyptian students were to make podcasts about health issues following research carried out with the American students. The shared student learning outcomes were:

- SLO 1: Demonstrate a greater appreciation and understanding of cultural differences and similarities that exist between Egypt and the United States;
- SLO 2: Demonstrate greater understanding of social issues impacting health in Egypt and the United States as illustrated in a collaborative audio project.

All of the respondents from both groups were female with the exception of one American student who preferred not to indicate gender (Figure 48) and all of the students fell within the age range of late teens and early twenties (Figure 49).

Table 17: Responses from students who completed the pre-, mid- and post-COIL assessments (Podcasts).

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From Figure 50 and Figure 51 it would appear that communication between the students was primarily asynchronous with the exception of two American students who report communicating with their Egyptian peers on a weekly basis. Most students report having spent more than two hours per week on the exchange (Figure 52). One student in each course indicated that their commitment to the course was 6+ hours a week and though we could imagine that these two students were partners but there is no way to know for certain.
In terms of which competences students felt they developed during the COIL project, there were similar responses across the board except for language, i.e. communicating with speakers of other languages, which 4 out of the 6 Americans reported having developed but none of the Egyptians (Figure 53). This seemingly positive indication of learning appeared odd upon an initial reading of the qualitative data for the post-COIL assessment because the students on both sides were very critical of the experience. However, upon deeper reading it appears that despite serious organizational misunderstandings and difficulties communicating, the students felt they had learned something. The researchers were also able to interview one of the teachers and get feedback from the other so there is additional contextual information regarding this COIL exchange. First of all, it was optional in both classes, i.e. the teachers asked for volunteers who worked on COIL in addition to the regular coursework the rest of their classmates were doing. Although both teachers found ways to allow students doing COIL to use that experience for required assignments, participating in the COIL exchange did require extra work on the part of the students who volunteered to participate.
Secondly, despite seemingly good communication between the two teachers, and a solid course design, the teachers did not leave enough time for certain tasks or to make adjustments when a task such as the icebreaker did not work as planned. They also did not calculate the students’ spring breaks so that when students on one side were needing to meet deadlines, their partners on the other side were on vacation. Indeed, most students felt there was too little time and/or that timing was bad. Despite this, some students saw this as a challenge, as a positive learning experience and relevant to their future life in terms of online intercultural collaboration:

_It made learn to work under certain pressures that I would have never dealt with during my regular academic projects. It made me realize that sometimes one is put under a totally new experience and he/she has to deal with. The overseas partner issue was a big deal for me at the beginning. Not being able to physically meet with my partner and plan what we’re supposed to do next was something hard for me to understand._ (POD-EG-7)

Thirdly, related to the previous two factors, many students indicated that what was lacking in the project was time for personal interaction, time to focus on getting to know one another and to better understand one another as opposed to what they experienced which was pressure to get a project done. They felt the COIL exchange was too product-oriented and would have liked to explore culture more. As one Egyptian student explained:

_I believe I was able to achieve one of the two student learning objectives of the program. The COIL program allowed both me and my partner to research together and understand different implications of health related issues in different areas of the world; Egypt and the USA. I do not believe the program gave way to a “realization” of cultural differences and similarities. I’m not sure if this was my own experience only, but I did not experience a distinct cultural interaction in the program. Maybe, there may have been similarities in that we were both interested in producing high quality work, yet the interaction wasn’t very personal._ (POD-EG-2)

Finally, especially on the American side, in the post-COIL assessment there is evidence of increased curiosity on the part of some students, a change in attitudes, the ability to negotiate and respect cultural difference, different ways of working and being, and increased awareness of own culture.

**PPP**

Two professors of finance came together to create the COIL exchange we called PPP because the focus of the shared syllabus was on Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) as can be seen in the SLOs below. The course in the US was Global Financial Markets at an institution was located in New York City and the course in Cairo, Egypt was International Finance. There was
significant overlap in the primary objectives of the local courses so the SLOs aligned quite well with the local syllabi. The shared student learning outcomes were:

- **SLO 1:** Develop an understanding of the Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) as the concept applies to their individual countries (Egypt and the US) and identify the factors that may contribute to the deviation from the PPP theory in Egypt and the US by sharing and reflecting on local factors that may not be included in the PPP calculations.

- **SLO 2:** Develop a better understanding of the determinants of foreign exchange rates in Egypt and the US.

The response rate to all three assessments for the Egyptian course was extremely low, only 3 out of 28 students who replied to the pre-COIL survey and, though low, the response rate for the US course was higher with 8 completing all three assessments out of 19 from the pre-COIL assessment (Table 18). All of the respondents from both groups were female with the exception of one American student who was male (Figure 54) and all of the students fell within the age range of late teens and early twenties (Figure 55) with the exception of one American student who was in their thirties.

**Table 18: Responses from students who completed the pre-, mid- and post-COIL assessments (PPP).**

<p>| | |</p>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The challenges resulting from trying to assess a COIL exchange based on very few replies on one side of the partnership are evidenced in Figure 56 where the Egyptian students say they had no synchronous communication with their US peers whereas all of the US students indicated there had been some with one student reported having spent 2+ hours a week communicating synchronously. There is no way to know from the data whether the three Egyptian students were an exception to the rule in their class or if students might have been
interpreting or understanding the question differently. There was more normal distribution with students in the responses regarding how often students communicated asynchronously with students reporting spending from one to two hours a week doing so (Figure 57). Students’ answers regarding how much time they spent per week on COIL vary significantly from some reporting spending very little time on the project (0-1 hours per week) to those spending a lot of time (6+ hours) (Figure 58). Again it is difficult to determine whether indeed there was a significant difference in time commitment or whether students simply understood the question differently. Unfortunately, the qualitative data does not offer much insight into understanding these discrepancies.

There is more equal distribution in students’ responses to the question about competences developed with a majority of respondents indicating they felt they had developed IC, ICC, DIG.
LIT, and TEAMS. The only difference was that the US students indicated having developed the ability to communicate with non-native speakers of English (Figure 59).

The most striking aspect of the qualitative data is how much students, in their responses to the reflection questions, focused on the course content the main project they were carrying out together. Their evaluation of success or difficulty of the exchange was generally in terms of how much they were managing to get their project done, where moving forward with the project meant a positive evaluation of the COIL exchange. Although this can be considered a positive outcome in terms of the SLOs, it seems to have meant little time was dedicated to simply getting to know one another and one another’s culture: “The communication was strictly about the project instead of trying to talk more about our culture.” (PPP-US-110)

Indeed, as regards intercultural issues - hardly any respondents reported any change in views or perceptions of other cultures, and in terms of intercultural awareness it was very much along the lines of highlighting similarities. This may also in part due to the fact that the Egyptian students are at an American University and so have exposure to US culture, teaching approaches, etc. What is not clear is to what extent the US students are aware of this since none mentioned it. This might be an indication of a lack of deep engagement and interaction on intercultural, social and political issues, which might have provided more information regarding the determinants of foreign exchange rates in the two countries (SLO 2).

The primary negative reflections came primarily from the US students who mentioned it being difficult to communicate with their Egyptian peers, which made carrying out the project more challenging and stressful. Students also complained about limitations with the learning management system they were using, but were creative in finding alternative solutions they found more manageable such as Whatsapp or Messenger.

The overall evaluation of the COIL experience on both sides was positive and they found it to be a unique experience. A few mentioned the relevance to real life and being able to apply what they learnt and gaining a more global perspective on financial issues. One student from the US said that they would consider doing an internship abroad after this experience, and believes the COIL experience should be repeated.

**RIGHTS**

The COIL exchange we called Rights was the only one that lasted the entire semester in both classes since there was nearly perfect overlap in academic calendars and very similar syllabi. The US course at an institution in New York City was on Human Rights and the course at a private institution in Lebanon was an Introduction to World Affairs. The shared SLOs that guided the 14-week long COIL exchange were:
● SLO 1: To develop critical insights drawing from diverse approaches to international politics and apply these in analyzing contemporary and emerging trends in world affairs with a focus on Human Rights
● SLO 2: To develop the capacity for critical thinking and writing in ways that reflect a deep understanding of the complex challenges and the various options for approaching and addressing them.
● SLO 3: To analyze trends in contemporary world affairs in relation to actions of key actors, and analyze how democratization, globalization, culture, conflict, and peace connect with, and impact the Human Rights across the world.

The response rate to all three assessments for both courses was just under 50% for the Lebanese students and 70% for the US students. The respondents from the Lebanese group were mixed with 5 female, 6 male and 1 student who preferred not to indicate gender, whereas the US group was predominantly female with only 2 male students (Figure 60). Most of the students fell within the age range of late teens and early twenties (Figure 61) with the exception of two Lebanese students in their late twenties and one American student in their thirties.

Table 19: Responses from students who completed the pre-, mid- and post-COIL assessments (Rights).

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lebanon</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

![Figure 60: Gender of students who replied to the post-COIL assessment (Rights).](image1)

![Figure 61: Age of students who replied to the post-COIL assessment (Rights).](image2)

The exchange appears to be based on asynchronous communication as the majority of students in both groups of respondents report having communicated asynchronously 1 hour a week throughout the semester (Figure 63) and several students in both groups report having never engaged in synchronous communication with their international peers (Figure
It is unclear from the data available why some students report greater synchronous communication and what the purpose of such interactions were.

With the exception of 4 students from the group in Lebanon who report having spent 0-1 hours a week on the COIL project, most report having spent 2 or more hours a week with 5 US students reporting 4 or more (Figure 64). It would appear, therefore, that students spent more time working on and preparing for the project with their international partners than they did engaging with them online.

The two skills that the majority of students in both groups report having acquired the most are intercultural competence and intercultural communicative competence (Figure 65). Students from the group in the US felt they had also acquired digital literacy skills and the ability to work in teams whereas a smaller number of students from the group in Lebanon felt this was the case for them. It is also worth noting that only about half the students in each
group felt the COIL experience had contributed to developing their ability to communicate with speakers of other languages. This may, in part, be due to the type of interaction they had, i.e. geared towards completing a task.

As far as the qualitative data is concerned, overall the experience seemed to have had a significant impact on the American students. For example, a student who appears to not be American but a student from the Caribbean who is now living and studying in the US provided this response in the mid-COIL assessment:

_I was shell shocked by what I have learnt in my course so far. In my culture America has always been the hero and can do no wrong. I have not known much about my partner’s country except for the basic news reports I heard. I was open minded but also I think I could have been a bit tainted since I have been living in the USA for a few years. [...] This course has made me think critically about the story I am told. I have also learned to try to get the a second version of the story. A version that is not from the western world which only represents our interpretations (RIG-US-6)_

Or from this student who clearly grew up in the US.

_Being from America and taking actual American history courses since I was in middle school it amazes me how I have learned so much more in my short time in this class. It’s really great to hear students from other countries and their perceptions of things because they sometimes differ tremendously. (RIG-US-12)_

Although several of the other responses from US students are not quite as reflective as these, students still report feeling that they have learned to challenge stereotypes and see things from new perspectives.

Overall the Lebanese respondents were positive as well, most recommending the COIL exchange be implemented in other courses and with students from other countries as ell, e.g. “They [the institution] should even broaden their connection, not just with the Americans but with people from all around the world or a country from each continent.” (RIG-LB-3) That said, their responses were more tepid using expressions like “a fair experience” (RIG-LB-12) and comments such as “It was challenge I admit it is not easy to interact with foreign people” (RIG-LB-18). They also seemed more acutely aware of the importance of being careful about how you express your thoughts and opinions, especially on social media, Facebook being one of the primary tools used in the course: “During the COIL-program, some students must be aware on what to put, or edit, or write on social medias (especially Facebook), since sometimes social media could be a threat & could be harmful to individuals” (RIG-LB-12) And while some students felt it was a unique experience offering them the opportunity to learn from students in the US, others felt it was not exceptional: “I didn’t explore further any thing because they have there own culture and though and we can not be similar any time because each one of us has there own background.” (RIG-LB-24)
However, this last response highlights another aspect that emerged from the responses from this group: an acute awareness of difference, accepting it, respecting it and appreciating the opportunity to learn about it, but certainly not arriving at the conclusion that we are all the same. “It seems that we always have the wrong images about others and sometimes it’s a bad one, I’m happy that our imaginations gone wrong and that was proven! Everyone is great their own way” (RIG-LB11). Finally, several students indicated that the COIL experience had inspired them to go out into the community and act on what they’d learned:

“with this Interaction I learned a lot about them and this definitely as I mentioned before changed the way I perceived the world and the problems and human rights all around me and this made me motivated to act and try to change the world and that even if we have different background, we all fight for the same human rights” (RIG-LB-22).

Undoubtedly the subjects of the two courses, i.e. human rights, lent themselves to COIL and this partnership had the advantage of lasting nearly the entire duration of both semesters.
### Appendix 2: Themes and Codes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Sample extract</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>learning from people</td>
<td>references to learning from other people/students as opposed to media, internet</td>
<td>I want to connect and learn from people I don't interact with everyday. I also have a desire to see the affect media in other countries have on its citizens and if it is more or less the same as our own country.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>challenge stereotypes</td>
<td>explicitly or implicitly make reference to challenging stereotypes</td>
<td>Since it's not only a strict group that is all about studies we got to know each other pretty close and that cleared out many things about the &quot; other culture&quot; that has always been mediated to us and we've rarely got the chance to learn about it by ourselves.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>learn how others view us</td>
<td>learning about how own culture is viewed by others</td>
<td>he way I see and understand the world has always been the same. Same scenery, it almost feels like an expected outcome. The way us Americans live compared to how the Moroccans live are very different. I’m looking forward to discovering what they think of the world and America. Hopefully they don’t think we are a bad place.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>knowledge</td>
<td>acquiring knowledge about something</td>
<td>Honestly speaking, My knowledge about other cultures of the world is limited, I hope that after connecting with students from another countries, I will get the chance to know more about the western world.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>subject content</td>
<td>makes reference to course content</td>
<td>Because of the information I received from participating with our partner in the first step, I now know the prices of 16 products that are available in the USA and in Egypt. I also know whether the products are overvalued or undervalued and by what percentage they are under or over valued.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>acquire competences/</td>
<td>learning new skills/competences (rather than knowledge)</td>
<td>Well, the thing that surprises me the most about this experience is that it constantly makes me learn new things about different areas. In other words, I learned how to work with a partner in a different country with 21st Century Skills</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
for example how to communicate online with speakers of other languages, collaboration and teamwork, digital competences extreme time zone differences. I also learned to work independently. Although our professor was monitoring us, yet due to the fact that not all of the class is doing this project, it's not always discussed in class like other course material topics. I also learned that I should be more open to deal with people of different backgrounds.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Change</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Sample extract</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>not so different</td>
<td>Observations from students mid or post that their peers are more similar than they had expected.</td>
<td>We kind of have the same point of views toward certain things to a certain extent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>respect difference</td>
<td>when specifically mentions respecting difference</td>
<td>We had to take into consideration our cultural background, yet we were able to accept other's point of views and we're open to accept more and more even if it's completely different than ours.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>change</td>
<td>self-reported change in perspective/opinion..</td>
<td>It has definitely expanded my outlook on things. I’m more open to hearing what they have to say and really get to understand that there are many sides to every story.  86 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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>not much change</td>
<td>Students who feel that the project didn't change their views about other culture or their mindset much (often because they already knew a lot they say)</td>
<td>What has surprised me is that the whole experience has been less eye-opening than I had assumed it would be.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### personal growth

Type of change which reflects personal growth

*I actually enjoyed the COIL experience, although it was indeed stressful at times. It was nice to get to experience what it would be like to work with someone who wasn’t close to you, or someone you actually knew. It was an experience that taught me how to be able to accept new challenges; that no matter what I thought I was accustomed to, there is still a lot of experiences I can yet go through.*

### increased curiosity

Desire to travel, to further explore topics that came up in the conversations, to get to know other cultures better

*Not much has surprised me yet about the COIL experience, I would love to travel to Morocco if I ever had the chance, so I guess this experience has opened that idea into my head.*

**OR**

*I want to learn more about Moroccan culture, language and history. I think being able to understand Arabic a bit more would connect me with more of the world. The relationship of the French language to Morocco is also something that deserves further exploration. I’m interested researching feminism and gender politics in modern Morocco, too, and the ways in which people from the United States are portrayed by other countries.*

### Challenges

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Sample extract</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>lack of communication</td>
<td>Frustration expressed at lack of or limited communication with peers</td>
<td><em>I don’t no believe that I achieved the learning objectives of this course, the communication between students were very weak.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>digital</td>
<td>Issues regarding the technology used</td>
<td><em>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!</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Yes and no. I have learned a lot, especially in reference to the college culture in Egypt, however, I did not learn as much as I had expected. There was not that much time to discuss these topics with my partner since, due to the time difference, each time we interacted it was only about the project. I did learn about social issues impacting health in Egypt, however, my partner did not provide as much information about this as I wanted her to. It was difficult to delve into the specifics and complex topics.

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!

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.

Usually it is a mess dealing with another group on social media and from a different country. But actually all is good, we’re always on time, we’re interested in the subject and out teachers are willing to give more and more which makes the best part of it.

I was surprised at how much I enjoyed this experience. When the professor first told us about the COIL I thought it would be more of a nuisance because we
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>social experience</th>
<th>Getting to know people, developing a community ('we’ COIL group), joint purpose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>unique experience</td>
<td>Reference to COIL as something new, never done before and unique</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>class more interesting</td>
<td>Reference to COIL making the class more interesting</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

would have more work, but I actually really enjoyed the entire experience and would suggest it to others. The project definitely opened my eyes to a new culture in a different way. The class was fun since it was completely different from all the other group project I had at FIT. It was exciting to work with someone from a different country and complete a whole project together. I not only got to learn more about economics/global finance but also about a different culture.

I’ve always been more immersed within the American culture rather than ours due to my constant use of the internet, but I can say that this connection with the other students has given me a chance to be more involved and active and I almost feel like we’ve built our own little community which is nice.

This coil experience is certainly Unprecedented, at least in my life. it has been a pleasure to work with students who are English native speakers. I got to learn a lot of new vocabulary from them as well as how they deconstruct ads. in a nutshell, I am really thrilled to be part of this project.

The course is much more interesting this way. Pupils from both universities get exposed to new cultures. It's interesting to know how the prices of products differ between Egypt and USAA. Also, we have discovered several products that are not available in either country but is available in the other. Thus, this collaboration has really added depth to the course.

Well my cultural background have had a very big impact on the way I interpret the course content. I was shell shocked by what I have learnt in my course so far. In my culture America has always been the hero and can do no wrong. I have not known much about my partner’s country except for the basic news reports I heard. I was open minded but also I think I could have been a bit tainted since I have been living in the USA for a few years.