2018 COIL CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

Writings on COIL courses, programs, and projects from session presenters and contributors
2018 SUNY COIL Conference
March 16 – 17, 2018
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The COIL Conference depends on the enthusiasm and interest of teachers and professors from around SUNY and the world who attend the COIL Conference to share their teaching programs and meet new teaching partners. The conference presenters, manuscript authors, and attendees make this event possible and we thank you for making COIL a part of your students’ learning experiences.
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Identification of the need for a nursing view/perspective in the construction of an Assisted Living facility in the United States: A Case Study from the COIL NCC-UASLP in Nursing & Construction

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Abstract

Purpose: This case study focused on faculty from SUNY, Nassau Community College Nursing in Garden City, New York, and faculty from HABITAT-UASLP, Autonomous Universidad San Luis Potosi, Mexico offering a globally-networked course that included students in nursing & construction. The 2016 and 2017 new courses explored and reflected on intercultural communication competencies.

Method: The construction student’s assignment: *The Project Evaluation of a Retirement Home for Older Adults (Assisted Living)* included the selection of a construction site using the topography and demographics of the area. The nursing student's assignment was an ‘*Older Adult Interview*’ that fostered therapeutic communication. An additional question was included in the original instructions; “If you had to live in an assisted living facility, what you would want to see or be there?” Using non-traditional learning tools and face to face discussions, students explored the individual needs and concerns of each older adult as they thought about transitioning into an Assisted Living Facility.

Results: The final results showed the course objectives were met with this collaborative project. Nursing students integrated their experiences with older adults using critical thinking to identify health problems and comprehensive patient assessments. The construction students designed the methodology and criteria for evaluation of their project to determine the technical profitability of a new building system. This group of students gained a diverse intercultural experience from this COIL course that will influence their perspective of global multidisciplinary interactions.
Courses Involved in Fall 2017

Fundamentals of Nursing 101 at Nassau Community College, State University of New York (SUNY). This course provides nursing students with the necessary skills and core competencies to utilize the nursing process. This facilitates critical thinking and identification of health problems allowing for implementation of comprehensive patient care in the medical-surgical setting. The student integrates theory, skills, psychology, and physiology to provide nursing care for the older adult.

Technical Evaluation of Projects at Habitat from Autonomous University of San Luis Potosi. This course will provide the methodology and criteria to evaluate projects to determine the technical profitability, the ability to design, and use specific systems and processes that respond to technical and administrative challenges that occur in all types of building construction.

Objectives

The COIL course objectives were to appreciate similarities and differences between both disciplines (construction and nursing) while working together to complete a project. They explored their own discipline’s ability to be creative, ingenious, careful, and protective using the lens of their international partner. This was evident in the intercultural communication competencies (verbal and nonverbal) for understanding complex projects using the other disciplines language when making request or suggestions.
Students Involved

Professor. Joan Buckley’s NUR101 team consisted of students in their first semester of nursing. In fall 2016, there were 32 nursing students and fall 2017, there were 33 nursing students.

Professor Alma Cataño’s construction team consisted of students in the seventh semester of their academic program of UASLP’s Building and Management of Construction. In the Fall 2016 experience, the team consisted of 26 UASLP students and in Fall 2017 experience, there were only eight UASLP students.

Fall 2016 and Fall 2017 COIL experience:

In 2016, the COIL project involved the same two courses with a plan to construct a virtual hospital located on Long Island. That project resulted in students developing a complex understanding of each other’s profession. The student's efforts in understanding the need for, and benefits of a multidisciplinary approach were remarkable and the cooperation between the teams became the highest priority.

Fall 2017 was the first time student team leaders were assigned and the project focused more on the needs of the individuals that would live there, rather than the technical aspects. Both
groups of students took advantage of that component. Discussions revolved around how the rooms and grounds would be used and why specific equipment would be needed. The construction student was responsible for making sure that certain physical requirements in the construction allowed for the accommodations. The construction students needed made their approach that improved technical solutions for the creation of a physically and psychologically safe environment for the residents, as well as maintaining or improving their quality of life and health.

**Issues of Language**

The 2016 version of COIL course was taught in English. At NCC most of the students have English as their primary language while some of the students, because of family members speaking Spanish, were able to engage fluently, which benefited the communication process. One of the requirements of the UASLP course included speaking and reading in English. Their ability to communicate in another language enhanced the team’s cohesiveness.

The 2017 version of COIL course was planned to be taught in English, however, as far as the UASLP students, most of them had not completed the English education as a second language requirement. The NCC students needed to improve their Spanish speaking skills in preparation for the cultural diversity of their community that resulted in the course being taught in both languages with the support of the students with better language skills and the use of online translators. The language barrier was not a barrier at all but a true learning experience for everyone involved. The creativity and enthusiasm of students on both campuses were able to communicate and support the content and their ideas/opinions without any difficulty.

**Academic Support**
Both courses are part of the curriculum of academic programs that were designed for a classroom setting. At NCC, Professor Buckley used a Blackboard (BB) platform to support and present the content of NUR101. A request was made to the NCC Distant Education department to provide a platform that would be available for the UASLP students. This course was aligned to satisfy the UASLP faculty and contained all paperwork from the course including weekly work, discussion board, and grade book.

All tools were available to both faculty and the NCC nursing students had a link on their NCC course established. At the same time, a private group was established using the social media platform, Facebook (FB), specifically for the non-academic part of communication. The discussion forum on FB provided an area where students could share images from their assignments, diagrams, and explanations of the progress that they were making in the buildings construction.

Videos were posted regarding the older adults and often there were comments and voices of the older adults heard by the students. One nursing student’s older adult interview had a wonderful monolog on aging. There were gardens, computers services, Bocce ball courts, and family rooms. Research conducted by students showed how older adults needed activity and so a pool was then included in the plan. Research articles on nutrition, social life, spirituality were included in some way in the construction of the this quality home for Nassau County residents.

The cost factor along with the cultural significance of a family member being taken care of by strangers, brought a very stimulating conversation to what became the last synchronous class. This class was student orchestrated and faculty spoke very little, if at all. The asynchronous technology was used for all written assignments. The USALP team had some difficulty using all
the features of the BB and FB became another place for their work to be deposited on time. Understandably, it was due to the English language formatting of BB.

For each unit in the two courses, synchronous sessions were planned using Skype technology, and all sessions had small technical issues that were solved creatively by the students using FB and smart phones to finish each activity. The different time zones created minor issues. Whether technical problems were caused by the internet speed or bandwidth was something that was never determined. What was known is that these small issues motivated both teams to explore other channels of communication.

**Content and Evaluation**

Professor Buckley and Professor Cataño assessed their classes independently from one another, with the activities for the collaborative course established in advance. Some activities needed to be observed by both faculty members and were posted on BB or FB (maps and videos). There was no formal rubric created for common academic assessment but informal observation of students was ongoing and discussed on a weekly basis. Since the institutions have different grading expectations, the formal evaluations were done by the individual faculty member.

The final project for both classes was to participate in a teaching activity. Nursing students made videos that taught emergency skills including: a neurological exam if there was a head injury on a construction site. Vital signs were demonstrated and the construction students had to do a ‘return demonstration’. This was done on the FB platform with comments (likes vs dislike) recorded.
Photos 02 to 05. Cataño TEP Team. Nursing vital signs dynamic. Fall 2017
Summary

The Mexican and United States Embassy support was instrumental in allowing Professor Cataño to travel to NCC-SUNY making the connection a real one for the nursing students. The hope is that in the future Professor Buckley will have the opportunity to travel to HABITAT-UASLP and made the collaboration real for the UASLP students. COIL collaboration has enormously enriched both of these courses. It was a pedagogical tool for both students and professors that embraced the differences between these two disciplines and cultures.

Nursing students learned more about the influence of project building requirements and the influence it has on quality care and health outcomes. The construction students were able to understand the value of their technical work by connecting the needs of a real people as they aged and became more dependant. All of the students from the discipline of construction and the discipline of nursing have gained confidence in their ability to provide for whatever group of people that they will serve in the future in there own, very different professions.
Two-way Conversations on Business Management in the U.S. and Mexico

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Abstract

This paper summarizes the experience we had in a collaborative project between the University of Richmond, USA and the Tecnologico de Monterrey, Mexico. Each professor taught a similar subject and decided to enrich the class by having contact with people from a different country. The courses were Business Culture in the USA and Business Communication in Mexico. Professors designed interactive Skype sessions to discuss Business Culture Topics based upon readings and videos previously assigned to students from both classes. It will be noticed that students helped each other in their language skills to design their oral presentations and final written projects. Readers will see that at the end of the project, results showed that students from both universities were able to understand cultural differences business people have to accept before attempting to make a business deal.

Keywords: collaborative projects, online communication and online learning.
Two-way conversations on Business Management in the U.S. and Mexico

The University of Richmond, Virginia follows an interdisciplinary approach that integrates arts and sciences with business and leadership studies. Thus, students who are enrolled in Language and Culture Courses who have not been able to travel to a Spanish speaking country are looking forward to contacting Mexican students and getting to know their cultural traditions, especially their behavior when doing Business.

On the other hand, Mexican undergraduate students are required to reach an upper-intermediate level in the English language as a graduation requirement. However, not all of them have had an international experience that helps them reach this goal. Besides, the opportunities to be on an English speaking environment are scarce. Tecnologico de Monterrey is a private, non-profit, independent institution with no political and religious affiliations located at Monterrey, Mexico. Students from the undergraduate programs such as engineering, business, communication, medicine, law, etc. need to have an international experience once they are able to master the English language. Having an American University as a partner provides a great forum for students to have an international experience at home. Additionally, online learning is said to be more cost effective and convenient than traditional educational environments (Richardson and Swan, 2003).

The professor from Business School at the University of Richmond and the professor from the English Language Program at Tecnologico de Monterrey decided to optimize resources and through the COIL (Center for Online International Learning) program in order to work together in a win-win partnership. Besides the fact that nowadays, colleges and universities across the United States and the world are increasingly offering online learning opportunities for students (Smallwood and Brunner, 2017).
The Courses for This Project

As part of the objectives of the Business Culture class, students are able to compare and contrast culture and reflect upon their own context and how it influences their lifestyle and their personal and professional decisions they make. They are also given case studies in order to solve them in accordance with ethics.

The objectives of the Business Communication course are similar to the Business Culture course in the sense that students are learning not only the English language, but also the culture that English speakers reflect. This enables students to be internationally competitive by fostering their personal, ethical and humanistic development.

Having said that, one can notice that both courses share common areas and their objectives match. That is why the partnership looked feasible.

Participants

There were eight American University students participating in the joint project. These students were over 20 years old who have working experience. While there were 16 Mexican University students who did not have a working experience because most of them were under 20 years old. Neither the American nor the Mexican students have visited Mexico or the United States for more than a week, only as a tourist. Americans were studying Spanish as a foreign language as Mexicans were studying English as a foreign language.

Designing Activities

Before the semester started, professors shared the content of the program to design common assignments. According to McPherson (2004) the course development team should
conceive, define and design relevant teaching and learning activities which will be supported by the online environment. In this particular case, students have to interact live with their partners and be able to describe, discuss and design assignments together in order to have a common product.

The first activity that both teachers decided was an icebreaker activity through a skype session where students met each other for the first time, they were introduced to their teammates (one American and two Mexicans). They talked about their major, hobbies and why they had decided to take this course. Skype was selected because it is a free of charge and interactive technological tool that teachers can easily use in the classroom (Eaton, 2010).

For the second skype session, American and Mexican students were asked to read a book about stereotypes before coming to class. This activity was an ice-breaker and was meant to build confidence on both groups. They talked about stereotypes that Americans had about Mexicans and the other way back. It represented a challenging activity because at first, nobody wanted to say anything, but the Mexican professor engaged students by saying that Mexicans do not only eat tacos as neither Americans eat only hamburgers. After that, students felt relaxed and started to share other stereotypes regarding physical appearance, behavior, traditions and the like. Students were asked to write a report about their findings considering how they felt during the session, what were some topics that interested them the most, the conclusions regarding the perspective after all the analysis in both cultures.

For the final session, students needed to work in an asynchronous way, the first cultural challenge was that some American students did not want to share their personal information or social networks, but they found ways to work towards their final project. In the last Skype sessions students solved an ethical dilemma and share ways of working together considering both cultures to come to Business Agreements. To mention one example, American students learned that in
Mexico before closing a deal, business people need to socialize and Mexicans also learned that Americans want to hear a straightforward answer first and details can complement the answer later on.

**Evaluation of Assignments and Final Project**

Assignments were evaluated by each teacher. However, in the skype sessions, or in the platform, American and Mexican students asked any of the professors directly so one can say that it was a team-teaching model since both professors were involved in the design of the common areas of the course.

**Students’ Experience**

American students reported that it was difficult at the beginning of the semester because they did not know what to expect but as the semester went on they were able to handle the Spanish language and started to get to know their Mexican partners. They also reported that some Mexican students did not turn in their work on time at the beginning of the semester but as they were getting to know each other they started to engage actively in common tasks. They were glad they were able to have an authentic and real experience and the distance was not an issue.

Mexican students reported that at the beginning of the semester they felt embarrassed when speaking or writing in English to their American partner but later, they realized that they were in the same boat as they both were foreign language learners. They also had the stereotype that Americans did not want to talk about themselves but later in the semester they were able to share hobbies and even became friends. They were also grateful they had had this real experience with American people pursuing a common goal,
Conclusions

This has been a very enriching experience for several reasons. First, because two professors from different universities were able to build a course with a common goal. Second, because American and Mexican students got to know each other and were able to push through a final project despite their cultural differences since they worked together pointing out common areas. Third, according to results, we can see that students can become classmates even though they have barriers to overcome such as distance, cultural differences and native languages.
Works Cited


Connecting Early Childhood Students and Faculty from the Caribbean and United States through COIL: Successes, Challenges and Opportunities

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Abstract

This paper describes the process behind the development of a collaboration between faculty in early childhood education from SUNY Empire State College and The University of the West Indies Open Campus. The authors explain the steps taken towards the development of an online course connecting students from across the Caribbean and the United States to learn about early childhood education curriculum models. The importance of in-country experiences for both faculty and students, as well as the challenges, successes, and opportunities inherent in cross-cultural collaborations are explored.
Introduction

In 2015, administrators from SUNY Empire State College (ESC) and The University of the West Indies (UWI) began preliminary discussions to explore collaborative opportunities between the two institutions. Administrators from both institutions attended meetings at the SUNY Global Center in New York City to discuss UWI-SUNY Partnerships. Nursing, Human Services/Social Work, Early Childhood, Labor Studies, Graduate Studies, and Prior Learning Assessment were identified as areas for potential partnerships and faculty teams were convened to explore these possibilities. The collaboration brought together three faculty, Desalyn De-Souza and Tracy Galuski from ESC and Ceceile Minott from UWI Open Campus, to form the Early Childhood (EC) team.

The EC team began meeting via Skype to generate ideas for collaboration that would enrich the student and faculty experience within and outside of the home institution. The team looked at this partnership as a project with a range of both short and long-term components. The team identified ideas related to online course development, coursework leading to professional credentials and early childhood workforce development, collaborative research projects, and faculty and student residency experiences. Because of the interesting and relevant cross-cultural application, the EC team chose to develop an online course on the topic of curriculum models in early childhood education.

In order to bring together students and faculty from different cultures into one online course, the EC team explored the SUNY Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) model. Team members participated in the 2016 COIL Fall Academy, an eight-week online program that provides hands-on activities and guides faculty through the process of developing
their own online course (SUNY Center for Collaborative Online International Learning, n.d.). By the close of the eight-week COIL program, the EC team had developed a first draft of the course description, student learning outcomes, learning activities, and syllabus for the course.

Nearly two years into this collaboration and the EC team had worked entirely at a distance, meeting through Skype and sharing documents electronically. Each spring ESC hosts an Early Childhood Residency in consultation with the Strong Museum of Play in Rochester, NY. Utilizing this as an opportunity for UWI faculty to experience the residency model, the EC team met in Rochester in spring 2017 for their first face-to-face encounter. Subsequently, the EC team met for two additional days after the residency to continue developing the online course. The team created content for the proposed course modules, shared rubrics, and discussed a timeline for piloting the course. The team left the meeting with information to submit to their respective curriculum committees and further ideas for future collaborative projects.

In fall 2017, faculty from ESC were invited to Jamaica to attend and present at the Early Childhood Development Conference hosted by the Dudley Grant Memorial Trust in collaboration with the UWI Caribbean Child Development Center, Open Campus and School of Education, and Mona Campus. Conference attendees included classroom teachers, program inspectors, administrators, and higher education faculty from across the Caribbean. Faculty from ESC presented sessions on the topics of quality early childhood environments and using environmental rating scales to make quality improvements. Prior to the conference, ESC faculty toured six early childhood schools in the cities of Kingston and Montego Bay. The schools represented a range of programs including government funded and private pay, rural and urban, high enrollment programs (serving over 100 children) and programs with as few as two
classrooms. Site visits were instrumental in better understanding cultural contexts and tailoring conference presentations to the audience. As the early childhood system in Jamaica is currently working towards licensing all schools on the island, this experience was a rich opportunity for cross-cultural discussions around quality.

**Challenges and Successes with Online Course Development**

Developing an online course created a number of challenges. In the early stages, approval of the course description had to be approved by both institutions. This proved to be challenging as each institution evaluated the course and situated it differently within their curriculum. Any proposed changes made by one institution had to be reviewed by the other institution. Eventually both institutions agreed on the course description and that it would be offered as a recurring collaborative course each spring term, with an opportunity to offer it independently, as appropriate.

Since both institutions use a different online learning management system, the next challenge was determining how the course would be developed and offered, followed by who could provide resources such as technical support. The faculty were experienced with course development, but there were substantial discussions around workload expectations for students, student engagement, and rubrics for grading. Face-to-face conversations around these topics were helpful, and the final course offered a blend of content from both institutions. Once the course was ready to be offered, the team had challenges related to the different term schedules, getting students registered, and how to get students from both institutions access to the course.

Despite the challenges with course development, the team encountered significant success. The online course is developed (refer to Table 1 for an overview of the course content) and it can
be poured and reused year after year. Different faculty can also participate in co-teaching the course from term to term, which broadens the projects and experiences for students. While the initial conversations and development took a substantial amount of time and effort, faculty will be able to use the course for years to come, eventually including a range of faculty from both institutions.

**Challenges and Successes with the Collaboration**

Reflecting on the overall collaboration, there are a number of successes. The most important one thus far is the wonderful relationship that exists within the EC group. Through this relationship, we have and continue to develop ideas on a range of early childhood topics with intentions of expanding on those ideas in the future. We have been able to learn more about early childhood initiatives in each other’s countries by visiting the early childhood schools and meeting with various stakeholders in each country. We now have a better understanding of the early childhood structure in both countries. As we broaden our own knowledge base, we will be able to add depth and richness to our teaching and interactions with current students (Alkarzon, 2016). The current collaborative online course is an example of this.

Through this partnership, we have expanded our networks internationally and broadened our perspectives. As we grow our collaborative efforts, we plan to extend opportunities such as those mentioned above to the other early childhood faculty members at both institutions. We have also increased the potential for collaborative scholarly opportunities around research and publication.

With any successful project, there are always some challenges along the way. The lack of funding has been the biggest obstacle identified by the EC team and this has hampered the ability to develop the range of project ideas. As one is aware, it is difficult to develop ideas without
adequate funding and identifying viable funding sources has been a great challenge for the EC team. ESC and UWI Open Campus have supported our ideas in the past and enabled us to visit each other while developing the partnership and the course. They will continue to assist with funding as they are able to.

Another challenge is that the EC team has a large work portfolio and the ESC-UWI partnership is a very small aspect of that workload. The team is continuously trying to find time dedicated to developing the range of collaborative ideas despite the existing workload. It is very important that the team have the support of both institutions for this collaboration as it is the individuals on the team that are responsible for the logistics (travel arrangements, site coordination, supervision of students) of faculty and student exchanges.

**Opportunities and Next Steps**

Success encountered at both the course and project level has allowed for future opportunities to expand upon the collaboration. To enrich the curriculum with cross-cultural experiences, the team has discussed the possibility of incorporating in-country field work for students. Experiential and applied learning through observation and site visits are remarkable ways to learn about cultural contexts and the discipline of early childhood firsthand. Building in-country experiences for students also leads to faculty exchange initiatives such as guest lectures and collaborative research projects that focus on cross-cultural comparisons (Alkarzon, 2016). Ultimately, this means students and faculty are introduced to a larger network of peers and colleagues and exposed to a range of ideas (Bell et al., 2015). With ESC serving the state of New York at over 30 locations and UWI Open Campus serving 17 countries in the Caribbean at over 50 locations, the opportunity for an immense and rich cross-cultural network of students and faculty in which to exchange knowledge and innovative learning experiences is tremendous.
Although we have been developing relationships and building a partnership for over three years, our work is still in the infancy stage and there are many barriers yet to overcome. The following are recommendations relevant to this case and partnerships in general that we have learned along the way:

1. Not every collaborative opportunity or partnership that presents itself is necessarily a good idea. Engage in preliminary discussions, become informed and be selective. In other words, find the right people and the right project at the right time. Doing so will help the team persevere through more challenging times that will inevitably arise at some point.

2. Recognize that any successful collaboration takes time. It is important to establish clearly defined goals and a realistic timeline (Ray, Muniz-Solari, & Solem, 2012). Setbacks and challenges are inevitable so do not get discouraged; keep at it and pace yourself.

3. Become aware of the institutional infrastructure and resources available to support the work of the partnership. What offices, departments, and staff are available to coordinate these efforts? Develop a budget and identify potential funding sources to meet short term and long range plans. Who at your institution has expertise in international student and faculty affairs that could prove useful to the collaboration? Determine if these services are available to the project.

4. Network with colleagues who have had long established and successful cross-cultural collaborations. Learn from their challenges in order to maximize successes.

Challenges are probable with any collaboration and there was no shortage of them in this case. It would have been far too easy to give up on the course and the collaboration when each challenge presented itself. However, upon reflection, there are several reasons for the team’s perseverance.
From the very first meeting via Skype, we embarked on the construction of a collegial relationship. Grounded in a shared vision, agreed upon goals, and passion for the work, the team flourished. Finding the time to meet on a regular basis in the early stages of a collaboration and connecting through a videoconferencing tool given the geographic distance between team members, are key aspects of building a relationship. By the time the team had our first face-to-face meeting we were comfortable with one another and had an established working relationship. The face-to-face meeting served to enhance and build upon the relationship established at a distance. The EC team has learned a tremendous amount from the range of experiences encountered throughout this partnership and remains focused on the opportunities and next steps that lie ahead.
Works Cited


## Appendix

*Curriculum Models in Early Childhood Education Course Content*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Module</th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Assignments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>3 weeks</td>
<td>Introduction, Culture, and Core Themes</td>
<td>Informal icebreaker discussion, written assignment, group discussion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>3 weeks</td>
<td>The American Experience</td>
<td>Written assignment, group discussion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>3 weeks</td>
<td>European Approaches</td>
<td>Group PowerPoint presentation, peer feedback on presentation slides, group discussion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>3 weeks</td>
<td>The Caribbean Way</td>
<td>Group PowerPoint presentation, group discussion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>3 weeks</td>
<td>Final Project and Final Course Reflections</td>
<td>Written assignment, group discussion, reflection journal.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Bilingual Learning and the Gradual Immersion Technique

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Abstract

Bilingual courses can contribute to both the acquisition of scientific knowledge and the enhancement of language skills, and offer excellent prospects for employability. Moreover, they attract as well students from other countries. This paper presents and discusses good practices, methods and challenges faced in the teaching and learning process of the (bilingual, English) course Political Communication, within the Faculty of Social Sciences, Murcia State University. We develop and assess a simple but effective technique that we have coined “gradual immersion”. It consists of a gradual increase in the use of English in the various dynamics and processes of the learning process. We describe and analyze strategies and good practices, which we have adopted gradually during the semester, in accordance with the difficulties encountered, the feedback and responsiveness of the students. Finally, we examine the outcome and propose recommendations.

Keywords: bilingual experiences, teaching innovation practices, language skills, gradual immersion;
Introduction

In 1999 twenty-nine European Ministers of Higher Education agreed in Bologna Declaration to undertake a comprehensive reform of their educational systems, and to establish a Higher Education Area. The creation of this area was conceived as a key way to promote citizens’ mobility and employability (Prague Communiqué, 2001). The more particular goals of the Bologna Process can be summarized as follows: increasing the compatibility and comparability of European higher education systems; the implementation of a two-cycle system (undergraduate and graduate), of a common credit system, the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS); the promotion of the mobility of students, of European co-operation in quality assurance, and of the necessary European dimensions in higher education. The original goals were redefined and additional objectives were set in Prague (2001), Berlin (2003), Bergen (2005), London (2007), Leuven (2009), Budapest and Vienna (2010) and Bucharest (2012). Hence, the European Higher Education Area should develop a social dimension, lifelong learning, student participation and international openness. All in all, the major expected outcomes of the ongoing reform process lie in the promotion of international mobility, international competitiveness of universities and employability of graduates (Ceylan et al., 2011).

As far as students’ mobility and international openness are concerned, not only the promotion of Exchange Programs (i.e., Erasmus) is essential, but also the launching of bilingual courses. Certainly, mastering a foreign language is a requisite for outgoing students in partner European universities. Bilingual courses can contribute to both the acquisition of scientific knowledge and the enhancement of language skills. Moreover, bilingual courses offer excellent prospects for employability in the current global society where commercial transactions and trade occur beyond the borders of the state. The knowledge of a foreign language is one of the most
demanded competences in the labor market (Riesco González, 2008).

The aim of this paper is to present, discuss and assess good practices, methods and challenges faced in the teaching and learning process of the (bilingual, English) course Political Communication, within the Faculty of Social Sciences Murcia State University. The methodology will be mainly empirical, based upon the implementation of the “gradual immersion technique” in the learning process. It will consist of the description and analysis of strategies and good practices adopted gradually during the semester, in accordance with the difficulties encountered, the feedback and responsiveness of the students. The objective of study is related to cast light, discuss and assess the “gradual immersion technique” adopted, and offer recommendations for future bilingual teaching practices.

**Preliminary Considerations: Students’ Language Skills**

Before undertaking the task of teaching in English in a Spanish University, i.e. to Spanish students, it is convenient to take into consideration the English knowledge of the students in the classroom.

The optional course *Political Communication* is taught in the fourth year of both degrees, Journalism and Public Relations and Advertising. These two degrees only have one English course in the fourth year: *English for Journalists* and *English for Advertisers*. On the whole, after the English skills learned in school and high school, study programs of both degrees only contemplate English courses in the fourth year. Thus, we can identify the first challenge: at least during three years students have not “formally”—within University programs—studied English. Yet, there is every likelihood that students have taken English lessons in language schools (i.e., *Escuela Oficial de Idiomas*, private academies, etc.), in those three years previous to the fourth one when the course
is taught.

The second big concern is the English level acquired by the majority of students in the school and high school stages. This topic is intrinsically related to education policies in primary school and high school, which it will not be addressed in this paper. In the first week of class the English level of the group was determined. At this purpose the instructor spoke in English and raised questions to students in order to check how many of them were able to follow my explanations and give answers. Moreover, the instructor projected a couple of videos related to the course units, and finally asked them to write in English: 1) why they have picked up the course and, 2) what their expectations were. This way the speaking, understanding and writing capacities of the group were verified.

The English speaking, understanding and writing abilities of the group turned out to be moderate. As a result, the instructor made the decision to adjust to the level of the class in the way it is referred below.

**Adapting and adjusting to a group of moderate English skills: the technique of “gradual immersion”**

Soon it became obvious that the whole class taught in English, only a few advantaged students would be able to catch up theories and case studies. We developed this simple but effective technique that we have coined “gradual immersion”. It consists of a gradual increase in the use of English in theoretical explanations, interactions, discussions, exercises and working sessions in smaller groups.

The creative idea for this technique came both from the instructor’s background in foreign languages, and from foreign language immersion programs implemented in USA schools. As a
little girl the instructor learned English, French, German and Italian. We are, thus, convinced that to learn successfully a foreign language, it is convenient to do it in a progressive and continuous way.

As far as US foreign language immersion programs are concerned, they were first launched in 1971 in public elementary schools as a tool to incorporate second language education (Curtain & Dahlberg, 2004). The strategy implies “immersing” students in the target language during the whole school day. It aims to make them proficient in the target language in addition to English, and to develop increased cultural awareness while reaching a high level of academic achievement (Fortune & Tedick, 2003). There are different types of immersion programs depending on their intensity and structure. However, total and partial immersions are mostly applied. All subjects are taught in the target language in total immersion, whereas about 50% of instruction is provided in the target language in partial immersion. (Center for Applied Linguistics, 2006a). Finally, the two-way immersion or two-way bilingual is an interesting variation of the immersion model. Both English and a second language are used for instruction. Certainly, interactive dynamics develop between English students and native speakers of the target language, put together in the same classroom.

To sum up, the “gradual immersion” method we have adopted is inspired and combines both the partial immersion and the total immersion, since starting with partial immersion gradually expands into total immersion, which constitutes the ultimate goal.

Implementing “Gradual Immersion”

Homework or Entertainment?: Complementary but Necessary Recommendations

Since the first week of class, some easy but necessary unavoidable recommendations were
made to the group. Apart from the study and preparation related to the course, they had some other activities to get done. They can be called homework or entertainment, for they consisted of reading literature, magazines, watching movies or videos, listening to the radio, music but always in English. In other words, students were recommended them to devote an estimate time of 15 minutes a day to read novels or magazines in English, watching films in original version –or you tube videos-, listening to English stations: even a page, or five minutes of a movie or radio program, song would be worthy.

Journalism and Advertising students are creative, artistic, indeed. Many of them write themselves and develop creative projects. That is why these recommendations would appeal to them more as fun than as obligation. The suggestion was they should spend time on their own hobbies, regularly, but hobbies in English.

To this purpose, some useful links were set up in the virtual campus: websites where they could read online books, listen to audiobooks, watch free movies or read magazines on art, culture, music, fashion, online radio stations –the public radio in NYC, the BBC. It is convenient to make clear that students were also encouraged to read or have a look at online journals and political websites in English to be informed and follow the news.

*Bilingual Explanations and Materials. Working Sessions. Assessment*

In the early weeks of the course up to the first month, we explained the theoretical contents –course units- both in English and Spanish (*partial immersion*), alternating the two languages in class.

The same technique for class materials, uploaded to the virtual platform of the course unit. We made a big effort to prepare and organize the basic readings in the two languages. Yet, We used
more simple English slides in class to facilitate the “harshness” of English articles and handbooks, part of the basic readings.

Even during “theory hours” assigned to develop and illustrate the theoretical framework of the course, we would watch English videos, and we would often stir up discussion and reactions by raising questions to the group and favoring responses and debates in English. Nevertheless, English projections, speaking and writing were especially emphasized in the working sessions or seminars. The characteristics of the working sessions are: 1) a empirical nature – highlighting theory explanations with case-studies about real politics--; and 2) a reduced number of students – half of the class-, designed to promote participation, team-working and similar interactive activities. Therefore, in the seminars and leaded by the instructor, students would read, analyze, comment and discuss texts, speeches, pieces of news, etc., enhancing written and oral skills.

After a month, we started to appreciate the improvement in the English level of the students and gradually expanded the partial immersion towards a total immersion in both theory hours and working sessions. Nonetheless, we always kept bilingual materials to guarantee that the essential contents of the course could be properly assimilated. The presence in the classroom of Erasmus students was also beneficial: discussions were enriched and, in general, the bilingual environment enhanced. Regarding the Assessment, it was structured in three distinctive instruments: quizzes, oral presentations and final exam: two quizzes were set as English tests. The first one took place mid October; the second one, mid December, corresponding to major knowledge fields of the syllabus. The questions of the tests were brief, clear and precise. The oral presentations, in English, took place the last week of class, but the preparation related to composition of the groups, definition of the topics, research tasks, team working, started early October. The final exam had two parts. The first one consisted of an English test; the second one, in Spanish, of short questions
and of a commentary of a text. The results of the various mechanisms of evaluation and assessment were more than satisfactory. Most of the students passed with good grades.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Bilingual courses can contribute to both the acquisition of scientific knowledge and the enhancement of language skills, and offer excellent prospects for employability. Moreover, they attract as well students from other countries. Therefore, they should be widely launched in Spanish Universities and overall the higher education area established with the *Bologna Declaration*.

The implementation of bilingual courses requires a proper English level of both students and instructors. At this respect, transversal services of the Universities play an outstanding role. Firstly, Language Services, by providing courses that enable students and instructors to acquire the necessary English skills. Secondly, International Relations, by promoting exchange programs for that same reason, but also for academic, cultural and cohesive goals –the deepening of EU integration–. The Unit of Foreign Languages and the Service of International Relations have made significant accomplishments in that direction at Murcia State University.

Bilingual teaching-learning processes have to start since primary school through college. Coordination of educational policies at all these stages is absolutely necessary, and would favor the acquisition of the optimal English skills by the graduates.

The “gradual immersion” technique we have adopted in the bilingual course, *Political Communication*, has been successful indeed. Students obtained good grades and found much easier to face the course *English for Journalist* in the Spring Semester. As instructor, the experience has been very positive and we hope to improve the methods and learning processes in coming academic years.
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The Connect Project

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Abstract

Conducted in March 2015, the Connect Project provided a collaborative educational experience focused on the challenges of environmental impacts, over-consumption and ethics in the global apparel industry. Motivated by internationalization, four leading institutions – Buffalo State College (USA), Manchester Metropolitan University (UK), Beijing Institute of Fashion Technology China (CH) and RMIT University Australia (AUS) – collaborated on a transnational project. The project brought together instructor/student teams, one from each institution, to travel around the world in eighteen days to learn and disseminate information about sustainability in the apparel industry.

In order to engage students at each home institution, a website was built around the project which was pre-loaded with videos and articles pertaining to sustainability in each country visited. While the team was active in each country, students would blog about their experience and share images through the website. Social media was also employed as a means to reach out to students at each institutions home base. They were encouraged to ask questions and read the daily blogs. The student audience was encouraged to participate through adding their knowledge of sustainability to the content of the blog, ask questions and participate through classroom/campus activities.

The response from the students at each institutions was constant. Over 500 students logged in at least once to follow the group and read the articles. The social media feeds brought in almost 600 followers including leading members of the international fashion industry who added in their thoughts to the issue of sustainability.

Keywords: participatory learning, fashion sustainability, internationalization strategy, online learning
The Connect Project

The Connect project was a collaborative educational project whose main objective was to help students better understand the scope and scale of the problems and challenges that face the apparel industry in creating a global sustainable future. Bringing together four universities, one each from the United States, United Kingdom, China and Australia, each with one team consisting of an instructor and a student traveled the world in eighteen days in order to inform themselves and the students from each of their institutions on the current state of sustainability in the global fashion industry. A Connect specific web page was developed in order to disseminate information from each participating country/institution/student and was ideated as a depository to capture information.

The Connect project enabled participants to learn about the multifaceted apparel system first hand and report information and experiences to their peers through multimedia channels. Thus, it is connecting experiences and the opportunity for knowledge exchange by reflecting on lessons learned and sharing experiences collectively that becomes important to broadening students’ understanding of the fashion industry’s “big picture”.

Connect provided a collaborative educational experience that debated the challenges of environmental impacts, over-consumption and ethics in the global apparel industry. It had the following objectives:

1. To generate interest and enquiry surrounding the issues which affect the global apparel industry, the environment in which we live and our future.

2. To better understand the scope and scale of the problems and challenges that face the apparel industry in creating a global sustainable future.

3. To encourage students to become active in the campaign for a sustainable future.
The Connect project’s design offered the opportunity to practice problem-based learning (PBL), creating a focused learning experience grounded in exploring sustainable innovation in the context of the apparel industry. Through visits to each of the participating universities, constructive investigations were formed toward structuring the students learning within each socio-cultural and market contact (Sroufe & Ramos, 2015). This offered the environment in which the students learned about sustainable innovation by recording their experiences, developing understanding and reflecting on what they had learned by posting on the projects blog.

**Literature Review**

The topic of sustainability in the apparel industry provided common ground for all students studying fashion in the participating institutions and important opportunities for research, across both business and design disciplines. The partners shared common goals to engage academics, students and professionals from around the world in participatory learning towards the importance of sustainable innovation and to educate future leaders of industry, who might instigate change

**Globalization**

Globalization is defined as the increasing phenomenon of international interdependence and interconnectivity, which brings together economic, cultural and social change (OECD, 2009). Marginson and Van der Wende (2009), stated that “Higher education is implicated in all the changes related to globalization. Education and research are key elements in the formation of the global environment, being foundational to knowledge, the take-up of technologies, cross-border association and sustaining complex communities” (p. 18). Globalization has stimulated an unprecedented flow of information worldwide and has changed the transmission of knowledge. It
is therefore incumbent on universities to internationalize curricula to improve their student’s prospects in globalized sectors of the labor market (OECD, 2009).

**Apparel industry**

According to Kunz and Garner (2011), textile and apparel related businesses provide employment for more people than any other business segment and these positions can be found in every country of the world. The global apparel industry has long been aware of the environmental and ethical issues along its supply chain – unsafe factory conditions, workers’ rights violations, and the use of harsh chemicals are but a few of the issues. Jones, Blackey, Fitzgibbon and Chew (2010) found that students enjoy the use of technology and online activities and appreciate the opportunity to communicate through social media platforms.

The concept of communicating experiences and knowledge transfer through shared learning is what inspired the Connect project (Chhabra & Sharma, 2011). Each institution was also keen to engage in internationalization in response to the continued globalization of the apparel industry. In order to tackle the issues of sustainability in a global field such as the fashion industry, it was felt that we needed to take a global perspective. This collaboration took the issue of sustainability and combined it with social platforms to engage and inform students about the state of the industry in four diverse countries.

**Methodology**

Each institution had the freedom to implement this project on campus in their own way. For example, at RMIT the school year was launched with industry panel discussions and presentations. This, combined with access to the Connect digital intelligence, provided a
foundation for all our students to literally ‘connect’. By framing the commencement of the academic year around global issues and sustainability it provided knowledge to all students in our cohort to be considerate of this in their work, whether developing design ideas, considering business models or challenging the system in which they will be employed. Students were encouraged to base decisions on the underlying premise of social responsibility as well as benefiting the global community and to develop a personal definition of sustainable fashion based on their perspective, research, and creativity. As a consequence, a project that could have benefited a few but actually informed many and has had significant breadth of impact on teaching methodologies and heightened student experience.

Key to dissemination of the research and findings from each institution in the Connect project was the technology strategy the project employed to communicate the projects learning objectives as well a engage and expand the projects followers to create a fashion community discourse around the key issues and debate sustainable fashion. In the first instance, a website was built around the project where the students were required to take notes during each professional visit or event and blog their own reflections and learning on the experience. Prior to traveling, each instructor/student team uploaded videos and articles pertaining to sustainability in their city/country that could be released during planned activities to provide research contexts and further information. While the team was active in each country, they explored local small and medium-sized companies which practiced sustainability in some manner and presented at events conducted in the home institutions, putting forward what they had learned; debating ideas and perspectives as part of the learning objectives. The experiences each team had in each country provided rich information to help the students following the project become engaged in knowledge sharing and
reflect on their own actions as consumers and future fashion industry professionals (Hmelo-Silver, 2004).

Social media was also employed as a means to reach out to students at each institutions’ home base. The use of social media allowed individuals to engage in a global network of others interested in similar topics. The students were encouraged to ask questions and read the daily blogs. While the team was traveling in the air, the pre-loaded videos and articles would automatically go live in order to keep the audience engaged and informed.

Twitter is a social media site which broadcasts short messages to followers. Twitter was used to update the students back at the home school to what we were seeing, learning and doing. Twitter limits the size of the posts to 140 characters [this has recently increased to 280] which encourages students to summarize key ideas from the information they are taking in. Twitter also offers an enhanced way of connecting with the professional fashion community and this is how the projects debates came to the attention of key fashion commentators such as Lucy Siegle.

As such, the Connect project directly engaged students aligned to the project and provided a specific and enhanced benefit to the students who were the University representatives. The broader benefits however indicate that the Connect project democratically enhanced the student experience across a broad cohort (Hmelo-Silver & Barrows, 2006).
The student representatives directly communicated with student cohorts at their home institution via a range of social media platforms including individual blogs of daily experiences, podcasts of seminars and conferences and visual presentations via Instagram.

As the travelling participants originated from a diverse range of cultural and international backgrounds, students at their home campuses were able to compare different perspectives of activities that the travelling teams were experiences. The diversity of the travelling party provided a forum for home students to engage with all students of the travelling party. As a result, digital discussions became much broader and deeper and were not limited to single country perspectives.

The interest generated by students at the home institutions was very strong. This was demonstrated and measured by individual hits, comments and questions raised. The response from the students at each institution were constant. Over 500 students logged in at least once to follow the group and read the articles. The social media feeds brought in hundreds of followers including leading members of the international fashion industry who added in their thoughts to the issue of sustainability.
The Connect project enabled participants to learn about the multifaceted apparel system first hand and report information and experiences to their peers through multimedia channels. The Connect webpage (Figure 2) is currently a rich learning resources which holds a variety of examples and perspectives on sustainable innovation. It is used as a learning resource for all the universities and this has allowed an even larger audience to continue the discussion and add to the resources. Participation in unique learning experiences, such as Connect, help students acquire new knowledge and skills in an engaging manner and help them to be better prepared to enter the global apparel industry.

![Connect webpage](connect_webpage.png)

*Figure 2: Connect live blog screen capture*

**Discussion**

**Long Term Impact**

According to the Institute for International Education (IIE) (2018), 325,339 U.S. Students studied abroad for academic credit in 2015/2016 which was an increase of 3.8% over the previous year and 63.1% of the study abroad experiences were considered short term (eight weeks or less).
While there has been a marked increase in the numbers of students studying abroad, the expense of doing so is usually a major reason why more students do not participate in this type of experience. A short term study abroad program can help reduce the expenses.

Chieffo and Griffiths (2004) noted that student who spent even one month abroad “were more confident in their levels of intercultural awareness and functional knowledge than their peers who remained on campus”.

In order to determine how this experience affected the students, they were asked to complete a reflective learning exercise. According to Boyd and Fales (1983), reflective learning is "the process of internally examining and exploring an issue of concern, triggered by an experience, which creates and clarifies meaning in terms of self, and which results in a changed conceptual perspective” (p. 100). At the end of the 18 day trip, students went home and were given three weeks to reflect on their experience. At that time, students showed an increased awareness and understanding of the global scope of the issues of sustainability in the fashion industry and indicated that they wanted to carry this knowledge into their lives and workplace in the future.

In order to determine if there was a long term effect on this experience, questions were mailed to the participating students one year after the experience and they were asked to once again reflect on their experience. The objective of this exercise was to determine how the students perceived the effects of this experience on their subsequent choices in academia or their career. The student responses showed that the students reached the point in which they are re-evaluating their behaviors and altering them to embrace a lifestyle that considers the environment (Boorady, et. al., 2016). They most notably also stated that this experience had given them a more overall positive outlook on the fashion industry and gave them insight on how they want to define their role in the industry.
...this project has made me acutely aware of the extent of the issues and the importance of engaging in discussion about what can be done; to be a part of developing solutions to problems is much more important than profiteering from fantasy that drives consumer tastes. I have noticed a change in mind-set within myself since returning...As a result...I have gained...life changing knowledge regarding the importance of sustainability that...I will be able to use to inform any future job search and occupation.
– UK student

Social Media

Once the project was completed, data was collected on the social media response. We had over 400 followers on our Instagram account “@mmu_connect” and Lucy Siegle, an early pioneer of environmentalism who is currently focusing on the fashion industry, called out our project to her over 16.3K follower with “UBER DISRUPTORS!!” and included links to our project (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Lucy Siegle names Connect project in UBER DISRUPTORS! post

The Connect project launched in March of 2015 and 51.6K tweets happened in the one month, followed by 35.9K in April (the month of the Fashion Revolution campaign), see Figure
4. In all, we had 123.2K tweet impressions in total. We also had major influencers such as Sass Brown, Orsola de Castro, Lily Cole and ASOS Green Room tweet positive reviews about our project and the student’s presentations.

![Twitter Impressions](image)

*Figure 4: Twitter Impressions. Twitter statistics for Connect during project activity phase.*

**Recommendations**

The structure of this project allowed the students to accumulate a wide range of knowledge about sustainable fashion innovations in a wide range of areas. The students took opportunities to interact with their peers and engage them in the learning process. The combination of peer-to-peer learning, connecting with industry professionals and the formation of a real-world and online community created a network of learning resources which was used in real-time and has created an archive for future use.

To further engage students, using technology to its fullest potential is highly recommended. Since the completion of this project, social media sites have embraced the use of live video streaming to enhance their use, such as Facebook Live®. This feature would allow the person, for
example, visit a factory to live stream what they are seeing and hearing while also allowing the viewers to ask questions and interact. The video would then remain posted for others to watch at their convenience.

It would also be good practice to encourage the students at each institution to interact more. A possibility would be to pose a question and give students a time limit to post their responses, perhaps in video format. This would allow deeper learning to take place, actively engage the followers and increase their involvement in the project.

Limitations

The small size of the participants in this study is the major limitation and further studies should be conducted to assess the impact of short term study abroad.

Conclusions and Future Study

The main objective of this project was to help students better understand the scope and scale of the problems and challenges that face the apparel industry in creating a global sustainable future. The modality of this project was considered very successful as determined by the reach of the online accounts. The responses from the students who participated in this global project show that there was a positive long term impact. Future short term study abroad experiences and a virtual experience between campuses is currently under discussion.

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Challenge Stereotypes through COIL

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Abstract

This paper explores the implications that ethnocentrism and stereotypes have on intercultural relations, and how that relation has reached the higher education strategies. These behaviors, to a certain extent discriminatory, can mean that these relationships that are intended to be strengthened, remain truncated. For that, theoretical positions are also reviewed that focus on managing and even countering these reductionist visions of one culture over another, mainly within the educational dynamics.

Internationalization, is something that higher education institutions are promoting, one of the multiple efforts that the world is doing is Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL), where students and teachers work together in order to produce knowledge among countries; one of the obstacles that COIL has faced is the stereotype. As teachers, we have been working in challenging stereotypes in COIL courses, at the end of the paper you will find our experiences in COIL courses, in which we have worked with challenging stereotypes.

Finally, we emphasize the importance of not neglecting to work with these topics in our online international collaboration courses, and likewise, we make a series of proposals - some of them put forth and others based on the revised theory - where we aim to assess, both the stereotypes, and the ethnocentric customs, that could be presented by both groups.

Keywords: stereotype, COIL, education, online education.
**Introduction**

Nowadays we live in a globalized world, but even though we are connected between nations, cultures remain with their own differences among each other. Not knowing in a profound matter the other culture can result in the creations of stereotypes.

The global communication has reached the educational field, now students can be in contact with almost anyone in the globe, and not only that, higher education institutions are promoting the interlacinonalization.

It is labor of the education field, to challenge stereotypes with pedagogical strategies, in order for the students to learn how cultures are different, in other to learn how to behave among others, and not only that, to learn how to work, with someone that do not share your culture.

One of these internationalization strategies are the COIL projects, with which both students and teachers have the opportunity to meet and share a bit of their peers’ culture. It is true that both sides struggle with stereotypes and prejudices, however, if we do not challenge them and learn how to live with them, these integration processes will seem unattainable.

**Ethnocentrism and Stereotypes**

*On Ethnocentrism*

Ethnocentrism is something natural of each culture, and there is no one who can escape to have this kind of ideas and values. A classic definition of ethnocentrism indicates, “is a form of in group favoritism and out-group hostility in which membership is typically evaluated in terms of one or more observable characteristics (such as language, accent, physical features, or religion) that are regarded as indicating common descent” (Axelrod & Hammond. 2003).
For this, we have to understand that, historically, communities are formed by individuals that share a certain level of consanguinity.

They are organized into descent groups—lineages, or clans, or moieties, or ramages—which trace descent to common ancestors, live mainly on ancestral territories, are seen as consisting of similar “kinds” of people—an idea usually expressed through physical idioms of common flesh, or bone, or blood, or skin. Often kinship systems become a basis of social inequality as some groups are seen as higher than others, as for example in caste systems; always, kinship establishes the terms for sex and marriage and the passing of property over the generations (Graeber, David. 2004).

It is in this way, that this conception between 'They' those who do not do not bear kinship with 'We'. This relationship of consanguinity can be expanded to the members of a community; In this same way, it is not difficult to take this to other levels, for example, if we can find differences between one neighborhood and another of the same city, it will not be difficult for us to do it from one city to another, between regions of the same country, between different countries and even between different regions within our planet.

David Theo Goldberg, in his article ‘Modernity, Race and Morality’ (1993) and Tzvetan Todorov, in ‘The fear of Barbarians’ (2010), emphasizes that the first cultural distinction, which is recorded in Western history, happened in Ancient Greece, between their own culture and the outsiders, whom they called barbarians:

The primary objects of Greek discrimination and exclusion were slaves and barbarians, indeed, relatedly so. (Significantly, women were conceived in representational terms not dissimilar to slaves and barbarians.) As a general category of discriminatory socio-legal exclusion, "barbarianism" was the invention of fifthcentury Hellenism (Goldberg, 1993).

These 'barbarians' ended up being all those who were not Greek, or not they were part of the Hellenistic culture, or even simply could not communicate effectively with the Greeks:

It was contrasted with another word, and together they made it possible for the population of the whole world to be divided into two unequal parts: the Greeks (or 'us'), and the barbarians (the 'others', the foreigners). In order to recognize whether a person belonged to one or other group, you resorted to the Greek language: the barbarians were all those who did not understand it or speak it, or spoke it badly (Todorov, 2010).
These ideas of ethnocentrism have been practiced since then, and even in - practically - the entire Western world, we continue making the distinction between 'Barbarians' and 'Civilized people'.

Now, Ken Barger (2018) has found a broader way to refer to ethnocentrism: "In this sense, ethnocentrism can be defined as: making false assumptions about others' ways based on our own limited experience". This way of defining the term, brings with it a couple of concepts, which will help us to better understand its implications: assumptions and limited experience.

Obvious to clarify, that our ethnocentric positions lead us to develop stereotypes about other cultures, since regularly, these are crude representations about the characteristics of a different cultural group, not far from the idea that we are 'Civilized' and the others as 'Barbarians'.

*What do we understand by stereotype?*

Prior to a definition of stereotype, it is needed to understand, that it stems from the relationships that occur in a culture; Espinosa et al. (2007) citing Hofstede, 1991; Lehman, Chiu & Schaller, 2004; said:

> Intergroup relations must be analyzed within the cultural context in which they are developed. Understanding culture as a set of values, beliefs and norms shared by a group to which they conclude that in the cultural process are transmitted and perpetuate stereotypes, prejudices and discriminatory behavior towards certain social groups " (Espinosa et al., 2007).

As stated by Ortega Legaspi (2016): "culture is part of society, it is what gives meaning to it, and culture is produced and reproduced socially. Within the culture processes of meaning that allow the cultural interactions are developed" and it is thus within those cultural interactions that the prejudices and stereotypes towards other cultures arise.
A stereotype is usually a crude and insolent definition that exaggerates the features of a human or social group, such as religious ideology, physical and behavioral characteristics, place of residence, among others.

Catalina González states, that at the theoretical level, the difference between stereotype and prejudice is not significant, so for the purposes of this document they will be taken as synonyms. "Stereotype is a set of generalized and simplified characteristics in the form of a verbal label, on specific social groups. The stereotype assigns positive or negative values to such groups and generates attitudes of acceptance or rejection" (González, 1997: 81).

Why today - more than ever - should we fight against stereotypes?

Our world is becoming smaller and smaller, and at the same time, it seems that there are voices that brand ethnocentric slogans in order to isolate us and protect the privileges of the dominant groups:

One issue that we need to consider is that ethnocentrism is often exploited to foster conflict... and to promote the power of a particular group. History shows us that promoting an "us versus them" perspective, political, religious, and other groups foster discrimination and conflict to benefit themselves at the expense of others. Social conflict and wars usually have ethnocentrism at their core, which over time usually proves to be self-destructive for all concerned (Barger, 2018).

With these actions, it seems that they would like to make the world bigger, to increase distances, even if they are only symbolic. However, interactions between cultures of other countries intensify exponentially, and it is increasingly common for transnational companies to have to move their employees across countries. Added to that, the tools of communication through the Internet have forced us to pay more attention to the way we communicate with people from other countries.
Nowadays, interaction does not happen only face to face, web 2.0 has been considered as a generator of multiculturalities, and how Ortega Legaspi responds (2018) What happened with society and its culture when the Web 2.0 emerge?

It is no longer necessary to travel from one country to another to be in contact with others, not only in regards to the social contact, but also with companies that are establishing working procedures that require communication and data exchange among counties. As the information society estates data, and money not only belong to one country, but rather to a corporation (Ortega, 2018:79).

The same author, Ortega Legaspi (2018), establish how minorities are generating communication and relationship thanks to the advances in technology. "Currently, a territory is called cyberspace due to the interaction created between the Web 2.0 and the users that do not need to" travel "to be in contact with others. New communities are being created every single day in the cyberspace ... A new world and a new culture have emerged thanks to the Web 2.0. New bonds are being created by day and minorities are gathering together no matter what their geographical status is, and they live together in their own cyberspace" (Ortega, 2018: 80).

We must understand, that we all coexist in this world before the existence of information and communication technologies, and that we must promote multiculturalism and not the prejudices around it. "Multiculturalities existed before the Web 2.0 appeared; technology has enhanced them so new connections could be made" (Ortega, 2018: 80).

**Challenging Stereotypes**

Ken Barger (2018) points out, that we must be fully aware to identify ethnocentric behaviors, since there is no such thing as trying not to be. To do this, it highlights the fact that we all have a degree of ignorance - to a greater or lesser degree - about the other, which we have to recognize, in order to work with it.
The first step in developing more balanced understandings is to recognize that we do not understand, that we are falsely assuming something that is not the case and is out of context. How can we consciously become aware of something that is happening subconsciously? In this case, how can we know when we are being biased? (Barger, 2018).

Barger, proposes that we have to observe our reactions, to find if they are inhibiting our understanding process. These reactions, tell us if we are assuming things, but most important, if what we assume functions or does not work to understand the other. Once we recognize that there are things we do not understand, we will be in a better position to have control of our prejudices, in order to seek a better understanding. Subsequently, and as part of this same process, Barger proposes to make two series of questions.

(1) What are their meanings about the behavior and situation? (In anthropological terms, what is their emic experience?) This includes both their cognitive views and their emotional feelings.

(2) What are the adaptive functions of the behavior and situation? (In anthropological terms, what is their etic experience?) How does this help the group adapt to life challenges (ecologically, biologically, economically, socially, psychologically, etc.)? This is the question which is usually not asked on a common level, yet is the one that can provide the greatest insights and understandings. (Barger, 2018)

These questions are important, because they lead us to understand the behaviors of others, and just in that process, the dichotomy 'inside - outside' / 'us' is left aside; and starting from there, we can also take these questions to our own context and analyze our behavior. And by sharing them with another group, it gives us the opportunity to see characteristics that we, because we are within a culture, can not see. “Sometimes outsiders can see things we don't usually see because they are contrasting our behavior with others' ways, but being an insider does not preclude members of any group from understanding their own behavior.” (Barger, 2018).

Todorov (2010) agrees with this position, but also from his philosophical perspective, indicating that effective dialogue can never be carried out if we are not willing to question our beliefs and points of view, “it cannot lead to any kind of result unless the participants accept a formal framework common to their discussion, and unless they can agree on the nature of the
arguments admitted and on the very possibility of seeking justice and truth together.” (Todorov. 2010: 196). Once we are aware that we have a culture that presents ethnocentric behaviors, and that we recognize that we have to engage in communicating with other cultures, we can have meaningful experiences of our intercultural interactions.

**Strategies to Challenge Stereotypes**

Following up on these ideas, but from a more pragmatic perspective, pedagogues and psychologists have worked with multicultural groups, trying to cope with discriminatory attitudes in the classroom. These strategies are aimed at seeking integration in work groups, without this meaning that minority groups or those with less economic power, have to lose their identity and have to be necessarily integrated to the dominant groups.

As mentioned above, ethnocentrism leads us to make distinctions about ‘us and them’, this model is designed to be thought in an inclusive way, and all participants can identify themselves as ‘we’, by utilizing three basic mechanisms: mutual intergroup differentiation, decategorization, and recategorization. Which is known as: Common In-Group Identity Model:

- **Mutual intergroup differentiation:** Here the important thing, is that a group is given a task and that, beyond imposing some structure, it focuses on those involved to solve problems. “Problem solutions that are “win–win” rather than zero-sum are emphasized, and group goals and boundaries are respected.” (McKenzie and Twose. 2015. 311).
- **Decategorization:** The focus of this mechanism, is to do one-to-one work, so that the plurality has a lower weight among the participants. This strategy also works, because it helps to make the communication more intimate, and in this way there can be a search for points in common in which a bond of trust can be established.
• Recategorization: Here it is proposed to create a larger group, where all the members are included, in this way, all of them will identify themselves as 'we', seeking a greater cohesion among the members of the group.

**COIL Experiences with Stereotype**

In Universidad La Salle - México, as part of the COIL courses, in this specific case, the subject of "Contemporary Communication Themes Seminar" has been worked with in the Communication course at the La Salle University - Mexico. This subject is taught in their very last semester. This subject has collaborated with SUNY Broome and Nassau Community College. The COIL courses have taken the following names. "Collaborative Culture" and "The Importance of Color in Communication Pieces"

Before starting any course collaboration, it’s essential to promote knowledge of each other, in order to try to eliminate stereotypes and prejudices that may exist among course participants. In the case of the COIL course, the above is done through the activity of "Icebreaker" which lasts approximately two to three weeks. The activities that take place during the "Icebreaker" are:

- Share a small personal biography, and ask the other members of the group to comment on the biographies.
- Request that photographs be shared, whether portraits or photographs that are part of what they are and in turn comment on the published.
- Share videos, where they express their expectations of the COIL experience.

One remarkable activity, was, that students face the differences of culture specific in the digital culture. The students were requested to create an infographic where they needed to express the differences between Mexico and United States. The students recognised the differences and embraced the similarities with their peers. (see works from the students in
appendant 1) as Ortega states Digital Culture is generated, accepted, transmitted, and lived through information and communication technologies, our society is defined by what happens through the various screens to which we have access” (Ortega, 2016:68). As COIL teachers, we are challenged to teach in digital culture “Digital literacy is one of the main challenges facing education today” (Levis, 2016).

When we use a digital tool, we assume that everyone knows how to use it and that they know its functionality. During the COIL courses we have realized that in Mexico the WhatsApp instant messaging application is used on a daily basis, however it is not used regularly by students of the State of New York, they prefer text messages or emails:

The great project of the twenty first century —understanding how the whole humanity comes to be greater than the sum of its parts— it’s just the beginning. Like an awakening child, the human superorganism is becoming self-aware, and this awareness will be the sheer joy of self-discovery and the realization that to truly know ourselves, we must first understand how and why we are all connected (Christakis, 2009:305).

The previous quote, tells us the importance of letting students who participate in the COIL courses, achieve the connection and break the stereotypes that surround both Mexican and American. Since students inevitably come with prejudices about the other, it is our job to break with these prejudices and see the differences as an opportunity for learning and development.

Looking to another institution, UDEM has a strong Department of Internationalization, whose mission is interrelated in all the curricular lines. Due to the agreements with which they are counted, COIL projects have been made with educational centers around the world, with Japan, South Africa, Europe, Latin America and, of course, the United States:

- In a COIL with Japan, a general activity was designed in which both students had to mention the stereotypes they had of each other, with the aim of contrasting them at the end of the course.
- COILing with SUNY, students digitally exchanged analog photographs they took, in a sort of photographic dialog, they understood the geographic and climatic differences between them. In other courses, students used online platforms of interactive maps, in order that they could have a better understanding of the environment in which their peers lived. Thus, Mexican students understood that their New York state colleagues lived in a rural environment; and in turn, the students of New York, realized that their Mexican partners, lived in a big modern city, of great territorial extension.

- In COIL with Xavier University, in Cincinnati, both groups of students, realized that the reality that they live inside the campus, is quite similar. And interactive map activities were also done online, to share the vision they had of their cities.

**Towards a Pedagogical Approach to Challenge Stereotypes from COIL**

It is important to highlight, based on our experiences, and the projects we have seen from our other fellow teachers who participate in another COIL projects, it seems that not all of us focus on the issue of challenging stereotypes. It's understandable, in many cases we pay more attention to the contents, that can be communicating between the two courses; but we strongly think that, as part of intercultural communication between students from two different countries, it is essential to seek the inclusion of activities that take us to look for such integration. Next, we will present some proposals for objectives that could trigger activities or icebreakers:

- List of stereotypes (internal use).
  - Each group, on its own, makes a list of stereotypes, of what they assume from their international colleagues, before starting the COIL. This list is
then contrasted at the end of the projects, and if considered prudent, the contrasts can be shared with the peers.

- **List of stereotypes (shared use).**
  - Each group, on its own, makes a list of stereotypes, of what they assume from their international partners, but this is shared within them, and can be used as a discussion forum.

- **Knowing the history of the language of our international partners.**
  - Each group should investigate the history of their language and share it with the international group. This includes regionalisms and colloquial language (slang).

- **Knowing the concept of 'Barbarian vs Civilized'.**
  - Contrast the ideas, that both groups have regarding this concept, in order to identify the discriminatory agenda that it contains (positive and negative).

- **Recognize the groups that are excluded in each culture.**
  - Investigate about vulnerable groups in each culture, and be aware that ideas about discrimination can be shared among them, or they can be products of the values of each culture.

- **Understanding the values of each culture.**
  - Through dialogues between the two groups, design a series of questions that are oriented, on the one hand, to each discovering their submerged part of the iceberg, and on the other, to make their international colleagues understand, those things that are not they look at their own culture.

- **Family history.**
○ Through one-on-one dialogues, each student shares the story of their family. This way they can understand that - practically everyone - we are descendants of migrants.

**Final Thoughts**

After analyzing the case of three different universities in Mexico, we can say that in Monterrey and Mexico City, working with COIL has been a really flourish experience, but one of the objectives from all the teachers involved was to fight against stereotypes, not only because we know that was important but also because during the courses we found out that our students have stereotypes.

In the following lines, are some reflections of them, issuing about the importance of fighting stereotypes. The richness of our world, is based on the differences that define us as culture and society, technology has given us the opportunity to know that diversity breaking the barriers of space - time. One of the primary objectives of COIL should be to make the differences evident, break stereotypes to generate true learning, all of the above to achieve true digital literacy and true multiculturalism. All efforts are positive, however, in order to be able to think about an integration process that has been going on for more than 20 years, we could think that COIL projects should also be applied in earlier stages of education, perhaps in middle school and/or highschool, in order to make our students more sensitives in those topics, and that upon reaching the later stages, the COIL experiences can be more profitable.

We can not deny that our world is interconnected, however, this does not mean that we all live in the same culture, on the contrary, each culture has its characteristics and its members will be always be proud of it. The only way in which we can instruct ourselves to be able to interact effectively between cultures, is through education, so these relationships can be enriching and we will learn from them.
APPENDIX

Infographics made by La Salle students and SUNY Broome students, about differences in digital culture among this nations.

Infographic 1: Work by the students Andrea Rosas and Andy Jean-Baptiste
Infographic 2: Work by the students Erik Rubio and William Klein.
Works Cited


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Learning through Experimentation, Commitment, and Sharing: A Higher Education Café

International

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Abstract

A SUNY psychology professor and a German counterpart who have worked together over the past five years to involve their students in an international exchange venue, will offer an Action Learning Lab for those interested in exploring the dynamics of what makes such exchanges work effectively and efficiently over time. The co-authors draw upon their personal international experiences and a theoretical base to form the foundation of the session. Participants will explore the process of developing, building, and sustaining international professional relationships and educational partnerships. The discussion will be organized in the World Café format, allowing and inviting participants to actively share their thoughts and experiences throughout the whole session.

Keywords: international higher education, global education, international collaboration
Learning through Experimentation, Commitment, and Sharing:

A Higher Education Café International

The essence of intercultural education is the acquisition of empathy—the ability to see the world as others see it, and to allow for the possibility that others may see something we have failed to see, or may see it more accurately.

— J. William Fulbright

This conference paper attempts to achieve two lofty goals: 1) outline a theoretical base for healthy international professional relationships and 2) describe the World Café roundtable format employed in a conference setting. The co-authors while representing the State University of New York (SUNY) College at Potsdam in the U.S.A. and the Universität Potsdam in Germany and under the umbrella of a signed International Exchange Agreement discovered creative ways to collaborate that included their students. The co-authors decided that it was time to “take-stock” after five-years of collaboration and share such insights with a broader professional audience. Fortunately, the COIL Conference offered a venue to reflect and share such learning experiences with others.

A recent report prepared by the American Council on Education entitled: International Education Partnerships: A Global Review of Standards and Practices (ACE, 2015) offered several thematic principles of “good practice” for higher education leaders and stakeholders. Of particular interest to our topic is Theme 2: Faculty and Staff Engagement outlined below:

Well-qualified academic and administrative staff are fundamental to the success of international partnerships and programs. Given the challenges inherent in cross-border collaborations, a deep commitment to the goals of global engagement—along with a willingness to take a long view of the benefits—is important for all personnel. (p. 10)
This ACE Report further suggested that one strategy for faculty engagement includes the ability to capitalize on the enthusiasm of faculty “champions” defined as “a single faculty member or group of faculty members who are already heavily involved in international partnerships…” in order to serve as “key catalysts for expanding and strengthening strategic partnerships” (p. 12).

We stand united in championing the many benefits of international partnerships while realistically reminding readers of this paper that there are many frustrations and failures that lurk in the pathways of effective international educational collaboration. Our hope is that our stories of successes might help readers ask thoughtful and personal questions related to this exceptionally complex human and cultural endeavor.

Lumby and Foskett (2016) suggested that internationalization cannot simply be seen as “cash-cows” or a panacea to solve what is wrong in higher education today. Investments in international educational programs are not always a “win-win” situation in the world-wide higher educational marketplace. Clearly the hidden benefits and potential problems of international educational efforts need to be considered in the decision making process by stakeholders.

DeZurie et al. (2012) summarized several crucial topics to consider addressing in international educational exchanges: emphasize planning, know the context, build relationships continuously and be flexible, use technology to enhance communication, ensure that both parties benefit, create common ground, and think long-term. You will note in this paper that we have chosen to focus upon one facet that we think is most crucial and often neglected—building healthy long-term relationships with international partners.

Readers might be curious regarding exactly what we accomplished over the past five years and the long-term relationship between our institutions. There has been an International Exchange Agreement and Memorandum of Understanding between the State University of New York
College at Potsdam and the Universität Potsdam, for over 25 years and the current agreement expires in 2023. During this quarter of a century, collaboration has taken place that has allowed for student, faculty, and personnel visits in both directions. Since first meeting in the summer of 2013 on the Universität Potsdam campus, the co-authors of this paper have been involved in several joint activities, some of which directly involved students. The following list highlights some of these professional activities:

- Each faculty member (Bill and Frederik) has visited the other’s home campus and personal/private homes at least once.

- Bill and Frederik co-taught the month-long course: “From Theory to Practice” for 27 prospective German school teachers and Bill served as a research consultant for 12 education doctoral students at the Universität Potsdam on-site in Germany in June of 2016.

- Bill and Frederik made a joint on-site presentation at the 2016 SUNY COIL Conference held in New York City on the following topic: “COIL as a Double Helix: Insights from a Three Year German-American On-Line learning Collaboration.”

- The article entitled “The Marketplace of International Experiences” describing Bill and Frederik’s collaboration appeared in the Portal magazine published in the German language by the Universität Potsdam (see Hermanns (2016)).

- During the 2014-2015 academic year, German and American students planning to become classroom teachers used Poly-Com for a ‘real-time” video conference. These students were in Bill and Frederik’s classes and each German student was paired with 2-3 American students in order to make a student “team.” Each Team eventually produced a Prezi post related to the topics of grading and evaluation. (see Herman & Ahlgrimm, 2016)

- During the 2013-2014 academic year, German and American students planning to become classroom teachers and enrolled in Bill and Frederik’s classes were all registered on the American campus Moodle website with access to nearly 50 learning tools that included classroom stories, study guides, quizzes with answer keys, etc.

- On March 3, 2014, Bill appeared via Skype and Frederik appeared in person on-site at a conference in Germany to discuss their current international on-line learning efforts.
On March 17, 2014, Bill appeared via Skype and Frederik appeared in person on-site at the DGHD Conference in Braunschweig, Germany, to offer an overview of their international partnership.

The article entitled “Via Video over the Big Pond” describing Bill and Frederik’s collaboration appeared in the *Portal* magazine published in the German language by the Universität Potsdam (see Szameitat (2014)).

This should give readers an idea of the type of professional work that we have done together. It deserves to be pointed out that the co-authors also spent time together outside of the professional arena by visiting a Berlin museum and attending the 2016 Paul McCartney Concert. While in the U.S.A., they both attended a rehearsal session at the Crane School of Music at SUNY Potsdam and took pictures of the Adirondack Mountains while traveling to New York City. We remain convinced that a personal and professional friendship was built by working together as professional educators and also by spending quality time together outside of our professional roles and responsibilities.

We employed “taking stock” and reflective thinking as a theoretical framework in order to produce mindful, honest, and purposeful reflections regarding why our professional relationship has been sustained. Our first step was to independently review our private notes in order to refresh our memories and react to the following guiding questions. Our independently generated responses are included in below:

1) Why did your professional relationship thrive over the past 5 years?

*Bill (B): Commitment, university support, personal sacrifice, intrinsic value of learning about teacher preparation in another country, chance of becoming a world-wide scholar, learning about cultural differences and similarities, goodness of fit with our backgrounds, patience/understanding, caring about the safety/well-being of others, making compromises including teaching/learning and travel adaptations, mutual respect and admiration*

*Frederik (F): In my view, this relationship thrived due to the openness and curiosity on both sides to try new paths and experiment with formats that involved both colleagues in new and unfamiliar roles. This openness required much understanding for the other’s professional*
working environment, personal circumstances, as well as his institution’s rules and expectations. Nevertheless, the interest in the colleague’s ideas, knowledge, and mindset and the resulting chances to learn were forces that made the collaboration blossom.

2) Was there a life-event that convinced you this relationship was going to flourish and be sustained?

(B): Once I offered Frederik a series of multiple-choice items over the content we were covering with both the German and American students. I made a prediction regarding how his students might struggle with a couple of the questions, just like my students have been confused in the past. A few days later, Frederik wrote me that his students had struggled with the same items exactly in the manner that I had predicted.

(F): I cannot think of one individual life-event. My view is that the relationship grew out of a series of personal interactions that included: Bill’s visit to Potsdam in 2013, our close work together in the German on-site class we taught together, Frederik’s visit in Potsdam, NY, Bill’s stay in Potsdam, Germany, and many Skype sessions. In my memory, the common activities were always highlights: visits to the SUNY campuses in Potsdam, NY, and in Albany, NY, the New York State Museum in Albany, NY, presenting together at the NYC COIL conference in 2016, a co-taught class in Potsdam, Germany, the Paul McCartney concert, a Berlin museum visit, and a barbecue at my home in Berlin.

3) What do you admire the most about your international colleague?

(B): Frederik’s excellent English skills, his travel experience, knowledge of the German education system, his willingness to share his professional connections, his dedication to lifelong learning

(F): Among many things, I do deeply appreciate and admire Bill’s profound knowledge in psychology and his ability to apply it in diverse and new contexts - both in teaching and in his written work.

4) Describe an accomplishment/activity with your colleague that was most rewarding and/or meaningful.

(B): Teaching a course together on Frederik’s German campus, 2016 COIL presentation, traveling together by car through the Adirondack Mountains, attending social events together, meeting his family
(F): Again, picking out one thing is difficult. What stood out for me were the classes that I adapted to meet our COIL on-line teaching concept, using Anita Woolfolk’s excellent textbook was a great revelation to me, teaching in the English language, and preparing the German students for the exchange with American scholars. This total experience was very rewarding, offered new insights, and shaped my path toward future international exchanges.

As we review the compilation of juxtaposed reflections, some generalizations become possible regarding the factors that might encourage collaboration such as the importance of building trust, respect, admiration, shared experiences, willingness to take risks, openness to new experiences, and toleration of some ambiguity. These reflective discoveries encouraged us along the lines that we might have something of value to share with other professionals involved in international collaborations. Fortunately, our topic was seen as important and the SUNY COIL Conference Committee accepted our proposal to create the “Action Lab” session to further explore these ideas.

**Action Lab Session Description - 2018 COIL Conference**

The presenters organized and facilitated roundtable small group discussions (about 3-4 people) on the topics of developing, building, and sustaining international professional relationships and educational partnerships. The Action Lab was directed toward scholars with and without former COIL/international experiences and designed to enhance the participant’s international exchange knowledge base and identify and address successful conditions for COIL and other international collaborations. The interactive format of a World Café allowed all participants to actively share their thoughts/experiences and pose questions. Important points were recorded and made available after the session.

Some of the guiding questions for the group members included the following:
1. Which have been or can be the major gains from an international collaboration, both for you as a scholar and for your students?

2. Where do you see the major obstacles or hurdles?

3. Which technological tools do you consider useful or not so useful for international work?

4. What does a successful international collaboration require?

5. What are the costs? How do you find the time and energy for collaboration?

6. How do you get started and find a support system like COIL?

7. How do you involve students in international collaboration? Can COIL help?

8. How do you establish and maintain trust in collaboration?

9. What personality traits contribute to long-term collaboration?

10. Is COIL/international collaboration required, supported and/or rewarded in your institution? If so, which kind of support or reward to you perceive? How important is institutional support from your point of view?

The conceptual design for this “Higher Education Café International” originates with the World Café or Knowledge Café concept of group sharing that is semi-structured, but open ended so that participants can share their own experiences, frustrations, and visions. A brief summary of the highpoints of the discussion and unanswered questions were written down by the Recorder at each table. After exchanging thoughts, ideas, and questions for about 10 minutes, participants switched tables and interacted with different people on another pressing topic.

The World Café was composed of several round tables (often times standing tables, reminiscent of a café) equipped with a large piece paper and pens. Each table focused on a different topic. The participants were split into smaller groups of 4 to 6 persons. One person played the role of a Host at each table, thus welcoming the guests, moderating the conversation, and taking notes on the table notepads. After 10 minutes, each group moved on to another table while the Hosts
remain at their table. Next the Hosts welcomed the new group and introduced them to the topic and summed-up the prior conversation based on notes. The group then continued to talk on the topic, adding new ideas and questions. After ten minutes, participants were encouraged to join another table. The Hosts do not change tables and thus become the anchors at each table. Each Host later presented the major outcomes to the whole group.

Participants were constantly involved in learning, sharing, and asking questions. The key points were recorded providing a clear session outcome. Participants chose the topics and had powerful input into the ideas recorded as output. The two group leaders briefly introduced themselves and later become two of the five Hosts. Three additional table Hosts were selected from the participants and the following activities took place:

- 10 minutes: Two Leaders Introduce themselves and format
- 50 minutes: Conversation at the Café tables
- 10 minutes: Summarizing outcomes
- 20 minutes: Debriefing—sharing—questions

Active listening techniques were employed to clarify, extend, and connect the contributions of the participants. The two leaders provided a paper as a “take-away” at the end of the session. This ensured that the leaders remained in their facilitator roles and resisted the temptation to more directly share their own ideas in the Café International Forum.

**Summary**

Clearly our joint collaborative educational efforts were successful and we hope that our reflections might shed some light upon the process of building successful international partnerships. As Kuzhabekova, Hendel, and Chapman (2015) reviewed research conducted on
international higher education, they found that only 11.3% of the 2,302 research publications studied were authored by researchers from at least two different countries. We hope to inspire others who might be able to increase this statistical finding in future decades.

If we had to distill all of our lessons learned down to a few over-arching factors for success in collaborative international education these would be empathy, openness to experience, genuineness, and honesty. For those trained in counseling and psychotherapy (especially for those familiar with the writing of Carl Rogers), such factors will sound very parallel to the client-centered or person-centered theory applied to the teaching/learning environment. Carl Rogers (1969) wrote that human beings have the need to forge healthy and growth-producing “connections” through interpersonal relationships. Our personal collaborative experience working together on educational projects over the past five years echoes the veracity of these insights from counseling and psychotherapy. May these thoughts serve as a catalyst for those who wish to form, maintain, and extend healthy, productive, and respectful international educational relationships.

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Reflecting the Challenges in Internationalised Teaching and Learning of the Systematic Approach COIL.UP

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Abstract

Reflecting the challenges of the systematic approach COIL (Collaborative Online International Learning) allows a structured improvement of the internationalization of higher education. The focus of reflection is set on three different areas of challenge: didactic, technology and organisation. By splitting the dimensions of challenges theoretically, we can clarify their core to find entry points to improve and stabilize the sustainable implementation of internationalization. In the area of technology, the challenge is to build a stable technical infrastructure, which is the precondition of the most internationalization approaches. Secondly, the article focuses on organisational and administrative issues. An administrative framework is necessary to internationalize the curriculum of higher education. Internationalization needs top-down structured planning and implementation goals, as well as teachers, who implement individual projects from the bottom-up. The third challenging dimension focuses on didactics or e-pedagogy. Thereby, not just the outcome and evaluation of achievements matter, but also the question about the impact and the shape of knowledge distribution.

*Keywords:* internationalisation of higher education through digitalisation, reflection of challenges, Collaborative Online International Learning, success factors for internationalisation
**Internationalisation Through Digitalisation**

Ways of teaching and learning are constantly changing in the context of digital globalization in the twenty-first century. The use of e-learning services and learning management systems has been largely established and the extension and stabilization of digital teaching and learning tools are one of the trend topics of university policy (Arnold, Prey, Wortmann, 2015, p. 53). However, little attention has been paid to the potential of systematically combining the idea of internationalisation of higher education curriculum with the use of digital infrastructures and e-learning offers.

The University of Potsdam (Germany) dedicates its attention towards a model which aims towards the institutional embedding of internationalization through digitised teaching and learning scenarios. Furthermore, the idea is to give concrete support for teachers and learners to design their courses and learning environments. The approach has found a name in the “Collaborative Online International Learning” (COIL.UP) project\(^1\) (Knoth & Herrling, 2017) and takes initiative to disseminate and stabilize innovative teaching formats within a local and global context.

\(^1\) See [http://uni-potsdam.de/oil-up](http://uni-potsdam.de/oil-up)
COIL.UP deals with the conditions and limits of the institutionalisation of internationalised e-learning curricula within the university context. As one of the first universities in Germany the project links central higher education strategies concerning internationalisation, e-learning and IT and commits itself to the practice-oriented development of Information Communication Technology (ICT) tools and services, teaching and learning materials, the building of structures of technical and didactical support, as well as the documentation of good practices. The combination of the different measures aims to establish the COIL.UP-format as a natural part of university culture. Therefore, the project improves hybrid mobility (a combination of physical and digital mobility) of teachers and students and thus contributes to the internationalisation of curricula. Figure 1 gives an overview of the three interlinked strategies and the four fields of action with some concrete examples.

Figure 1: Internationalisation through Digitalisation: A framework (own source)
This concept reflects both the combination of top-down and bottom-up initiatives as well as Potsdam’s self-understanding as an innovator in research, especially in ICT-development, teaching and creating blended learning environments.

This article puts light on the relationship between the development of digital infrastructures (with ICT as an example) and the organisational change of higher education institutions. We start with a case based description of a few technological and strategic challenges. Afterwards we discuss some crucial success factors for sustainable internationalisation through digitalisation with regard to didactics (e-pedagogy), technology and organisation. Lastly we end with an outlook.

Case Studies And Challenges

Existing and diverse approaches to foster internationalisation have implications for the organisation itself and the institutional practice. Among the most famous are dual and joint programs and degrees, international professional networks, research cooperations and exchange programs (Hénard, Diamond & Roseveare 2002; Qiang 2003). Most authors (Knoth & Herrling, 2017; Rehatschek et al., 2016; Soria & Troiso, 2014) agree that ICT can play an important role for a successful internationalisation process. However, technology presents only one aspect of a multifaceted change management process. The following three examples illustrate different challenges which arise on the way of shaping a systematic and sustainable internationalisation process through digitalisation.

The Obstacles Of “New” Media

The usage of new media and e-learning technologies is a highly virulent topic which
effects innovative teaching and learning scenarios. The range of digital enrichment varies from supporting administrative processes (such as the course enrollment or formation of peer-groups) to the stimulation of student collaboration for instance via social media activities, virtual classrooms or structured forum discussions up to the digital documentation of learning outcomes via complex systems of knowledge organisation (e.g. wikis, e-portfolios or weblogs).

But each e-learning tool has specific administrative as well as technical and didactical requirements which could hinder both lecturers and students from making them an integral part of the teaching and learning process. The problem is getting even worse when it comes to the development of global learning experiences. Especially the implementation of (inter-)disciplinary and/or cross-cultural learning environments by linking two (or more) university classes in different geographical locations entails various problems.

Several technological challenges have to be solved in order to implement a usable collaborative online international teaching and learning scenario by the use of blog softwares such as wordpress or specific globally networked weblogs like the Canadian platform “newsactivist” (Knoth, 2015) or customized ICT- and e-learning services developed and hosted at the home university. In this article three aspects will be highlighted: accessibility and authentication, media literacy, and content management.

In order to implement virtual classrooms, web services must be accessible from each point of the world and if so, it needs to be clarified how participants could register; this raises the issue of accessibility and authentication. Generally, there are three options: Participants need to create their own account for each tool. That requires a lot of effort for a tool which normally does not become a part of the daily used toolbox. Another option consists in the use of the university account which is usually linked with the identity management system of each higher education
institution. In order to use the account, external students must apply for guest accounts which therefore costs a lot of administrational resources. A third possibility could be a Google or Facebook authentication which is easy to use but comes along with data privacy problems.

Secondly, after the onboarding process has been completed, both instructors and course participants must know how to use a software (and maybe also hardware) correctly. This requires additional time and task related training, either in preparation or within a course. The use of technical functionalities goes hand in hand with communication skills, i.e. knowing how to work in a team and communicate adequately with the given opportunities.

Thirdly, during and especially after a course, problems of content management may arise. How to ensure data privacy? Who takes care of the data (maintenance, archiving)? Participants may want to export their documented learning artefacts in order to archive or exchange their data with other tools, platforms or services. This is not only a technical question related to the interoperability of systems, but also a legal question of copyright, examination and evaluation.

**Strategic Goals In Higher Education Development: Internationalisation Of The Curriculum**

Since last year, internationalisation of curricula has become a very important topic on the strategic agenda of Germany’s higher education system. But most of the mentioned obstacles of new media are either not at all or not adequately embedded into these strategic plans. Moreover, international strategic partnerships are not focused on cooperation in the field of digital infrastructures and cooperative ICT development. Universities of “excellence” such as the Georg-August-Universität Göttingen invest a lot of money to transform their teaching infrastructures. This top down initiative is aimed to institutionalise an international and
intercultural dimension within the core curricula. That means to incorporate a global perspective into learning outcomes, teaching methods, assessment tasks, and support services of nearly all programs (Leask, 2015). It includes mostly content related changes such as new teaching materials or new perspectives on existing teaching materials, for instance related to diversity, anti-discrimination or eurocentrism. Further changes of modules and course concepts are reflected in the practical and professional orientation of learning concepts. These changes are necessary and important on the way down the road to a fully internationalised curriculum, but not sufficient.

One common ground for many occurring challenges is the unfinished Bologna Process. The defined goal of the Bologna Process was to systematically create a zone of joint higher education to make cooperation and exchange easier: “It is an effort to create a framework of comparable and compatible qualifications in terms of workload, learning outcomes, competences and profiles” (Valiulis & Valiulis, 2006, p.223). Lack of resources and different socio-economic settings between partner universities are identified as challenges for a sustainable relation. Furthermore, geographical exclusion and recognition restrictions are not completely managed yet (ibid., p.224). Agreeing on standards for higher education within the EU is thus more complicated than it seems; beyond the EU, European visa restrictions remain a problem when it comes to attracting students and scholars from the global South (ibid., p. 226).

These are only a few examples of the contestation of the Bologna Process which actually does not lead to the institutionalisation of international research and teaching collaborations. If universities want to contribute to the flexibilisation and individualisation of higher education (i.e. flexibilisation of degrees, modularisation of curricula (content) and learning contexts, self-organised learning, key-qualifications and competencies etc.), they might not build more
lighthouses but change the sea (Gruber, 2007; Ehlers, 2013). This paradigmatic change of study programs covers three major topics: (1) self-organisation, (2) spatial/geographical, temporal and content flexibilisation, (3) competence orientation. Study structures and study plans should allow students to define their own learning paths. Polyvalent modules are one option to interlink study programs. Those modules could be filled by digital imports of the curricula. Furthermore, expanded recognition practices of study achievements as well as rules for the certification of achieved competencies are needed. Fully online or blended learning scenarios are one option to become more independent from local (seminar room, country), temporal (time zones, work rhythm) and curricular (disciplinary content, accessibility) limitations. The so called shift from teaching to learning goes hand in hand with a shift from dismissing knowledge to train competencies. For realising that, new (e-)assessment formats such as collaborative project work, on the one hand, and a focus on digital 21st century skills on the other hand (e.g. how to use ICT tools in different professional contexts) are essential (Ehlers, 2013).

All internationalised and digitised study programs must pay attention to changed student-life-cycles as well as to professional ability requirements. In addition, research and teaching activities must be more closely connected, especially in the case of junior researchers/teachers. The higher education system should take into account that new career paths have emerged and junior researchers need new forms of institutional support. Getting international (online) teaching experiences, being physical and digital mobile, and global networking could not be individual issues or part of unique teaching projects. These points have to become an integrated part of the strategic development of each higher education institution.

**Crucial Success Factors For Sustainable Internationalisation**
Individual projects of lecturers are the nucleus of all internationalisation efforts. At best, a corresponding strategy which stimulates and supports individual projects exists at the institutional level. Even if those projects are nothing more than a drop in the ocean, they may provide a blueprint for similar initiatives. Yet, those projects might lack of sustainability for various reasons. In the following section, we ask which conditions are necessary for the long-term internationalisation of innovative digital-based projects.

Seufert and Euler (2005, p. 75) conducted a case study analysis of the sustainable implementation of e-learning innovations in higher education. As a result, they identified five crucial factors which stimulate and promote sustainability. To be innovative and sustainable, the implementation of a learning scenario should first start with analysing didactical aspects, in order to be able to identify which technical tools are most adapted to support the realisation. In a second step, conditions like the organisation (e.g. the support structure, project relevant support processes), the economy (available resources, use potentials of collaborations, align project funding according the promoted internationalisation strategy), and a corresponding culture are crucial aspects to develop the scenario further towards the permanent integration into the institutional context.

However, internationalisation in a brighter context could only be achieved if technological, didactical, organisational, cultural and economic aspects from different institutions synergize and at best suit together. According to Leask and Bridge (2013), whose conceptual framework highlights the relationship between internationalisation of the curriculum and disciplinary as well as institutional conditions, these five aspects play a role and should be taken into account as success factors both at the individual level and at an institutional level and from that ongoing to a regional, national and at best to a global context (cf. Illustration 2). Their
framework allows to identify and conceptualize challenges of internationalisation at every level and to combine both individual and global perspective, in order to ensure the success not only of single internationalisation collaborations but also of long-term projects. Their descriptive framework places knowledge in and around disciplines at the center of successful internationalisation processes. Because internationalisation processes are not an end in itself, they have also to take into account both disciplinary boundaries and transversal, key competencies.

The starting point is the individual with his personal goals, interests and the willingness for taking risks or tackling unforeseeable learning or teaching scenarios. The local roots of individuals, institutions and organisations shape teaching and learning interactions and hereby have a crucial impact on internationalisation. International learning environments not only confronts one with the own position in global settings, but also challenges the awareness of global structures for all participants (Breser, 2017, p.30ff.). That’s why the higher education institution itself should provide an internationalisation framework and strategy which supports projects and helps to connect individual with institutional goals. Thus, we understand ongoing internationalisation development as a combination of top-down and bottom-up processes: while individual projects are supported by institutional strategy, individuals can help to stimulate further institutional developments (Knoth & Herrling, 2017).
In the following, we aim at highlighting this concept by means of didactical, technological and organisational challenges. We argue that reflecting these challenges at the individual, institutional, and regional levels will endorse future internationalisation projects.

**Didactics - The Core Of Teaching And Learning Scenarios**

Beelen (2017, p. 140) identify lecturers as important stakeholders and potential change agents. They can improve intercultural competences by teaching, learning and researching abroad, or in their home university by interacting with students who have a different cultural background. Cultural awareness is important to handle an international classroom, and to enjoy, develop, and support the richness of multiple perspectives (ibid., p. 141).

In stating the importance of open communication and reflecting one’s own expectations -- for teaching staff and students -- Angelika Thielsch describes what she calls “hidden
“curriculum” (Thielsch, 2017, p. 168). Contrary to formal and informal curricula, the hidden curriculum is composed by unspoken and unintended expectations between teachers and students. Teachers might expect more than they actually say. Students and teachers from different cultural backgrounds share different expectations about what should happen in the classroom, what and how to communicate. This leads to misunderstanding. With regard to didactical methods, Thielsch points out the necessity to acknowledge the hidden curricula and to unmask the unspoken rules and judgements: “Because, after all, including a global perspective in higher education teaching and learning implies that both students and academic teaching staff are capable to understand and value the ‘otherness’ in a classroom. And more often than not this means to deal with contradictory expectations” (Thielsch, 2017, p. 185). By unmasking the hidden curricula and being aware about the social-cultural differences in explicitly communicating expectations in higher education, the international classroom can benefit a lot from various perspectives and socialisations in terms of learning and teaching comprehension.

Potsdam’s COIL.UP approach illustrates how a non-physical mobile internationalisation can be performed step by step. Time management of synchronous and asynchronous teaching activities as well as different time schedules of the cooperating universities can be challenging. Here, didactic training for teachers as well as administrative and technical support are important to enable implementation (Knoth & Herrling, 2017, p. 79).

Still, it also contains an excluding impact that has not been enough taken into account yet. Sufficient financial resources, on the one hand, and media competencies by lecturers and students, on the other hand, are the prerequisites of successful internationalisation by digitisation. Lack of media competencies can marginalize participants in their way toward scientific internationalisation. It could lead to asymmetric relationships between the teaching and the
learning sides, hence reproducing hegemonic structures in curricula development. Democratizing globalization means to overcome asymmetric hierarchies in knowledge production and develop integrative systems (Oluwasanmi, 2005; Schelting et al., 2017; Jordan, 2008).

**Technology - The Enabler Of Innovative Scenarios**

Services of digital internationalisation are mostly locally developed and embedded. Therefore, they are only full operable within a single institution or at least also for the partner, without any chances of transferability to other interested parties. The issue of the Journal for Higher Education Development (2017/4) makes evident that solutions for digital internationalisation are predominantly individual approaches developed by single universities. Some of these solutions might be transferable to other universities as well, but a global concept to share transnational research and teaching goals has not been developed yet (May et al., 2017, p. 106). Furthermore, the management of research data, how to save, transfer and work on it while cooperating, is a field which hasn’t been addressed by scientific approaches on the internationalisation of curricula yet (Knoth & Herrling, 2017, p. 75). The question of proper management of research data represents a huge challenge in long-term international higher education collaborations. Until now, neither a common platform, nor a network that allows universities to collaborate, share learning artefacts and ensure national data privacy regulations, are available (ibid., p. 88). Most of the times classes use Facebook, email, Skype and guest accounts on their home-system to communicate, work together and share their learning results, with the drawbacks of the lack of transferability and interoperability of learning artefacts through the use of accepted standards.

Opportunities and possibilities for internationalisation projects significantly correlate with
the available digital infrastructure provided by the institution or by the government in a regional or national context, and is therefore usually a question of financial resources. A modern ICT-infrastructure can be understood as the basis of digitalisation, and depends on the different stakeholders and their will and possibility to distribute resources. If the government (e.g. the U.S.) supports and encourages internationalisation of universities (cf. Beelen, 2017, p.126), more resources are likely to be accessible to build the infrastructure. The advantages of a remote-laboratory (May et al., 2017, p. 110) for different international engineer students is almost unlimited, especially because it can be used from all over the world, if the technical devices are accessible.

Such a platform has been developed at the University of Potsdam under the name of Campus.UP. Our approach is to build up a flexible and extendable communication and collaboration portal providing so called “workspaces” for various teaching and learning scenarios (e.g. groupwork, e-portfolio work, interactive teaching). The scope of functions is adaptable to the needs of every institution through the implementation of web services. The underlying infrastructure addresses most technical challenges described in part 3.2 and provides a base for institutional collaboration and service exchange and use (Kiy, List & Lucke, 2017). In the future, students and lecturers should be able to move freely from one institution to another or from country to country without having to change the experienced virtual environment; only the underlying services change without implications for the user experience.

In order to support the sustainability of internationalisation projects and the transformation from an individual context to a regional or global context, further projects such as Campus.UP have to address aspects of standardization, transferability of artefacts, interoperability, accessibility, and availability of services. ICT can provide solutions to support
various and recurrent learning and teaching scenarios, including e.g. communication, interaction, assessment and knowledge distribution through the use of different methods, tools, and platforms. Furthermore, when trying to foster global citizenship the decentralized identity management (e.g. account management and accounting process at each university) will play a crucial role supporting the internationalised student-life-cycle at its best.

**Organisation - The Environment For Change**

Several authors (Wedler & Karrie, 2017; Goering, 2017) point out that internationalisation of curricula includes another time management than the local, not mobile curricula development. A big challenge for internationalisation is the additional work and expense spent by teachers and students. Additional time expense, didactic development and communication with partner students and teachers (Schelting et.al., 2017, p. 154) can be seen as obstacles. Support for teachers and students is needed at that point. The best ideas could not become reality if concrete implementation in daily university life seems too intricate. Goering (2017) points out the necessity of analyzing the organisational situation and environment, and developing a strategic implementation plan. Administrations are the key player at different stages for that structural support (Goering, 2017, p. 125). Beelen (2017) identify university management, international offices and lecturers as important key players or stakeholders in the internationalisation process.

As we already mentioned, a systematic interlocking from a top-down policy and a bottom-up implementation enables a stabile internationalisation (Beelen, 2017, p. 139f). Providing a top-down policy means, that the university management defines internationalisation of curricula as a policy goal. The policy goal must be supported with financial resources and an organisational framework that lecturers and faculty staff can refer to. The bottom-up implementation is done by
the teaching staff and students (Knoth & Herrling, 2017, p.82).

All challenges described in the field of technology have to be supported and defined within each organisation and at best beyond on a regional and global level. The main challenges to be addressed concern grading and certification processes, simplification of competency mapping and increasing quality management as well as the willingness for external accreditation. However, all this should be compatible with each university’s individualisation and curricular specialisation. Here too, ICT can play an important role to provide contemporary solutions.

As a process of positioning within global settings, internationalisation through digitalisation should avoid the emergence of hegemonic structures instead of promoting it. Therefore, two aspects have to be distinguished: the promotion of further cooperation between different countries as well as tendencies of convergence and interdependence which could ultimately be a result of globalisation (Enders, 2003; Jordan, 2008).

**Outlook - Designing The Shift Toward Sustainable Internationalisation**

Nationwide defined content and Western perspectives can be enriched by intercultural exchange and international perspectives. Since this addresses the roots and the reproduction of global power-structures, it is crucial to be aware of the kind of internationalised curricula one is approaching. That can be handled with a conscious reflection and communication, as well as the clear definition of goals and motivation. During the internationalisation process universities act within their own cultural context and negotiate their own position in the field of knowledge production. This is a political process and is therefore confronted with power structures and hierarchies. With globalisation and cultural sensitivity, the hegemonic distribution of defined knowledge can be questioned. Perspectives ascribed as marginalized need to be included in order
to achieve a democratic, balanced, transnational network of teaching, researching and learning (Breser, 2017, p. 33; Jordan, 2008, p. 100).

As we have shown, the COIL.UP approach is one possibility to initiate and structure change processes at higher education institutions, which pay attention to transnational digitised collaborations to reach internationalisation as a strategic goal as well as to face other global challenges mentioned above. Thereby, main questions of how to handle individualisation (e.g. de-institutionalisation, patchwork study cycles, assessment of competences etc.) and flexibilisation (e.g. informal/non-formal learning, self-organized learning, modularisation and pluralization of learning contexts etc.) processes of teaching and learning have to be asked.

In this paper, we could only sketch some technological, organisational, and didactical challenges. Future work has to deal with challenges regarding economy and culture. In order to ease the internationalisation through digitalisation process, best practices in the fields of technology, didactics, organisation, economy and culture have to be shared and have to be made accessible. Solutions have to be fostered on a regional, national and global level and have to be designed and implemented in merging top-down and bottom-up processes. Internationalisation through digitalisation provides a chance for cooperation within and beyond institutional and geographical borders. However, this needs a shift from single, individual projects to a holistic approach defining goals regardless of institutional or national boundaries.

When shifting to a global context, ICT services and solutions across institutional and national borders become more necessary than ever. Here, general circumstances and conditions that favor the shift from individual projects to a sustainable implementation based on standards and reusable solutions have to be further analysed.
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Educational Challenges in a Globalized World and in Times of Inequality: Two Proposals from a COIL Perspective

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Abstract

Colombia is experiencing a historic moment with regard to the peace agreement and the new dynamics of the post-conflict period. At the same time, the country is joining the digital transformation that the world is experiencing, generating new challenges in the training of future leaders of the country. We are convinced that COIL-based courses can be a great tool to reduce inequality and create bridges between government, industry and academia, not only at a national level, but also internationally, thus learning the good practices of developed countries and sharing the needs of the new emerging economies. To respond to this need, we propose two types of COIL-based courses that seek to democratize learning in an innovative and meaningful way, also creating positive networks that promote the development of the global economy from the perspective of respect for different cultures and learning the good practices that are born when we are united in diversity.
Motivation

Colombia is currently experiencing a historic moment with regard to the peace agreements with the FARC (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia - Colombian Revolutionary Armed Forces) and the post-conflict period. The way in which we understand education and its scope has been modified, taking into account the new affected student communities, as well as academic challenges. On the other hand, the new “country brand” has made Colombia an attractive niche for companies interested in the Latin American market (Bothwell, 2016).

To this historical moment must be added the will of the country to transform itself digitally (Luna, 2018), attending to the global needs of the current 4.0 revolution (Salkin, Öner, Ustundag & Cevikcan, 2018; Gauthier, 2017). Thus, as the co-founder of Singularity University suggests, “we are living a magical moment, an extraordinary moment in the history of humanity. We can, as individuals and as small groups of people, literally do what before only governments or large companies could do.” (Diamandis, 2017).

In Colombia, although the intention to generate collaborations between academia, government and industry exists, the gap between these three nodes, from the well-known triple helix model (Leydesdorff & Etzkowitz, 1996), is incipient. The academy is not preparing students for the real needs of the country. In addition, companies historically were focused on sales and not on production, which makes this type of collaboration even more difficult.

Taking into account this historical moment of the post-conflict period and the digital transformation of industries, the skills and capabilities of people are more important than the physical industrial capacity thanks to the fact that digitalization decentralizes the large industrial sectors (transportation, television, music and even possibly the banking sector) (Zhang, 2017).
Therefore, it is vitally important to develop this type of skills in our young people and thus have a differentiator and a regional leading role in this new digital economy.

In this order of ideas, the triple helix model, being made up of people from different entities, encourages cooperation rather than competitiveness, and promotes development of the economy and of knowledge. In the task of preparing our students, it is necessary to take into account both the hard skills and the soft skills focused on both of the above. It is also important to note that some jobs that the young people we are training are going to do in fifteen or twenty years do not exist today, hence the importance of incorporation of “learning how to learn” and soft skills such as innovation, entrepreneurship, empowerment and resilience. In order to learn from international good practices and share learning, it is very important to promote internationalization experiences where students become acquainted with, and interact in, different schools of thought. Also, most of the needs of industry are international and not local, thus digitalization benefits globalization and reduces physical borders.

This is why professionals must be prepared to work virtually with people from other countries, who have other cultures, customs and abilities. It is also important that they get used to thinking and solving real-life problems in a multidisciplinary way and emulating the real constraints of working life (time, resources, stress and time zones, among others). In addition, this globalization of knowledge requires minimum quality standards and encourages examinations of skills that are used internationally. Obviously, the success of the results depends on the preparation of these exams and, therefore, access to graduate programs, jobs, etc. Thus, it is important to look for different means that allow the democratization of this type of action and connect experts and institutions that transfer knowledge and good practices, in order to foster them in other countries or developing areas. It is also very important this knowledge to be appropriated by industry and
governments, so that the gap between stakeholders diminishes or disappears, growing, then, as a global community and not a segregated one.

**Why COIL?**

To respond to the tensions described above, we need to generate a community that discusses, debates and collaborates, and that in the future advances the frontier of knowledge in acts of co-creation. Virtual co-working is the most efficient and economical way for this cognitive democratization. Moreover, at the same time it is responding to the current need to erase borders and train the participants of this experience to work virtually. The transfer of knowledge, of which we spoke earlier, takes place in international settings, thus taking up good practices according to the experiences and skills present in each country. Finally, active problem-based learning centered on the “student” (participant), multidisciplinary, meaningful and multilevel.

**Conclusion**

We consider that this pedagogical innovation proposal promotes one of the most important skills that we want to strengthen in our young people: “learning how to learn”. In addition, it responds to a need for inclusion and social equity. The proposal seeks that our future professionals be able to take advantage of the triple helix model in the best way at a global level, which will have a significant social impact not only for empowerment in terms of the improvement of multicultural competencies but also for the use of tools in digital environments, all of this thanks to the methodological innovations proposed by COIL.
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From Mystery to Mastery: Creating & Enhancing the Ultimate Virtual Classroom Experience

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Abstract

Often the highlight of the student experience in an international collaboration is the quality of a dynamic group interaction. However, planning an effective synchronous student learning experience is a challenging hurdle when confronted with different time zones, modalities of teaching, as well as different levels of technological support and expertise. With these issues in mind, this paper will analyze a 2017 case study from SUNY Empire State College International Education, where geographically dispersed faculty members interacted with remote student groups through a series of synchronous course meetings online for a period of eight consecutive days. Making this experience more complicated, one of the courses was a Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) course that combined students from four institutions. Through this experience, students, educators and administrators learned the practical applications of utilizing technological tools, many of which are globally available. In this case, a faculty trip to Lebanon was cancelled three days prior to the pre-arranged face-to-face meetings with students. The university did not want to cancel the course meetings in which both faculty and students had prepared to attend, and thus, decided to replace them with a virtual residency. Faculty and staff pulled together to recreate a substitute method for in-person interaction utilizing Zoom videoconferencing as a virtual classroom; in addition, Moodle, Video repository tools and WhatsApp were also used as form of backup support. Through these intensive virtual sessions, both effective and ineffective ways of delivering educational content virtually were observed. Some practical issues which arose and needed to be addressed included faculty training with virtual tools, resolving common logistical problems, using course moderators and backup applications effectively, identifying methods to engage students in the virtual classroom, and recording and sharing the course meetings according to ADA regulations.
Introduction

The digital age has fundamentally transformed many facets of the human experience by reshaping certain aspects so that they are more interactive and extensive. This is seen in our communication habits, in various entertainment platforms, and in our learning experiences. Technology is reshaping many aspects of education. Diverse global citizens are now exposed to a variety of scholarly expertise and courses online. These virtual tools are providing an opportunity to rethink how educational delivery methods are being utilized and dispersed to distant student populations across the globe. Terms like virtual classroom are frequently used these days. A Google search of the term (conducted in February 2018) resulted in over 23 million hits, while terms such as virtual conference or tele-collaboration (O'Dowd, 2016), yielded even more results. Educators have used synchronous educational sessions using technology that transfers audio and video or, the “virtual classroom,” for nearly two decades (Hoffmann, 2015.) As this trend indicates, today’s modern educators try to keep up with ever-evolving technological trends and capabilities in order to deliver educational content virtually. Thus, the way educational content is delivered is continuously evolving, in the hopes of creating better engagement and extending outreach to those challenged by socio-economic status and even their access to technology itself. Inevitably, these new educational delivery methods are changing the way students learn and want to be taught. Educators are challenged now more than ever to find innovative ways to bridge the crossroad of the digital divide between educators and diverse student populations. This is especially apparent when institutions take part in international student collaborations where student experience can be remarkably different across various cultural groups.

Effectiveness of the Virtual Classroom

When shifting from the physical to the virtual classroom, often the barometer of its effectiveness is based upon the level of classroom engagement and whether or not the students
gained a positive learning experience. This can be difficult to assess, much like assessing a live physical classroom interaction, and is often measured through student queries or student performance. When educators describe and evaluate their personal experience with virtual teaching, mixed results are reported (Martin & Parker, 2014). As it seems, success does not depend on the mode of delivery, but more on preparation, design and facilitation of the educational content. Some educators have described having positive student learning experiences when utilizing synchronous virtual meetings (Yasmoto 2006), while others (Koenig 2010) experienced negative results.

Positive results have been reported through measuring student overall performance. For example, Yilmaz (2015) conducted a study on 63 students in which half of them took traditional lessons and the other half participated in virtual sessions. Test scores for the students taking virtual sessions were higher. However, educators who poll students tend to find mixed results. Altiner (2015) conducted an evaluation survey on 80 students from two universities in Turkey, who participated in video-conferenced English courses. Even though a vast majority of these students appreciated the virtual interaction, they still stated that they would have preferred a traditional classroom setting.

The Arsenal for the Synchronous Classroom: Virtual Tools

It is clear that selecting correct instructional tools is a very important part of planning a course. A number of frameworks for selecting media and technology for educational purposes have been developed over the years. For instance, Reiser and Gagne (1983) discussed as many as ten models for media selection. Bates (1995) created a model that applies to the selection of technology and tools in an online setting, a so called ACTIONS model, which emphasizes Access, Cost, Teaching, Interactivity, Organizational issues, Novelty and Speed. Over time, the tools have evolved, but the questions educators face when selecting the appropriate tool for
communication and collaboration with students are essentially still the same (Boling et al. 2014, Jackson, 2010). Furthermore, Jackson (2010) emphasizes the difference between tools that primarily support communication (such as Skype) and tools designed to support collaboration (such as Google Docs) and recommends to evaluate each tool on both communication and collaboration aspects.

In the case study of SUNY Empire State College, synchronous virtual class meetings were created with the videoconferencing tool Zoom, the texting phone application WhatsApp as a means of backup support, and the college’s LMS, Moodle, as a repository for the recorded video sessions over Zoom. Zoom proved to be efficient due to its features as an online (cloud based) tool, easily accessible on both the laptop and mobile phone for both students and faculty, with no cost to students and at a very low cost to the college. Zoom also offers collaborative features such as text-based chat, screen sharing, breakout rooms, polling, and the ability to record sessions in the cloud.

Virtual Residency: Overview & Reflections

In short, SUNY Empire State College (ESC) has partnerships with two institutions in Lebanon, American University of Technology (AUT) and the American University of Science and Technology (AUST). In what is referred to as the “Lebanon Residency Program,” ESC faculty travel once per term for a full week of intensive classroom learning with the students who reside in Lebanon, as a supplement to online instruction in Moodle.

In November 2017 this face-to-face residency was cancelled, and rather than risk completely losing this key engagement piece that has enhanced this program over the years, faculty and staff pulled together quickly to reenact the best substitution they could think of for a live experience. The faculty needed to replicate the engagement at a distance. International Education at ESC has been using the videoconferencing tool Zoom for quite a few years, but
they had not been using its advanced features of Zoom prior to this incident.

As the residency was cancelled three days before its intended start, it was mass communicated through various means that the residency would be changed to a virtual format. Zoom practice sessions were held using breakout rooms, chats, and polling features, where faculty and staff experimented with students on different devices (smartphones, tablets, and computers) using these features. Tutorials were also created, and links to them were distributed. Also, a moderator was assigned to each virtual course meeting, so that faculty could concentrate on course content, and not have to deal with logistical issues while teaching.

Over the course of eight consecutive days, 15 virtual course meetings were held over Zoom, each of which was approximately two-hours-long. The faculty member for each meeting physically resided in different geographical areas across Europe and the U.S, while students were mainly in Lebanon, but also in the US, Turkey, and Greece. Most of the virtual meetings consisted of groups ranging from 8-17 students; engagement and logistical issues were manageable, but still occurred.

The most common logistical problems included students having difficulty accessing the virtual classroom due to issues such as poor Internet connectivity, Zoom application errors, not having enough phone data via 3G to view an entire meeting, problems with their microphone or camera, and sometimes, getting kicked out due to the loss of electricity in Lebanon. Other student logistical problems pertained to not knowing how to upload files to the virtual classroom or how to share presentation slides.

In all of these instances, the virtual class moderator became an essential tool, assisting students to overcome their technical problems by talking them through it via WhatsApp, a texting tool. Students would explain their problem to the moderator through texting, often showing screenshots of the specific error message they had. In other instances, the screenshots merely showed the Zoom application, so the moderator could tell them where to “click” and
what to do in order to solve the problem. In situations that involved sharing files, the students simply emailed the file to the moderator, who in turn shared it in the Zoom session on behalf of the student.

The other issues encountered involved student engagement. Faculty members needed to deliver a virtual class that would result in a positive learning experience. It was quickly discovered that the typical lecture format of a bricks-and-mortar classroom did not replicate well in a video conference with at least a dozen participants. Interactive discussions where students responded either through talking or texting proved more engaging. Specifically, the use of polling features and breakout rooms on Zoom enhanced class discussions. In addition, because of bandwidth or language issues, students had a difficult time concentrating on the spoken word alone. In such cases, the moderator was able to facilitate by typing on a Word document with the main points or questions being raised by the faculty member and displaying them largely on the screen—and, as such, replicating a typical whiteboard used in actual classrooms. Because this task was delegated to the moderator, the instructor was able to focus on academic content rather than logistics.

**The Extended Virtual Classroom**

One challenging interaction was a scheduled Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) virtual classroom session between students in Lebanon and New York as part of a grant from the Stevens Initiative Project.¹ The original plan was to have all of the students in Lebanon in one classroom and to connect them through Zoom (as one Zoom video participant) along with many dispersed students in New York. However, this virtual residency

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¹ The Stevens Initiative is an international effort to build global competence for students in the United States and the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) by growing and enhancing the field of virtual exchange: online, international, and collaborative learning. To learn more, see the Stevens Initiative website here: [http://www.stevensinitiative.org/](http://www.stevensinitiative.org/)
format pushed the envelope where we had 33 participants on a Zoom video meeting, all of whom were expected to be interacting, not simply observing. Interestingly enough, this virtual meeting proved to be one of the most engaging meetings due to its active use of polling, breaking into groups using the Zoom breakout room feature, and having a moderator actively deal with students who could not connect or were dropped from virtual session for various reasons.

_The benefits of Polling during the Synchronous Classroom_

The instructors for the COIL collaboration, Dr. Rhianna Rogers (SUNY Empire State College and Visiting Professor at the American University of Technology in Halat, Lebanon) and co-instructor Dr. Andrew Hashey (SUNY Old Westbury) decided to employ polling as a method to engage students while teaching in a synchronous environment. During this interactive Zoom meeting, students were asked to answer both yes and no and open-ended questions. While one instructor lectured, the other instructor interjected student comments and questions posed in the chat area. What was revealed was that polling students during the lecture provided a way to measure overall student understanding of a topic. Additionally, having faculty be able to answer a variety of questions at once, and make effective, databased decisions about what topics to further address in future classroom materials and meetings made the interaction more engaging for all involved.

When designing this learning experience, Rogers and Hashey envisioned that using polling would contribute to students’ virtual dialogue through the application of the anthropological perspective of ethnographic analysis (i.e., digital anthropology/netnography) and the educational paradigms of the learning sciences, but what they discovered was that much more learning took place during this exchange. Students posted reflections of the collaborative meeting afterwards and several stated that the format of this interaction helped them learn about cultural similarities and differences as well as course content simply from the different ways
that both student groups interacted virtually. In sum, feedback from students in both courses suggested that their interactions in this session enhanced their learning process as well as develop cross-cultural understandings.

Some specific benefits of using polling were noted:

1. Polling provided the instructors with immediate feedback about what aspects of the discussion/materials were understood by students;

2. Polling provided students with breaks from learning. Students typically tend to absorb information in 15-20 minute blocks (McAllister, 2009.) Using polling allows an instructor to change the materials in a way that keeps students engaged.

3. Polls can improve attendance if it's factored into the grade (e.g. participation points).

4. Polling and allowing for difference student perspectives can stimulate conversation among students in class.

Getting student feedback is essential in helping a professor know how the class is progressing. Polls and surveys increase the likelihood of getting honest answers and greater participation from students. Using technology that simplifies the process, like Zoom, polls and surveys can be an integral part of an educator’s lesson plan.

**Recommendations and Conclusion**

Because the preparation for the virtual residency was conducted in a rather short period, not all of the possible problems could be anticipated. Byham & Lang (2014) list ten common pitfalls with virtual sessions, and based on their list, at least three of these were observed --not having had time to properly select and train facilitators, not pilot-testing the sessions, and not practicing extensively. In hindsight, a number of practices that can be improved were identified, in addition to practices that have worked better than expected.

**Preparation of Faculty and Students for Virtual Sessions:** For those participants who may be new to video-conferencing, online tutorials for the use of its basic functions is pivotal.
It is useful to run a practice meeting in advance with faculty and students to share and practice basic features. If the sessions are recorded, it is also necessary to address rules about sharing personal information.

Managing Virtual Sessions: Day and time for a session needs to be selected carefully, considering schedules of faculty and students (both of which may have full time jobs), as well as differences in time zones. Sessions need to be structured also in consideration of bandwidth, especially if there is a plan to show YouTube videos during a session. Having a plan set upfront on procedure to resolve most common technical and logistical issues is also vital. Students need to know what to do, whom to contact and how, if they have a technical or logistical problem, to resolve the issue.

Student Engagement: In a long Zoom meeting, it is absolutely necessary to find ways to keep students engaged. Just because a student is logged in, doesn't necessarily mean they are sitting by the computer and paying attention. In the case of the virtual residency, students stayed actively engaged mainly through the use of polling, chat features, and group work in breakout rooms. It is also suggested that you have students turn on their video cameras so that you can see what they are doing during class. Finally, students could better focus on lecture material when broken down in short intervals followed by discussion (see McAllister, 2009.)

Role of the Moderators: It would be difficult for an instructor to direct a synchronous virtual session with multiple participants while, at the same time, working to engage students. Having a moderator at the same time provide the instructor with technological support in the form of being able to monitor attendance and help struggling students. This work clearly requires dynamic multitasking and it is best if done by more than one person. A faculty member can concentrate on content while a moderator focuses on logistics and addressing technical issues.

Recording and Sharing of Recorded Sessions: Even when the virtual session attendance
is compulsory, there are always students who are not able to attend, often because of objectively acceptable reasons. Additionally, students who attend do not necessarily remember all of the content. Therefore, recording the Zoom sessions provides students with an option to view or review it later.

Logistics and technology to record sessions and providing access to recordings for students must be planned in advance. This includes technical aspects of downloading, uploading, converting and sharing large video files. Other issues to address include recording a Zoom session to the cloud vs. the faculty’s local computer, recording sensitive or personal information, ADA compliance issues, and college policies of sharing recordings outside of the institution (as is often the case with international collaborations).

**Conclusion**

These recommendations are clearly applicable in particular for synchronous virtual sessions in online courses, but as the use of virtual classrooms grows exponentially these days, these tips can help many other educators who look to interact synchronously with mixed and dispersed student groups online.
Works Cited


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Facing the Challenges of Virtual Exchange in a “World Affairs & Human Rights” COIL Collaboration between Lebanon and the United States

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Abstract

Despite the undeniable benefits of an inter-university exchange through COIL, it is important to keep in mind that for each institution, the adoption of COIL, the implementation of a common syllabus, communicating across cultures, and the use of technology and virtual communication platforms, all present important challenges for the administration, professors, and students who are immersed in this type of cross-cultural course. The purpose of this paper is to answer the question: “What are the different challenges that face every participant involved in an experience of virtual exchange?”
Facilitating the Challenges of Virtual Exchange in a “World Affairs & Human Rights” COIL Collaboration between Lebanon and the United States

In the process of virtual inter-university teaching and learning, students engage in new sociocultural interactions. This weaving of linkages is a useful way to enhance students’ communication and intercultural skills by forming a space for cyber-immersion that promotes cultural cooperation, and motivates them to develop knowledge and skills that are rarely mobilized in a more formal setting. They gain social and academic skills as well as a sense of responsibility and autonomy outside class. These are the objectives of a Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) course: to form academic and cultural exchange projects designed to stimulate inter-institutional and professorial academic cooperation, which, while aiming at pedagogical innovation between two foreign classes, also strengthens the intercultural component for students and enables a look at social, economic, cultural, behavioural, and ecological phenomena. It also offers an opportunity to observe and analyze these following an interaction using media and computer tools.

Despite the undeniable benefits of an inter-university exchange through COIL, it is important to keep in mind that for each institution, the adoption of COIL, the implementation of a common syllabus, communicating across cultures, and the use of technology and virtual communication platforms, all present important challenges for the administration, professors, and the students who are immersed in this type of cross-cultural course.

The purpose of this paper is to answer the question: “What are the different challenges that face every participant involved in an experience of virtual exchange?” The comments offered here are based upon an evaluation of a COIL program offered in Spring 2017, with the intention of developing and deploying a learning strategy more adapted to the demands of the students, in order to build the favorable conditions for a new inter-university cultural exchange between the Fashion Institute of Technology (FIT), in New York City, USA, and the American
University of Technology (AUT), Byblos, Lebanon. The COIL program was offered throughout two courses that semester, “Introduction to World Affairs” at FIT taught by Dr. Praveen Chaudhry, and “Human Rights” at AUT taught by Dr. Céline Merheb.

**World Affairs & Human Rights COIL Collaboration**

The aim of this particular COIL project was to enable the students to personally acquire new knowledge and skills, through the convergence of World Affairs and Human Rights concepts, but also by confronting two rather divergent visions: that of the East and the West. Through a common project between the two classes, the students gained a better knowledge of the international environment while trying to respond to the "problems" posed by assigned common readings and contextualized videos presented on the platform of Facebook, that they created together in teams and reflected upon as a group in comments viewed by all.

The project was created out of current concrete themes and issues happening in real life decided on by the professors after several weeks of consultation. Then they designed a common syllabus for the duration of the exchange, and presented the project to the students of both classes, with the explanation of the intended actions and assignments. The two professors and their respective students had to reach an explicit consensus on how to approach the subjects in order to reach the final goal: a joint project between different groups from both classes.

Although a number of studies highlight the benefits of COIL and draw a positive balance, others are more differentiated. Therefore, it was important to the professors to develop a certain self-criticism based on the fruitful exchange described here, knowing that this cooperation would result in an active exchange of information and ideas, that would also allow them to advance in technical and academic matters for the benefit of their future COIL projects.

**Implementing Virtual Exchange**
Dr. Chaudhry and Dr. Merheb soon came to understand that virtual exchanges in university courses present administrative challenges that can be described as hierarchical, organizational, and technical, and faced by students and professors alike. In their experience at AUT and FIT, administrative leadership at each of their universities offered crucial support to manage the challenges in their COIL initiatives. They found that it was necessary to have a shared vision from the top with a dynamic strategic plan to coordinate the administrative support needed from student services, technical support, and teacher training that was all necessary to set up these virtual learning experiences. For example, at FIT, the responsibility of coordinating COIL has been delegated to the Assistant Dean of International Education who reports to the Dean of International Education, who reports to the Vice President for Academic Affairs. Assistance for faculty and students also comes from their department chairs, the Center for Excellence in Teaching, the Office of Distance Learning, and Grants Office, all reporting to the Academic Affairs. This streamlined structure of offices and senior administrators is a sustainable infrastructure that enables faculty to establish and expand COIL partnerships.

Regarding technical expertise, the universities ensured the permanent maintenance of infrastructure to minimize the malfunctions likely to reinforce the resistance to change of some teachers. Again, at FIT, for instance, the Center for Excellence in Teaching and the Office of Online Learning provide instructional technology tools for instructors. The Information Technology department ensured that Skype, portable cameras, and other equipment were available to facilitate video conferences. Technology support was available by phone and email. Prompt responses were enormously helpful.

As professors, Dr. Merheb and Dr. Chaudhry had also to face the academic and pedagogical challenges of combining online teaching with traditional teaching, adjusting their course learning outcomes and syllabi, and choosing different evaluation criteria. Another challenge involved their obligation as leaders of this project to provide full support to the
students so that they could become more independent while interacting with the students of the other class, and ensuring full participation in the team work. Both faced the challenge to maintain a fair partnership between themselves that became not only interconnected but also interdependent in academic matters.

Assessing Student Needs for Virtual Exchange

In order to assess the challenges experienced by the American and Lebanese students, they analyzed the responses that their students provided in the Global Competency Assessment Report by the SUNY COIL Center related to the three qualitative assessments administered before, during, and after the course was concluded. The main takeaway was that while the project had helped to remove the inhibitions of the students in terms of cultural interactions, and they had learned a lot about each other’s views, it had also presented multiple difficulties for them.

To the question “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”, they found that some students became aware of the differences in their perspectives about the same subjects, and were sensitive about how to express them on social media:

*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, but in general, it was a fair job interacting with other students from abroad.*

Another important challenge involved building trust among students in the virtual teams, since it was sometimes uncomfortable to have completely opposing views on the same topic:

*I think the biggest challenge was when our class had an entirely different opinion as*
the students from Lebanon on one of the topics we discussed with the class. So, when we interacted with them we had to try to communicate how we were feeling and how we got to the conclusion of our opinions, but at the same time try to understand where they were coming from.

Many comments by the students lamented about the lack of time needed for building relationships and making decisions while working as a group in order to present a video within two to three weeks, and also that the amount of extra work added to a ‘usual’ course was challenging for them. They wanted more time to interact and less time on the content.

There were way too many writing assignments on subject matters, and less on our cultural - personal experiences.

Some of the topics chosen were psychologically challenging for some of the students since they were directly linked to current social and humanitarian issues, such as genocide, human displacement, and human trafficking.

The only challenge for me was because I did not know American history that much so I sometimes had difficulties following the lesson, also I think this course is psychologically challenging, because of the matters we discuss, as a sensitive person I sometimes had difficulties emotionally.

Concerning the use of English language, some students said that it was difficult for them to communicate with the other participants of the project. Nevertheless, the results demonstrated that the majority in both classes made an extra effort to communicate effectively. Some of the Lebanese students struggled with having insufficient English language skills:

Yes. Of course, language. I am always struggling with how to say something and write and read. It was my problem throughout this whole course.

Finally, the results indicate that using technical tools for making the videos presented difficulties for some of the students.
It was stressful to make a video for me because I am not good at preparing videos but then I love the idea because it was good to see others video too.

An analysis of the overall results demonstrated that successful intercultural exchange through COIL in this experience depended on three factors characterizing the students as well as the professors: aptitude, behavior, and existing intercultural competencies, the latter depending on four components: knowledge, social skills, learning ability, and technical know-how.

**Conclusion**

A positive experience resulted from an increased knowledge about the values and practices in both cultural systems, American and Lebanese. All participants thought they developed and enhanced their social and communication skills. They also expressed a new desire to relativize their own conceptions and points of view, to accept that they are not the only views that are possible or valid, and to learn to see them “from the outside.” They developed their ability to implement a new interpretive system, and collect and analyze data belonging to another culture. They also built their know-how through this intercultural exchange. They acquired knowledge about a new culture during the interaction, even under the constraints of virtual communication, established comparisons between the two cultural systems through observation and identification of cultural phenomena inherent in the foreign culture, and brought it closer to the phenomena in their own culture. The students and their professors all acquired new knowledge and skills as active agents overcoming the challenges presented through the COIL collaboration.

Ultimately, this COIL project was an adventure lasting a whole semester and it was enriched by trial and error. They’re doing it again in Spring 2018 with new groups of students. Its academic and cultural exchange raised intercultural awareness in the participants and contributed to the building of knowledge, expertise and know-how, but they also concede that
its dynamic is not without gaps and need for amendments. Diversity being inherent in any cross-cultural exchange program, the priority measure is to adopt in order to accommodate, and with the essential challenges of a COIL partnership, it is paramount to collaborate equitably in the content and the form of the exchange for all participants throughout the experience.
La Salle Mexico COILing Through the Years: Learnings and Outcomes

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Abstract

La Salle University has had an agreement with the SUNY Center for Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) for the last four years. During this time, collaborative courses have been implemented between both institutions. Such collaborations range from 4 to 12 weeks and give new contextual meaning to the subjects, while providing students new venues to develop cross-cultural awareness. Classes may be fully online or, more often, offered in blended formats with face-to-face sessions taking place at both schools, while collaborative student work takes place online. This allows the interaction between both groups generating knowledge through the exchange of experiences from their own reality and analytical proposals as an outcome from reflection and collaborative work. For La Salle University, this model offers the possibility to students who cannot afford exchange and mobility programs to have an international experience during their university education due to the development of important intercultural, communicative and digital skills that may prepare them for the XXI Century globalized professional world. La Salle recognizes the multiple benefits that this kind of courses offer to faculty, students and institutions and this paper shares the results and benefits that these experiences have led to Universidad La Salle to consider the possibility of extending the program to the Lasallian international network and other institutions around the world. As an example, the paper describes the COIL Course: “Seminario de Temas Contemporáneos de Comunicación” that has been taught for five consecutive periods. Its challenges, adjustments and students’ testimonies that makes better to understand how this kind of courses enhance student’s learnings and allow institutions to internationalize their curriculum.
**Introduction**

New generations are becoming increasingly aware of being, not only citizens of their own communities, but also citizens of the world. They are aware of the interconnection between different countries at the social, political, economic and professional levels.

Today, many companies require professionals who have the necessary skills to interact in an increasingly articulated world. These skills include the ability to communicate in other languages, the ability to work collaboratively and the ability to solve problems together; all with a mastery of digital skills and with attitudes towards their peers governed by an ethical conscience and respect for cultural, linguistic, religious, physical and / or ideological differences, among others.

In this context, institutions of higher education have the commitment of providing their students with actions that enable them to face the challenges that the globalized professional world presents to them. Professional preparation cannot be limited to content approach and task development within a classroom; what students as future professionals need is to enlarge their horizons and have the opportunity to know, compare, characterize, contextualize, analyze and recognize the differences that exist in different cultural, social, political and economic contexts.

Therefore, High Education Institutions face the challenge of providing their students with experiences that allow them to develop this kind of skills and knowledge, regardless of their professional area. In order to live meaningful experiences that allow the student to know other realities, other contexts, many High Education Institutions have been strengthening their internationalization programs by expanding their agreements, offering their students access to academic exchanges, short study abroad programs and mobility. However, it is well known that this benefit reaches only a few, because of multifactorial reasons ranging from economics to cultural or social factors. As we all know, not all students can access these kinds of programs and
at the end of their studies will not have intercultural skills and global competence, so important for current competitiveness.

**Needed Skills of the XXI Century Student**

Nowadays many institutions have been taking over the development of those skills that their students must develop, in the Information, Knowledge and Communication Society. Jenkins H. (2009) in collaboration with the McArthur Foundation defines eleven skills the school must develop in the New Media Culture:

- Play as the capacity to experiment with the surroundings as a form of problem solving.
- Performance as the ability to adopt alternative identities for the purpose of improvisation and discovery.
- Simulation as the ability to interpret and construct dynamic models of real-world processes.
- Appropriation as the ability to meaningfully sample and remix media content.
- Multitasking as the ability to scan the environment and shift focus onto salient details.
- Distributed cognition as the ability to interact meaningfully with tools that expand mental capacities.
- Collective intelligence as the ability to pool knowledge and compare notes with other toward a common goal.
- Judgment as the ability to evaluate the reliability and credibility of different information sources.
- Transmedia navigation as the ability to follow the flow of stories and information across multiple modalities.
Networking as the ability to search for, synthesize, and disseminate information.

Negotiation as the ability to travel across diverse communities, discerning and respecting multiple perspectives, and grasping and following alternative norms.

According to this, somehow, all pedagogical strategies planned by faculty must contribute in a way to enable students develop one or more of these skills. Actually, a great challenge to afford for Higher Education Institutions nowadays.

For Jenkins, H. (2009), education needs promote student to “…learn how to integrate knowledge from multiple sources, including music, video, online databases, and other media” learn how “to think critically about information that can be found nearly instantaneously throughout the world” and to “…participate in the kinds of collaboration that new communication and information technologies enable, but increasingly demand”

The development of digital literacy is not only a goal for private institutions, the UNESCO (2018), states that “Information literacy and lifelong learning have been described as the beacons of the information society, illuminating the courses to development, prosperity and freedom”. For the UNESCO (2018) Information Literacy empowers people in the following: seek, evaluate, use and create information effectively. In addition, to make it possible, users need to have the skills “to use information and communication technologies and their applications to access and create information.” In the Use of the Internet in its Domains of Competence (UNESCO, 2011), it is stated what this organization is pursuing in this particular field, which is very important as a guideline to higher education institutes in the XXI Century:

Table 1. UNESCO Use of the Internet in its Domains of Competence (UNESCO, 2011)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy</th>
<th>Working with Member States on the development and analysis of ICT policies in education and highlighting how these policies can be aligned to wider societal and economic goals.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quality e-Learning</td>
<td>UNESCO’s aims to provide policy advice to governments and institutions on the establishment of quality assurance systems to monitor the quality of the open and distance learning, in particular the cross-border higher education. The Organization is also developing tools to support e learning including open and distance learning, eg. the Open Training Platform (OTP) which promotes access to free courseware produced by UN agencies and public and private sector entities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher training</td>
<td>A significant challenge underlying the important role of teachers in the digital age is their lack of skills and ability to take full advantage of the internet, both as a basic educational resource and as a means of sharing educational content with other education communities. To address this, UNESCO, in partnership with major private sector entities concerned with ICT training, is developing an ICT Competency Framework for Teachers aimed at assisting educational planners and teacher training course developers to prepare teachers for making effective use of ICTs in their work. UNESCO has also provided capacity building and convened policy dialogues to build the institutional capacity of public teacher training institutions of Member States.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobile</td>
<td>Mobile technologies offer huge opportunities in education, in particular in developing countries, by providing access to information in the absence of fixed communication infrastructure and facilitating access to information to marginalized groups (rural and minority communities, women and girls, persons with disabilities, etc.) UNESCO is facilitating the realization of this mobile potential by investigating current practices, promoting innovations and content development in areas such as literacy, teacher development and school management, and reporting on policy developments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Innovation</td>
<td>In developing countries and in countries in post-conflict or post-disaster situations, there is a potential for innovation inspired by technology in the field of education, including distance learning applications, economic development and poverty eradication. Necessity pushes courageous teachers and institutions to make major leaps forward to develop locally relevant content and applications that respond to the needs of their communities in their special</td>
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UNESCO recognizes such innovations through its UNESCO King Hamad Bin Isa Al-Khalifa Prize for the Use of ICT in Education, and broadens the impact of the innovations by documenting and sharing best practices with Member States.

**Media and Information Literacy**

UNESCO promotes the concept of media, information and technology “literacies” to equip individuals and communities with essential competencies (knowledge, skills (such as critical thinking) and attitudes) required to engage effectively with information and media systems, including the internet.

**Open Educational Resources (OERs):**

The UNESCO OER Platform, scheduled for launch in late 2011, will offer selected UNESCO-sponsored curricula and educational publications as OERs to allow global communities of practice including teachers, learners, and education professionals to freely copy, adapt, and share their resources. The Organization will also benefit by establishing stronger, continuous links with institutions, and by tapping into the new materials and innovations that are produced through this network of education practitioners. Capacity building and awareness-raising are essential to ensure that OERs can readily be shared by many countries and higher education institutions. UNESCO has combined workshops with online forum in its recent program “Taking OER beyond the OER Community: Policy and Capacity”.

In order, to understand how to develop the information literacy, teachers must understand their context. Jenkings, H. (2006), describes culture as participatory and convergence.

**Table 2. Definition of Participatory Culture and Convergence Culture. (Jenkins H., 2006)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participatory Culture</th>
<th>A culture with relatively low barriers to artistic expression and civic engagement, strong support, for creating and sharing one’s creations, and some type of informal mentorship whereby what.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Convergence Culture</td>
<td>The flow of content across multiple media platforms, the cooperation between multiple media industries, and the migratory behavior of media audiences who will go almost anywhere in search of the kinds of entertainment experiences they want</td>
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</table>

The possibilities that the ICT’s have brought to the world are endless, and those possibilities
should apply to education, so teachers, need to give their students the possibility to develop all the required skills so they can take advantage of that possible world. “It has been established that the internet is not only a place to find information, it has facilitated major changes in the way people communicate, which has brought about incredible changes in the world, drawing people closer together despite huge physical distances between them” (Ortega, 2018:202).

To interact, work and live in the XXI century, students will need to develop certain skills, to be able to access to all the possibilities the knowledge society has to offer; and education must contribute to the development of those skills introducing new pedagogical models and strategies to make it possible. For Universidad La Salle, COIL (Collaborative Online International Learning) can be a model that should contribute to help students become real citizens of the XXI Century developing those skills but also interacting in an international context as real professionals of the Global World.

**COIL Courses at Universidad La Salle Mexico**

To extend the internationalization program, La Salle University joins the SUNY effort through the COIL Center to promote the creation of international collaborative courses with the support of technologies providing students the possibility to participate in an international experience without mobility. This allows our institution to internationalize the curriculum and to promote the development of the XXI Century skills on students and faculty, collaborating with other international institutions in a real intercultural exchange.

For the last four years, La Salle has promoted the COIL courses in almost all its schools reaching a wide number of students. The diversity of subjects has been very broad and not only limited to interdisciplinary courses but also transdisciplinary experiences with great success in the results.
La Salle recognizes the great enthusiasm of students that is translated directly into enhanced motivation to learn their curriculum subjects and according to the La Salle Model, developing real change agents because they become aware from their own disciplines of how their actions affect others and to propose and negotiate solutions and agreements, sharing with their international peers the current concerns about the world, discussing the issues that divide us, the issues we share and the problems that humanity faces; developing the necessary skills that may help them to be able to propose solutions that can change the world by involving them through experience, intellect and emotions.

COIL courses contribute to La Salle students to recognize themselves as real global citizens and professionals with a critical capacity to achieve a more just and fraternal world, promoting the creation of mutual commitments through working together with their peers, changing their perspective through an experience that exposes them to another culture and other forms of thought.

When two or more cultures come into contact, the differences and particularities of each are recognized and it generates exchange and respect that produces significant modifications in the symbolic scenario of young people. The Universidad La Salle recognize also the great enthusiasm of students translated directly into enhanced motivation to learn their curriculum subjects. It also recognizes the benefits for their faculty that after this important international experience grow as a better professionals and better educators. Finally, as a Higher Education Institution, La Salle is also aware of the benefits that this kind of experiences mean to their curricular programs and the way they contribute to an international institutional prestige so it is the reason the program continues growing with the support of its authorities. The commitment is not only to have single experiences but also to replicate in the future every COIL course to extend the benefit to the upcoming generations of students through institutionalizing COIL courses in all its curricular
programs. The following graphic shows the number of students that along the years have been in the COIL program with SUNY.

![Number of Students Graphic](Graphic_1.png)

**Graphic 1. Number of Students La Salle Mexico - SUNY that have participated in the COIL Program (Meza, 2017)**

The Universidad La Salle Mexico is aware of XXI Century challenges as part of a huge educative network all around the world so its current commitment is to extend the program with other La Salle’s universities, enlarging the number of teachers involved in the program through a formal training program. Another commitment is to continue disseminating its achievements to attract new institutions interested in venturing into this program, giving support to COIL teachers to publish and promote the result of their COIL experiences.

**A COIL Course at Universidad La Salle Mexico**
As an example, one of the most successful COIL courses: “Seminario de Temas Contemporáneos de Comunicación”, has been active for five consecutive periods. It is a course of the Communication undergraduate program, within the Architecture, Design and Communications School. The key terms, for the success of this course, have been flexibility and adaptation, because, even though through the five courses the teacher and the subject have been the same, SUNY have been different, due to other situations. After the last two and a half years running this COIL course, it has been possible to be aware of the main learnings that confirm these key terms:

1. **Flexibility.** the syllabus cannot be the same. It does not matter if it is the same partner or not, the syllabus must have modifications on each course to improve the students' learning experience and increase the development of specific XXI Century skills.

2. **Adaptation.** the teacher has to accept to cut out curricular content from the course, and to be aware that content is not the main knowledge that students will acquire from the course. The very important learnings will focus in intercultural exchange.

**Students’ Opinions**

At the end of each collaborative course, students answer a survey to assess their opinions about the experience. Results may be very rich to make changes in the next course. The results for “Seminario de Temas Contemporáneos de Comunicación” are as follows to the question “what have you learned?”:

- Fall 2015: Digital culture 47% - To communicate with my team 21%
- Spring 2016: Digital culture 63% - To communicate with my team 53%
- Fall 2016: 77%: Digital culture 47% - To communicate with my team 21%
- Spring 2017: Digital creation of a communication piece 4.76% - To communicate with my team 19%
• Fall 2017: Digital creation of a communication piece 38.46 – To communicate with my team 30.77%

It is important to notice that in all the five periods, students affirm to have learned more about digital culture. In answering to the question, “how much have you learned to collaborate effectively online?” students responded:

• Fall 2015: 33% Strongly agree - 47% agree
• Spring 2016: 36% Strongly agree - 60% agree
• Fall 2016: 39% Strongly agree - 34% agree
• Spring 2017: 28% Strongly agree - 33% agree
• Fall 2017: 53.85% Strongly agree – 46.15% agree

The main objective of every COIL course must be that students learn to collaborate with someone of another culture and almost all students answer they agree or even strongly agree that this learning has been acquired and this is possible with flexibility and continuous evaluation of student’s participation in the collaborative activities. Through the years, it has been necessary to change the tools according to the situation and the previous learnings. The students’ opinion about the different tools and their use in the courses:

• Fall 2015: Facebook (not good enough to the academic deliveries)
• Spring 2016: Moodle (It was not good enough for the icebreaker and feedback because it is too rigid)
• Fall 2016: Moodle and WhatsApp (Whatsapp gave freedom to the students, and the comfort to ask questions)
• Spring 2017: Facebook and Moodle (Facebook was great for icebreaker and feedback, Moodle worked for the academic deliveries)
• Fall 2017: Facebook, (due to the September earthquake in Mexico, we needed to give flexibility and freedom to the Mexican students)

Students changed also the use of technology selecting different tools through the different courses. In the survey they were asked which media do they preferred to communicate with their group and these were the answers:

• Fall 2015: Inbox Facebook 93%
• Spring 2016: Email 60%
• Fall 2016: WhatsApp 86%
• Spring 2017: Inbox Facebook 95%
• Fall 2017: WhatsApp 61%

Something amazing is to notice that once students enroll to COIL, they do not regret the decision. When they were asked if they enjoyed the COIL portion of the course they answered:

• Fall 2015: 33% Strongly agree - 40% agree
• Spring 2016: 56% Strongly agree- 36% agree
• Fall 2016: 26% Strongly agree - 30% agree
• Spring 2017: 28% Strongly agree - 33% agree
• Fall 2017: 92.31% Strongly agree – 7.69 % agree

To have a successful institutional COIL program it is very important to have continuity. COIL courses must repeat every school cycle within the curricular course. Subsequent students have expressed their desire to enroll to a COIL course, as they get to know from quantitative results and from the testimony of their fellows the benefits of this experience. When a COIL course is implemented only once inside a curricular course, it will eventually be forgotten.

The academic authorities and faculty must recognize the extra effort the student is making in working within a COIL course and recognition must be formalized. Aware of this the
Universidad La Salle delivers certificates, in a synchronous meeting where both teachers recognize the effort of their groups of students and celebrate the ending of their successful collaborative work.

Institutional Awareness of Benefits a COIL Course Offers

Get to extend the COIL program in the Universidad La Salle México is the result of the awareness the institution has gained of the benefits that students and faculty get from a COIL experience. According to different students’ surveys, interviews and professional teacher’s reports, the results are:

Benefits for Students

- Awareness of other cultures and realities.
- Understanding how others perceive us (and why).
- Understanding and knowledge about cultural background of each person.
- Learning about collaborative construction of knowledge.
- Learning how to apply knowledge to solving real problems from local to global contexts.
- Skills development in the use of English (or other languages) in communicative contexts
- Skills development for online communication and digital literacy.
- Acquire work experience in virtual teams.
- The opportunity to build international personal relationships.
- Increase the student's interest in studying or preparing abroad.
- International experience without mobility and extra fees.
- An international professional experience that can be reported on their CV.

Benefits for the Faculty:

- Teaching in an international collaborative environment.
- Knowledge about other points of view about for example pedagogical strategies
• Collaborate with a foreign institution.
• Improve their language skills in English or other languages.
• Development of technological skills.
• Development of virtual communication skills.
• Learning of new technological tools for learning.
• Enhance their courses providing their students an improved learning environment.
• Get to know the potential of their students and appreciate their individual talents.
• Professional experience to include on their CV.

Conclusion

In the Information, Knowledge and Communication Society students must develop many specific skills for the XXI Century to enlarge their professional opportunities and respond in a positive way to the society needs. In this context, Higher Education Institutions have the commitment to help their students to develop those skills they will require to live and work in the future. Jenkins, H. (2009) proposed 11 XXI Century skills and in a global environment, students must achieve the challenge to work in international contexts. Nowadays, intercultural training in the student's curriculum has become a real need, as it consolidates a new way of watching, understanding and living the world. It allows exchange, generates confidence and mutual security, allows people to overcome the differences and praises the similarities. It allows us to imagine a new kind of global citizen capable of respecting the rights of others, aware that coexistence and solidarity with those who are similar to us or with those different from us, strengthens, enriches and allows us to grow as members of humanity.

The COIL program that the SUNY University started over a decade ago helps teachers and students, get some of the needed skills. The Universidad La Salle Mexico is making a big effort
to institutionalize COIL courses in order to internationalize the curriculum and offer its students the possibility to develop real change agents acquiring the XXI Century needed skills. Seminario de Temas Contemporáneos de Comunicación is a clear example of how the Universidad La Salle is working hard to come through this challenge and to improve the model with the commitment and passion of authorities and faculty demonstrating its experience and leadership as one of the precursor universities of this model in Latin America.
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Reflections on Immigrant Entrepreneurs in a COIL Project  Student Voices: Perspectives on International Learning through COIL

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Angelica Selene Sterling Zozoaga
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Abstract

Student voices in one COIL module within the US-Mexico Multistate COIL Program coincided with the presidential election campaign in the US in 2016, which gave an opportunity to reflect on immigrant entrepreneurs. Student discussed strategies for ethnic restaurant owners or ethnic designers to be more successful and to be more recognized in their adopted countries. Interestingly, these strategies were reflections of one’s own understanding of immigrant communities in cosmopolitan cities such as New York City in the US and Cancun, México. The Diaspora of Asians in Gastronomy and Visual Arts is a COIL module developed by Kyunghee Pyun at Fashion Institute of Technology and Angelica Sterling at Universidad del Caribe. This COIL module is designed to enhance a student’s understanding of artistic and gastronomy business contributions and accomplishments by Asians dispersed across other continents including North and Central America. The students enrolled in Asian American Art and Design at Fashion Institute of Technology (FIT) in New York City and in Restaurant Business Management at the Universidad del Caribe (UC) in Cancun in México worked collaboratively during six weeks, taught and guided by Pyun from the discipline of history of art and Sterling from restaurant management who carefully designed activities to create this unique platform for students to acquire cross-cultural competency skills by interacting with one another via online-learning tools. Both professors emphasized that many international enterprises—in particular, fashion, culinary arts, visual or performing arts—rely on intercultural skills and seek for creative personnel with cross-cultural competency skills. Students discovered these qualities; yet their strategic suggestions were interesting by recommending business owners to stress or enhance more ethnic characteristics to their business. Pyun and Sterling reflect on how these ramifications are co-related to the current political climate of diversity and inclusion and immigration.
Introduction

The use of technology in education allows the student’s access to information almost instantaneously, providing e-mechanisms to support the delivery of content, communication, and interaction (Liyanage, Strachan, Penlington, & Casselden, 2013). In this context, the implementation of activities that allow communication between students from different countries and with different cultures, enrich the professional and academic training throughout higher education (Burawoy, 2000).

In an increasingly globalized economy, now more than ever, it is important to understand other ways of thinking, acting and seeing life (Saleem, 2017); these competences will allow the student to develop multicultural competences that will help him to develop in international scenarios locally, building intercultural relations, accepting differences, understanding diversities and developing relationships with people from any nation; Bank (2007) defines multiculturalism as a tool, medium and way to promote or inculcate harmony, peace and, respect towards the other beliefs, customs and religions; having this in mind, Professors Pyun and Sterling taught the COIL Module called The Diaspora of Asians in Gastronomy and Visual Arts.

Immigrant entrepreneurs are increasingly important in labor markets since the 1980s (Light and Bonacich, 1988). In immigrant-owned business, employees are more likely to be co-ethnics of the owner. It has been argued that immigrant employees tend to earn higher wages within the immigrant business sector. Students in the COIL module of The Diaspora of Asians in Gastronomy and Visual Arts observed the above-mentioned tendency in gastronomic or visual art enterprises run by Asian immigrants in the United States or in México. Students identified elements contributing to the business success with entrepreneurial skills of business owners such as
industry-specific experience or relatively superior language competency and their subsequent advantage as self-employed business enterprise (Lofstrom, 2004).

**Student Voices on Immigrant Entrepreneurs**

Pyun and Sterling collected quantitative and qualitative data from a pre-COIL survey and a post-COIL survey both in 2016 and in 2017. Pyun’s class had about 25 students each semester while Sterling’s class had about 35 in 2016 and 18 in 2017. Even though Sterling’s classes had different subjects every year, the COIL activities were the same.

At Fashion Institute of Technology (FIT), students major in art and design fields (Advertising and Marketing Communication, Fashion Design, Textile and Surface Design, and so on) as well as business (Fashion Business Management, for example). Students ranged from freshmen to seniors although sophomores and juniors were the most. They took Professor Pyun’s Asian American Art and Design as an elective or a requirement to fulfill a category of American History. At Universidad del Caribe (UC), students in 2016 were all freshmen, the most of them with basic English communication level; while those in 2017 were sophomores with intermediate to advanced levels in English communication. Although each course originated from a different discipline and aimed to achieve different learning outcomes, the COIL module was designed to instill students with cross-cultural competencies, cultural self-awareness, the global implication of one’s academic activity, and effective communication skills. Both universities had an adequate lever of international engagement with higher education institutions oversees (Dewey and Duffy, 2009). They also had some, though not satisfactory, administrative support for COIL modules with instructional technology and mutual visits to campuses.
As a first activity, the students were asked to fill out a survey with the purpose of knowing about their proficiency in English and Spanish, the UC showed proficiency from basic to advance, in English, while the FIT students showed low or none Spanish proficiency according to the survey’s results on both years. About their disposition and comfort level to work with people with a different language in 2016, 54 students responded. The results showed that 46.3% of the students strongly agreed to the willingness to work with people with different language, 42.6% answered for somewhat agree; 9.3% for somewhat disagree; and only 1.9% chose ‘strongly disagree.’ For 2017, 40 students completed the survey. The results showed that there was a little change in percentages: 52.5% of the students in the 2017 survey strongly agreed to work with people with different language and felt comfortable while 42.5% were somewhat agree, 2.5% somewhat disagree and only 2.5% were strongly disagree.

Graph 1. Willingness to work with people from different language

On the following questions they were asked if they were familiar with the Asian American heritage in the place of living (meaning Mexico or the U.S.) and if they knew the contributions that Asian Americans have made to culinary and visual arts in México and the United States.
## Table 1. Asian heritage and contributions

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<thead>
<tr>
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<th>2016</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>Somewhat Agree</td>
<td>Somewhat Disagree</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am familiar with Asian American heritage in the place where I live currently (Mexico or US)</td>
<td>17.50%</td>
<td>50.00%</td>
<td>25.00%</td>
<td>7.50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel that Asian Americans made significant contributions to culinary arts and visual arts in Mexico and the United States</td>
<td>44.40%</td>
<td>46.30%</td>
<td>7.40%</td>
<td>1.90%</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
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<th>2017</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>Somewhat Agree</td>
<td>Somewhat Disagree</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am familiar with Asian American heritage in the place where I live currently (Mexico or US)</td>
<td>13.00%</td>
<td>50.00%</td>
<td>31.50%</td>
<td>5.50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel that Asian Americans made significant contributions to culinary arts and visual arts in Mexico and the United States</td>
<td>47.50%</td>
<td>47.50%</td>
<td>2.50%</td>
<td>2.50%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In 2016, 96.30% of students were willing to know more about the Asian American culture and heritage and 97.50% in 2017. Regarding their expectations for the COIL module on 2016, 63.00% of the students strongly agreed about the possibility of learning new skills and/or perspectives, 29.60% somewhat agree, 3.70% somewhat disagree and 3.70% strongly disagree, while in 2017, 72.50% of the students strongly agreed with the opportunity of learning new skills and/or perspectives, 25.00% somewhat agree and only 2.50% strongly disagree.

Right after the pre-COIL survey, two icebreaker activities were designed with the intention that students from both countries knew each other, they should perform the first one as national teams and the second one as international teams as formulated by the professors. For the main project, the students in groups composed of students from Cancun and New York presented an analysis of a restaurant or a design brand whose owners were of Asian origin and their businesses were established in Cancun and New York. The limited locations were intended for in-person interviews with a business owner. However, in 2017, the component of interviews was omitted due to research topics beyond these cities.
For the final project, both professors hoped that the COIL Module presented an opportunity to consider cultural heritage and entrepreneurial spirits of Asian artists and entrepreneurs in the fields of gastronomy or visual arts in the modern and contemporary period. The project was in fact carefully designed to enhance their project-based learning outcomes. Each international team found a final project choosing an enterprise (artist, restaurant, or company) and created a seven-minute presentation. UC or FIT students visited a site to get photos and videos. An interview with an artist or a restaurant owner was required in 2016 and encouraged in 2017.

For the interview, students were advised to ask at least 7 questions related to cross-cultural dynamics in his/her business. It could be about personal history and challenges in creating and running an enterprise in a city/country that s/he migrated into. They also had to develop two specific tasks: (1) analyze cross-cultural dynamics thinking about how restaurant owners/designers can benefit more from their background of Asian heritage; (2) come up with at least two strategies for this business (artist) to improve his/her enterprise or career in the context of cross-cultural dynamics.

In 2016, students decided to work on several Asian restaurants either in Cancun or in New York City. For Cancun, a group chose to do research for their analysis of Hanaichi, a Japanese restaurant. For New York City, the remaining five groups worked, each, on Korilla, Inakaya, Jongro, Monster Sushi, and Grace Street, all of which were run as “Asian” restaurants. Their choices reflected the changing demography of immigrant groups from Asia after a long period dominated by European immigrants who usually ran small business companies in New York City (Glazer & Moynihan, 1963; Barkan, Diner, & Kraut, 2004).

In 2017, the students in four teams analyzed and created business proposals for artists from fashion industry such as Nicole Lee, Alexander Wang, Ana Sui, the Open Ceremony established
by Carol Lim & Humberto Leon while three teams worked on Asian restaurants such as Benihana, and Jing Fong, both in New York, and Niki Nakayama in Los Angeles. A wide variety of designers show the dissemination of fashion media across global centers while Asian restaurants are still more visible in larger cities such as New York and Los Angeles than Cancun.

**Analysis of Immigrant Enterprises**

In both years, students pointed out difficulties in immigrant lives such as limited language proficiency or weak networking skills. On the other hand, what is remarkable is that their appreciation of ethnic cuisine or ethnic designers lies in their distinctiveness. In many cases, students both in Mexico and in the US recommended that business owners enhance more of their ethnic particularity by adding more “authentic” decorations to their interior or by adding “Japanese” names in the menu.

Their suggestions were in fact tied to business strategies of avoiding competitions or increasing a share in a specialized/or segregated market for more profit as summarized in the research by ethnographers or sociologists (Sanders, Nee, & Sernau, 2002; Zhou & Xiong, 2007). Their understanding of cross-cultural dynamics was in tune with current immigrant policies or cultural policies of diversity and inclusion. Even though Cancun has a far less Asian population than New York, many students commented that lives as Asian immigrants in Mexico would have fared much better than in the US after watching documentaries on Asian immigrants during the WWII such as the internment camp of the Japanese Americans or anti-immigration policies. Many students responded well to the 1982 murder of Vincent Chen by auto-mechanic workers by relating the event to their own immigrant stories.

While most students in Cancun were non-immigrant Mexican citizens, students at FIT were
mostly immigrants or had immigrant parents. Many of students who participated in the module truly appreciated this COIL project as a way of celebrating their ethnic identity or recognizing accomplishments of Asian immigrants. While students understood difficulties and advantages of managing an ethnic business, they were insightful in emulating what the general society where they belong to make of an immigrant business: unique on its own way, never aspiring to compete with “authentic” culture of the hosting country.

Once the students finished the final project and presented it to their own groups, they were asked to fill out a post–COIL survey to reflect their opinion about the COIL experience; the information collected in more than 60 replies—from students who participated in the COIL at both universities—showed the opinions and thoughts about how to better work together with people from other countries, with different perspectives of the life and the culture. Starting with their evaluation of the activities performed, even if they experimented some troubles during the developing of the final project, it was one of their most favorite activities while fun activities in the icebreakers were their second.

They considered the language difference, scheduling with team members, and working with partners productively as the biggest challenges for completing the activities and a field research. Nonetheless, working with international team members was not considered as representative issues to perform. (Graphs 2 and 3). In fact, a difficulty of scheduling with team members often referred to those living in the same city. Especially in New York City, many students were working and also attending college so that finding a mutually agreeable time was a challenge. Students wanted more personal connections among themselves. That is why in 2017 professors introduced an ice breaker activity of introducing their favorite movies or songs instead of the exercise of finding major cities in Mexico and in the US. Students were more engaged with
one another in a new activity offered in 2017. Perhaps that is why students found the language less burdensome in communication in 2017.

Graph 2. Biggest challenge 2016

Graph 3. Biggest challenge 2017

In the post-COIL survey, professors also asked the following: whether they became more familiar about the Asian American heritage in the place of living and whether they got to know more about the contributions that Asian Americans have made to culinary and visual arts in México
and United States after taking the COIL module, the results are shown in table 1. A combined percentage of Strongly Agree and Somewhat Agree is overwhelmingly large, reaching to almost 90%. The difference between Strongly Agree and Somewhat Agree lies in which students evaluable themselves either in a confident or modest manner.

Table 2. Asian heritage and contributions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>Somewhat Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have become more familiar with Asian American heritage within my culture</td>
<td>25.50</td>
<td>66.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have learned that Asian Americans made significant contributions to culinary arts and visual arts in Mexico and the United States</td>
<td>44.650%</td>
<td>42.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>32.30%</td>
<td>58.10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have learned that Asian Americans made significant contributions to culinary arts and visual arts in Mexico and the United States</td>
<td>35.50%</td>
<td>58.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Conclusions

Participating students, according to their comments in the survey, felt that they learned something valuable from each other’s point of view and that this opportunity of international collaboration expanded their vision of life by exposing themselves to rich experiences and perspectives of immigrant students in New York City. All of them felt that they acquired some tools to work together with people in a distant country and to understand today’s cross-cultural, global, and dynamic business environment through a unique and meaningful personal experience. Their suggestions for more success in immigrant enterprises, though, were in tune with immigrant
policy makers. Most students agreed that self-employed business ventures were beneficial for growth and sustainability of immigrant businessmen (Lofstrom, 2004).

The contact with students who were born and raised in a different cultural context has allowed all of the participants of COIL to increase their cross-cultural communication skills and to nurture their adaptability to different types of work (Suárez-Orozco & Qin-Hilliard, 2004). On the other hand, having the opportunity to analyze immigrant lives and to know about entrepreneurs who have been successful in an adopted country, other than the one they were born in, has managed to expand their vision to the opportunities that this globalized world presents. Some students in New York referred to their own family’s experience of immigration or stressed hardships that immigrants may encounter in day to day operations. Students in Cancun, on the other hand, were less familiar with immigrant experience, but successfully expanded their understanding to immigrant entrepreneurs. Occasionally students in both campuses discussed current political affairs in each other’s country such as anti-immigration measures or un-documentated workers. The COIL project of Asian American immigrant entrepreneurs enabled students to reflect on importance of diversity and inclusion in each country’s political climate in order to cultivate entrepreneurial spirits of young, dynamic, and energetic creators in areas beyond gastronomy and visual arts.
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Leading from the Middle: Lessons Learned from Developing Awareness of and Competency for Globally Networked Learning among Faculty, Staff, and Students at York University

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Abstract

This paper explores the methodology and key strategies employed by the Globally Networked Learning Project at York University (GNL Project at York) over a three-year period. While many similar initiatives at the institution began at, and were driven by, a top down approach in the institutional hierarchy, the GNL Project York was conceptualized as a uniquely middle-of-the-institution approach. In turn, it experienced a distinct collection of successes and barriers in initiating, facilitating, championing, and assessing this pan-university initiative by attempting to mobilize and inspire from within, rather than leading from above.

Keywords: Globally networked learning, community of practice, pan-institutional project
Leading from the Middle: Lessons Learned from Developing Awareness of and Competency for Globally Networked Learning among Faculty, Staff, and Students at York University

The Globally Networked Learning Project at York University (GNL Project at York) in Canada began as a Provost-driven initiative in 2015. With the support of an Academic Innovation Fund (AIF) grant, colleagues at York University formed a project team to begin the task of embedding globally networked learning (GNL) pedagogy at the university. This initiative required a strong focus on mobilizing faculty through the work of an external project team, who represented a diverse yet lateral structure of positions and influence within the institution. While many similar initiatives at the institution related to experiential learning and eLearning, for example, often begin at, and are driven by, a top down approach in the institutional hierarchy, the GNL Project at York experienced a unique collection of successes and barriers in initiating, facilitating, championing, and assessing a pan-university initiative by attempting to mobilize and inspire from within, rather than leading from above.

This paper explores these unique benefits and barriers to leading a pan-institutional project from the middle. This discussion is of particular importance for colleagues and similar project teams currently attempting to identify and bring together multiple pieces of the GNL pedagogical puzzle without direct or immediate access to resources or senior level supports that typically ignite similar campus initiatives. While there are considerable benefits to relationship building and project management in this “on the ground” approach, the broader goals of integrating GNL curriculum were challenged by considerations of incentive, scope, and time. The paper begins with an overview of the GNL Project at York, and the methodology used for
integrating GNL across the university. The paper also discusses how the project team “led from the middle” to raise awareness of GNL amongst faculty members, staff, and students and attempted to build meaningful relationships and a community of practice within the university to identify possible initial challenges and important gaps in resources and/or support for those faculty members interested in developing and mounting such courses. It then moves on to a discussion of the unique benefits and barriers encountered over the past three years, and the ways in which the project team is currently navigating these insights to enhance current institutional processes and to propose the development of a GNL infrastructure at the university.

An Overview and Methodology for Integrating GNL Across the Institution

The Academic Innovation Fund (AIF) was established at York University in Canada as a means to provide financial support for initiatives highlighting, promoting, and advancing York’s strategic priorities related to teaching, learning, and the student experience (Academic Innovation Fund, 2010). What makes this model unique is its emphasis on supporting projects initiated by colleagues from across the institution that may not typically have access to significant funds, supports, or resources to launch large-scale, pan-university initiatives. The Globally Networked Learning project first received AIF funding for three years (2015-2018) on the strength of an application proposing a significant investment in several of the university’s strategic priorities, including Experiential Education, eLearning, and Internationalization. The project team’s goals, broadly speaking, were to embed an international component into the current curriculum while conceptualizing best practices to embed this curriculum across multiple disciplines and courses. While several team members hold senior positions at the institution, the majority of work in promoting and implementing the project was driven by colleagues “leading
Figure 1 provides an overview of our strategy for leading from the middle, highlighting key strategic drivers at each stage. Working as a team, the GNL Project at York began with a three-part strategy of i) awareness-building of internationalization in higher education and GNL pedagogy amongst faculty members, staff, and students, while gauging the existing interest from the middle” - those with roles that may exert considerable influence and have access to a variety of valuable resources in their home departments and among their personal international networks, but that are not often at the table with senior executive at the institution. Since the inception of the project, the team leading the initiative has included several faculty members (including those with and without tenure), graduate students, and an Educational Developer.
amongst these groups in GNL teaching, supporting and learning; ii) building meaningful relationships and a community of practice within the university to identify possible initial challenges and important gaps in resources and/or support for those faculty members interested in developing and mounting such courses; and iii) enhancing current processes to propose the development of a GNL infrastructure at York University. The team’s approach was informed, in part, by similar initiatives at other institutions including Cégep de Sherbrooke (Cégep de Sherbrooke, n.d.).

The team began by conceptualizing, designing, and delivering a series of intensive workshops, meetings, and consultations, to facilitate opportunities for professional development and inter-faculty dialogue that emphasized an attempt to integrate GNL into both the culture and practice of the institution to promote internationalized teaching and the development of global competencies (Partnership for 21st Century Learning, n.d.). The majority of these interactive sessions targeted faculty members - both tenured and contract - and support staff working in York University libraries, Information Technology Services, and Educational Development (known as the Teaching Commons) units at the university. In addition to awareness-building and networking opportunities for faculty members and support staff, the project team also coordinated several focus group sessions for the student body. These sessions were organized in an effort to gauge the level of interest – and awareness of – internationalization of higher education and skills relevant for the 21st century global workplace amongst its undergraduate and graduate student populations across diverse disciplines.

Through these initiatives, the project team discovered that at York, the conception of internationalization is typically understood as a model that counts students, programs, and curriculum as international when there is a significant movement of knowledge or mobility of
people between countries. Additionally, it found that diversity at York is largely defined as a reflection of the presence of visible minorities in the classroom rather than a deeper, more nuanced understanding of how a diverse classroom might enrich the learning and teaching experiences of both students and faculty. However, it found that once faculty, staff, and students were exposed to the ways in which GNL might enhance internationalization efforts beyond existing programs at York – for example, satellite campuses, study-abroad programs – they showed great enthusiasm in developing and integrating GNL pedagogy in their teaching and learning experiences.

In addition to the above initiatives, the project team also worked closely with groups of faculty and staff who are currently delivering courses that offer variations of GNL. In fact, the GNL Project at York began by working closely with the Borderless Higher Education for Refugees (BHER) Project based at the institution, which “aims to make educational programs available where refugees need them” (Borderless Higher Education for Refugees, n.d.). As part of this program, York University faculty members and BHER support staff design and deliver courses at both its Keele campus and satellite campus in the Dadaab refugee camp, with the support of Teaching Assistants based in Canada and instructors in Kenya. The GNL Project team worked closely with the BHER team to study, learn from, and document the experiences of faculty members and a team of graduate students (Teaching Assistants and Graduate Assistants providing various forms of instructional support). Findings from this collaboration with the BHER Project were recorded in an ethnographic blog that highlighted the considerable challenges of online teaching/learning initiatives, problems that needed to be addressed by various units at York including the Registrar’s Office, IT services and Library systems, as well as issues with York University’s Learning Management System – Moodle. This data collection opened the project
team’s eyes to the relative lack of preparedness of York’s current administrative systems in developing and sustaining a viable pan-university GNL infrastructure.

The GNL Project team also launched a website, developed social media platforms (namely, Facebook and Twitter), and are currently in the process of developing instructional videos and an instructor guide as a means to collect and curate key messages related to GNL that extends the concept of internationalization to consider notions of global competencies. For example, the project team emphasized GNL as a means to “bring together [students, faculty and librarians] in a consortium to collaborate on projects that bring together the diverse perspectives of participants to produce a richer, more nuanced, understanding of the issue(s) at hand” (Globally Networked Learning, n.d.). These ideas mirror a slow, yet noticeable, shift in the institution’s understanding of intercultural competence and global citizenship, which have begun to be more heavily promoted by York University’s senior administration. The project team found that despite this renewed focus on a global perspective, GNL as both a form of internationalization and a means to develop global competencies remains at the complex intersection of ideas that have proven to be challenging to communicate, integrate, and implement.

Through these initiatives, the project team began its process of developing its own community of practice from the “middle.” Currently, this community of practice consists of faculty members, IT and library support staff, and a team of graduate students from its two campuses in Canada (one of which is bilingual) who have helped to identify possible initial challenges and important gaps in resources and/or support for those faculty members interested in developing and mounting GNL courses. It is from the engagement with this community of practice that the project team is now preparing proposals for enhancing current processes to propose the development of a GNL infrastructure at York University.
Table 1 provides an overview of the phases of key strategic drivers of the GNL Project at York University. Now in its third year of funding, the project team is working with other units at the university to finalize a proposal for the organizational architecture of a GNL model at York University that can provide continuous and meaningful support to faculty and staff who are rethinking their curriculum for creating internationalized classrooms, and for the students and young scholars who will be taking these exciting courses.
TABLE 1: Leading from the Middle: Phases of Key Strategic Drivers

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>People involved</td>
<td>GNL Team, BHER Team, Faculty, Students, Staff, International faculty partners.</td>
<td>GNL Community of practice, Faculty as GNL leads, Administrators, Teaching Commons and LTS/IT support staff, and York International.</td>
<td>GNL Team, Faculty as GNL leads, Student as GNL leads, International faculty and Institutional partners.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Processes used</td>
<td>Awareness Building, Gauging the existing interest in GNL teaching, Supporting, Listening &amp; Learning.</td>
<td>Enhancing existing supporting practices towards internationalization at York, identifying gaps in resources and/or support for development of GNL courses/modules and internationalization at home resources.</td>
<td>Delivering papers and action labs at York Teaching in focus and international conferences, organizing virtual transnational GNL workshops on GNL as a framework to implement global competencies in curriculum internally and externally.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology used</td>
<td>Workshops, Meetings, Consultations with Faculty, Student Focus groups, GNL website, York Listservs, Posters, Promotional videos and Social media.</td>
<td>Meetings, Consultations with Faculty, Faculty guides for developing International partnerships and GNL courses/modules, Promotional videos and social media.</td>
<td>Conferences, articles in Yfile Innovatus, Consultations with Deans and Ministries, GNL Website, Social media.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenges encountered</td>
<td>Multiple meanings associated at York and abroad with concept of Internationalization of the curriculum.</td>
<td>Differentiating resources needed for GNL courses, eLearning and Experiential education</td>
<td>Intersecting Internationalization at home and GNL pedagogy to embed Global competencies in program curriculum.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Successful deliverables</td>
<td>Bootcamps, Webinars, Promotional videos, Faculty guides, Instructional videos.</td>
<td>Development of a GNL community of practice, GNL Bootcamps and Webinars.</td>
<td>Conceptualization of a bilingual certificate in social and civic stewardship with GNL pedagogy; GNL Faculty guide and GNL instructional videos.</td>
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Benefits and Barriers Encountered at York University

There have been many benefits to leading from the middle. For the project team, one of the biggest achievements has been its ability to connect with pan-university, interdisciplinary Faculties, both in terms of their students and faculty members. The range of faculty members and students that have shown interest in GNL - because of the innovativeness of the pedagogy and the possibilities it opens up to acquire crucial and relevant skills - is very diverse, contrary to what was initially assumed. The project team is now building on this achievement to conduct a large-scale needs assessment of the different Faculties at York, so that faculty members and students are well poised to begin and succeed in teaching, and learning from, GNL courses. The project team is also in the process of developing a survey to assess the understanding and adoption of the GNL pedagogy by teachers from Ontario elementary to secondary levels, as well as designing GNL workshops to train these teachers in the Summer of 2018. Over the next few months, the project team will be meeting with Deans and Associate Deans of the eleven Faculties to understand what type of GNL infrastructure would work best for faculty, staff, and students in the diverse departments housed within them. A needs assessment of lateral structures within the university will ensure that the model that is implemented works for, and across the unique features of, each Faculty.

Similarly, the GNL Project has been successful in debunking initial conceptualizations of GNL pedagogy as being synonymous with online curriculum development. This re-formulation has been encouraging for incoming BHER Project faculty members who wished to experiment with GNL rather than continue with the tradition of online teaching to student cohorts in the Dadaab refugee camp in Kenya. After two and a half years of sustained work with a wide range of faculty members from different disciplines, the project team has brought about awareness that
GNL pedagogy is less about merely connecting classrooms via different forms of technology, and more about the co-development of curriculum and a meaningful partnership to engage students on global issues. The team has also taken a cross-section of the diverse courses offered at the undergraduate level that might benefit from the addition of GNL modules, and identified how - and in what ways - partnerships may be established and GNL components may be added in.

These benefits are largely a result of the project team’s place and perspective at the institution. Given that the team itself reflects the apparent administrative middle, it has been able to access faculty members, staff, and students who have been instrumental in identifying and shaping the needs of the different stakeholder groups. These groups helped to open doors to lateral structures in the institution that would ultimately house GNL programs and curriculum, and in inspiring the project team to think through how it might incentivize these groups to take part in GNL teaching and learning. As part of its needs assessment of different Faculties, the project team is now in the process of identifying what these incentives might look like for different tiers of faculty members, undergraduate and graduate students, and support staff.

Yet, despite these benefits of organizing from the middle, the GNL project team encountered multiple barriers to implementing such a large-scale initiative from their place and perspective at the institution. It was readily apparent that such a project would rely heavily on networks and relationships; while each team member is well connected in their own department and immediately surrounding areas, it is clear that a pan-institutional network is required to encourage the rapid yet intentional and timely dissemination of information.

The project team recognized very quickly that in order for a GNL model at York University to be successfully implemented, and function effectively, it needs to bring together a wide range of units into communication with each other, and equally, to ensure that faculty members who are
developing and mounting courses are aware of, and know how to navigate, the organizational structure that currently exists. The project team’s experience of working with a core group of faculty members suggests that they do not necessarily know of the range of support systems that are already in place, and/or how they might seek out additional support should they wish to troubleshoot various aspects of their course, or request support from qualified and relevant educational developers and/or IT support. As evidenced by the ethnographic blog of the BHER Project, this is a key barrier for many faculty who are keen to embark on the process of developing GNL courses or GNL modules. Some faculty members have had to develop, troubleshoot, and negotiate various aspects of their courses or modules on their own while support at the university is already there. In other cases, they have resorted to finding unique solutions to their challenges in silos. This has meant that there is limited record of the institutional challenges faced, and the solutions that may be used. As such, there is the potential of reinventing the wheel, and wasting considerable time, effort and energy – all of which serve as disincentives for those who wish to innovate. With the inception of the Project, and the subsequent development of a community of practice, some aspects of knowledge mobilization and the development of institutional memory are slowly being addressed.

Leading from the middle has meant that the information and resources created to support this initiative were made up of several distinct yet highly interconnected parts, often drawing from multiple resources and perspectives that had not yet been brought together through regular curriculum development or review. While an emphasis on interdisciplinary curriculum and learning is not new to York University, working at the ground level to encourage innovation within individual classrooms represented a challenge not often faced by senior administration. This project work represented the other side or half of university-wide initiatives, attempting to inspire
change and integrate curriculum components without a direct incentive or clear direction and guidance coming (only) from those who typically and publically lead such work. Mirroring similar challenges at the institutional level, the project team quickly learned that an emphasis on collaboration and communication was required beyond, or at least before, the work of education and implementation.

Additionally, it has been challenging for the project team to introduce the concept of 21st century skills as an outcome of GNL pedagogy to the different stakeholders we are working with in higher education. While such research and materials are readily available in relation to K-12 education across the province of Ontario, it is less readily available for post-secondary education. The GNL Project team is proposing to explore this connection via a new AIF project, tentatively titled “Knowledge Translation Across Cultures: Developing 21st Century Skills Among Undergraduate Students.” This project is part of a proposed program on Civic and Social Stewardship / Responsabilité civique et sociale to be offered on the bilingual campus of York university, Glendon College. It will create a framework of open pedagogy (Open Educational Resources, n.d.), designed as a series of resources and activities.

This holistic program aims to offer student success and community-based experiential education strategies by creating an 18-credit Certificate in Civic and Social Stewardship that students can participate in alongside their majors, either locally and globally. It will also employ a cohort or learning community-based model which has been demonstrated to positively impact student success. The framework will be built using evidence-based practices for effective teaching and learning, guided, in part, by a partnership with the Teaching Commons and York International. The proposed bilingual framework aims to support students in developing the skills essential for success in the 21st century university. These skills include i) understanding interculturality; ii)
communicating across languages and cultures; and iii) critical thinking and research skills. Drawing on the P21 Partnership for 21st Century Learning which identifies these skills, and York’s strategic priority of internationalization, this auxiliary project will create a practical means for faculty to embed opportunities for such skill development in their courses.

The GNL Project team believes that the proposed project will enhance the reputation of York University by preparing students for success in a 21st century workplace that demands skills in global and intercultural competence. It will address the needs of students going abroad in exchange or those of International students enrolled in York various programs. It will build on the findings from this current GNL Project that explored the integration of a globally networked learning (GNL) pedagogy across campus, bringing together an interdisciplinary project team with the goal of inspiring pilot courses, providing support for integrating GNL teaching and learning strategies into existing courses, and researching new models for cross-cultural academic projects.

In an attempt to catalyze the change needed in current institutional practices and infrastructure, the Project team has also embarked on the concurrent efforts to engage different Faculties and to secure buy-in for GNL as a form of internationalization and as a model for delivering crucial skills for teachers and learners from senior administration at York University. Now that the GNL Project is in its final phase, the project team will meet with various members of senior administration – at the level of the Provost and Vice-Provosts of Teaching and Learning – at York University to ensure they are familiar with, and see the potential for, GNL as an innovative approach to learning and teaching in higher education today. Given its place in the middle of the institution, with senior administrators on the project team itself, initiating these important meetings has been relatively easy. The project team has compiled and aggregated its research, and now has sufficient data from its environmental scan of two and a half years to
highlight the importance of GNL. The project team believes that this buy-in is crucial to obtain the needed direction and guidance from those stakeholders that typically lead such work at the institution.

**Conclusion**

This paper has discussed the unique experiences of “leading from the middle” to develop a GNL model at York University. While there have been many barriers, the project team recognizes that these are part of the learning process when attempting to introduce any innovations to teaching and learning in higher education. The enthusiasm amongst faculty members and students, as well as the desire to learn about and support the development of GNL teaching and learning by the various support units show that a GNL movement is slowly taking root at York University. The project team is excited by the prospect, and looks forward to seeing how the GNL Project at York University unfolds in the near future.
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The Potential of COIL in Entrepreneurship Education: Global Venture Incubator as a Joint Initiative in COIL

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Abstract

Among the many disciplines collaborative online international learning (COIL) is already used nowadays, there is an especially huge potential in entrepreneurship education. This is due to the fact that entrepreneurship education should activate the student’s ability to develop ideas, think out-of-the-box and exploit opportunities, which is facilitated by the contact to other cultures, other disciplines and other ways of thinking. However, the execution of COIL initiatives poses specific challenges in the field of entrepreneurship education at the same time, as entrepreneurship education should be largely based on real-world and hands-on experience, requiring both input from students and teaching staff simultaneously. With the “Global Virtual Incubator” project, scheduled for the launch in May 2018, three international universities have designed a unique COIL course format with students from three different countries participating simultaneously, without the logistical and financial hassle of traveling. Facilitated by technology, the “Global Virtual Incubator” is a unique opportunity for entrepreneurial students to experience and develop crucial entrepreneurial capabilities (e.g., pitch, selling, being proactive, gathering as teams etc.), to develop new international networks for their future career path and to understand and expand their awareness to cultures and diversity.

Keywords: distance learning, collaborative online learning, entrepreneurship education
The Potential of COIL in Entrepreneurship Education: Global Venture Incubator as a joint initiative in COIL

There is a huge potential for collaborative online international learning (COIL) in entrepreneurship education. A growing body of literature deals with the phenomenon of entrepreneurship education. Among other findings, authors suggest for example that entrepreneurship education should foster “a real-world experience, action, and reflective processes to engage students in authentic learning” (Kassean et al., 2015, p. 690), include design-thinking approaches Nielsen & Stovang, 2015, p. 987) and make use of serious games to simulate entrepreneurial learning (Fox et al., 2018, p. 79). At the same time, when comparing traditional and alternative methods in entrepreneurship education, Lourenço and Jones (2006, p. 134 - 135) found that the best learning outcomes are achieved when traditional (conventional lecture-format) and alternative methods (activity-based, learning by doing) are mixed.

Collaborative online international learning in entrepreneurship education can be a big benefit in order to realize these recommendations by facilitating the provision of real-world experiences. What is more, networks both in the form of strong and weak ties play an important role during a venture’s early formation and growth (Elfring & Hulsink, 2003, p. 409). In that regard, COIL can be a valuable way to facilitate international network formation, as it helps to overcome resource restrictions, for example due to travel costs. Last but not least, multicultural experiences have a positive relation to creative performance such as idea generation and creative thinking (Leung et al., 2008, p. 174). This again underlines the importance of contact with different cultures in entrepreneurship education, which can be facilitated by COIL measures.
The Global Virtual Incubator Project

In connection to the findings above, three universities from three different countries have initiated a joint initiative of collaborative online international learning in entrepreneurship education between three academic institutions around the world.

The “Global Virtual Incubator” is a one month-long ideation course that takes place simultaneously at three international universities, namely the College of Management Academic Studies Israel, the Faculty of Economics and Tourism Dr. Mijo Mirkovic of the Juraj Dobrila University of Pula in Croatia, and the FHWien der WKW (Vienna University of Applied Sciences for Management and Communication). As a virtual platform, the global virtual incubator enables student entrepreneurs from any place to collaborate, work jointly, get more acquainted with peers around the world, and get the chance to expand their network. The virtual platform facilitates planning the venture creation by vigorously activating its participants to look for opportunities, inspiration, tools and networking. Through the use of technology, the students get the chance to experience all of this without the logistical hassle of traveling as well as the expenses connected with it. The virtual Incubator is based on an un-course approach to learning. Each university fills the course with content, and students as well as teachers add to the quality of the contents. Thereby, the content preparation and production is divided by the participating institutions.

The content of the Global Incubator Project is divided in seven sessions which take place over the course of one month. Attendance is mandatory. The course follows a mixed approach of teaching methods, consisting of both traditional and alternative instruction measures. The online sessions are used for both theoretical input offered by teachers from all participating institutions, as well as for reflection and teamwork by the student teams. The sessions take place each week on Fridays, and the time in between is used by the students to work on their project in teams. Three
of the sessions are hackathons, three of them classes and in the seventh session, the whole project ends with a pitch event, where the student teams present their ideas. The assessment is based on three pillars. Firstly, the students have to hand in weekly reports which count for 30% of the grade. Secondly, the students have to complete two models, respectively a value proposition as well as a business model canvas. Those count jointly for 40%. The last 30% are given for class participation in the hackathons and events, as well as in the classes and online modules.

**Content of the COIL course**

The course consists of two different course formats, hackathons and classes. The hackathons are the events where the local students get in touch with the international students via videos, skype calls etc., as well as where they meet stakeholders and develop their ideas further. Each hackathon is prepared by a different university. The theoretical course content is delivered through info-videos, each one of those prepared by a different university. In that way, the students are able to benefit from the different experiences and working styles of different academic institutions. The sessions are organized around three main topics, mainly the discovery of one-self, team building and the ideation process. The three classes take place locally each second week between the hackathons. Before each session, the students receive course material which has been especially developed for this course, according to a distance online learning methodology. This includes videos that are prepared by the participating universities. The classes cover the topics of business model generation and value proposition, the creation of a business canvas according to the lean startup methodology and pirate metrics and pivot. After each class, students submit a report on their ideation process, based on the material taught.
**Introductory Kick-Off Hackathon: “Me” - Discovery Of One-Self**

This session is organized by the College of Management Academic Studies Israel and aims to introduce the students to the intensive month to come. This includes a general overview of the course, introductory games to get to know each other, as well as a Big 5 personality test. The students develop an understanding for different personalities in teams and learn what people with different personality traits need in order to reach their full potential. In a skype call, the students in the local teams get to know the international students and have conversations about their Big 5 test results, as well. The students get divided in international groups and get the task to produce a video with the title “What kind of entrepreneur I am”, using all the tools they have learned in the presentations and the works they have done in the hackathon. This task is followed by a moderated discussion of the meaning of “ME” in the groups.

**Hackathon – Team Building**

The second hackathon is all about the team building process and is organized by the Faculty of Economics and Tourism “Dr. Mijo Mirković of the Juraj Dobrila University of Pula in Croatia. The students watch the videos the other students prepared in the last hackathon, discuss the strengths and weaknesses of and what skills of the people in the videos are complementary to their own. This is followed by a game where observers observe which roles the students are taking. Then, the choice of topic takes place. The teachers present topics (IoT, sports, machine learning, tourism, digital health/wellbeing, fintech, artificial intelligence, 3D printing), written on posters on the floor. The students can do research online for 10 minutes and then they go and stand on their topic chosen. In that way, the teams are built according to the topics chosen.
Hackathon – The Ideation Process

In the last hackathon before the pitch event the students learn how to develop their ideas further, according to the Lean Startup as well as Design Thinking Methodology. Here, the customers are in the center of attention. The goals are the creation of a persona based on proper research about the target group and customer interviews, to think about customer gains and pains and to view the product or service cycle through the eye of the customers. The students are introduced to the y and learn to analyze the big picture their business idea is embedded in. Lastly, they learn about storytelling and how to pitch their idea in front of others, which will be important for the pitch event which constitutes the end of the course.

Challenges And Limitations

As each education format, the virtual incubator brings its challenges and limitations, as well. The first of those might be the quite strict time-plan of the sessions, where there is an alternation between collaborative learning via skype calls between the international teams and local activities. So all participating universities must stick closely to the time schedule, which will be additionally hampered by the time difference. Another difficulty could arise due to the course structure: Each participating university is responsible for the preparation of one part of the content, which will be realized by the others in the respective session. Therefore, despite all the common preparation, there might be slight differences in course content at the single locations.


The Relationship between PBLL-Based COIL Implicit Learning and English Academic Achievement of College Students in Tianjin Normal University, China¹

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Abstract

PBLL-based COIL implicit learning is carried out in one of the College English classes in Tianjin Normal University from Sep. 29 to Nov. 30, 2017. The author will explore the relationship between PBLL-based COIL implicit learning and English academic achievement of college students. She tries to find how much English proficiency students have achieved through maximum PBLL-based COIL implicit learning by comparing her COIL class vertically and contrasting her COIL class with another parallel class of hers horizontally. On the same token, she wants to discuss the function of project in PBLL-based COIL implicit learning. By analyzing the statistics of her students' academic performance, she is eager to find out whether one-sided academic writing project (by Chinese students) is better than that aided by their American peers.

Keywords: PBLL-based COIL implicit learning, English academic achievement
1. Introduction

As a new model of autonomous learning and teaching, the origination and development of Project-Based Language Learning (PBLL) (Xia & Zhang, 2017) can be traced back to Dewey’s pragmatic education theory and constructivism learning theory. Dewey’s theory of pragmatic education states that “education is life, and education is a way of conveying experience” (Cited in Journal of Beihua University [JBU], 2015). Dewey advocated a learning-by-doing model of learning. According to constructivism theory, learning does not simply mean that a teacher imparts knowledge to students, but refers to students’ constructing meaning through the initiative to obtain.

Implicit learning was first proposed by American psychologist A.S. Reber in 1967. Dr. Xiuyan Guo, a professor of psychology in East China Normal University, China, put forward the following opinion in her article “Implicit Learning: Unknowing Learning”: “In the second language learning, students should contact with vocabulary with a maximum frequency, (for example, listening, reading and writing); in the teaching of complex grammatical structure, teachers should allow students to practice grammar rules repeatedly. Only by implicit learning is not enough. Learning is effective with the combination of the implicit and explicit learning.” (Guo, 2003)

In our teaching, since we can’t clearly distinguish students’ implicit learning and explicit learning, and can only favor one of them, then how to realize students’ implicit learning? The English implicit learning method is defined as follows: it refers to a method of gaining a command of English unconsciously in the teaching process by a substantial reduction of teachers’ teaching
content and time, but mainly by greatly improving the learning conditions of learners to make them practice a lot of listening, speaking, reading and writing.

Thanks to SUNY COIL, ideal learning atmosphere for English implicit learning is provided. Chinese students can be immersed in the context of communicating with native English speakers. Therefore, PBLL-based COIL implicit learning is carried out in one of the College English classes in Tianjin Normal University from Sep. 29 to Nov. 30, 2017. The author will explore the relationship between PBLL-based COIL implicit learning and English academic achievement of college students.

**Overview of PBLL-Based COIL Implicit Learning in TJNU**

College English in Tianjin Normal University attaches special importance to English use in both oral and written style, by adopting a production-oriented approach (Wen, 2015) which involves three principles, namely, 1) learning-centered principle, 2) learning-using integrated principle, and 3) whole-person education principle (Wen, 2017). This course is a combination of doing, learning and using, with English skill development as a natural by-product. Therefore, Project-Based Language Learning (PBLL) is adopted in TJNU.

Project-Based Language Learning is a learner-centered learning model, also known as "project-based learning" or "monographic research" (Li et al., 2015). PBLL is a learning paradigm which is carried out through "project implementation". That is to say, PBLL is a teaching mode in which learners acquire knowledge and skills through the actual operation of a specific project.
under the guidance of a teacher. The teaching mode breaks through the traditional teaching which mainly focuses on students’ passive learning in a teacher-centered class, and it emphasizes the subjective initiative of students learning in teaching. With the extensive application of multimedia network information technology in the field of teaching, teaching methods that have been taught monotonously by lecturers in classrooms have been greatly improved, and foreign language learning by means of multimedia networks is also more effective. Therefore, it also provides favorable conditions for project-based initiative learning.

The word “Project” in PBLL refers to "the effort to achieve a specific goal based on the effective use of resources and a unique set of interrelated tasks" (Cited in JBU, 2015). Therefore, PBLL learning, which extends and applies management knowledge in language teaching, becomes the independent learning mode of English learners.

For the project in English learning, it means that within a certain period of time, learners solve a series of inter-related linguistic problems with individual or group efforts, using various media resources and properly applying concepts, knowledge and principles of linguistics related to English subjects. Through the implementation of PBLL project, autonomous learning in certain learning situations can be carried out. That is to say, under the guidance of teachers, learners acquire skills and knowledge through a practical training for specific projects.

On the basis of meeting the needs of English learners of different professional majors, TJNU intends to cultivate college students’ abilities to engage in professional learning and research in English and hopes they will have the opportunity to exchange their professional ideas and
achievements in international academic seminars or international professional journals. Therefore, the project in PBLL is to write a small academic writing based on their interests. Students (from how to search the literature, to determine the title, to the literature review, to the final essay etc.) come to know the process of an academic writing.

Fortunately, the author found Dr. Temi Wright in Purdue University as her partner in collaborative learning for her students. During the fall semester of Year 2017, a whole class of the students of the author’s teamed up with Dr. Temi Wright’s, collaborating both online and offline to explore the topics of their interests and ways of broadening their intellectual horizon. The collaboration lasted from Sep. 29 to Nov. 30, 2017.

The author believes her students are learning English to become more globally competent. She witnesses her students are motivated and have goals in communicating with their counterparts. With two months’ immersion in the language environment, what will her students’ academic performance will be? That is what she is going to explore. She wants to explore the relationship between PBLL-based COIL implicit learning and English academic achievement of her college students.

Study Design

Study Sample

There are 47 students involving PBLL-based COIL implicit learning in K07, Year 2016 of Tianjin Normal University, including 11 boys and 36 girls, a total of 15 project groups.
Study Process

With elaborate preparation in advance, Dr. Temi Wright and the author finally chose 8 topics for the international learning group to discuss fully during the immersion, and one topic for each week. As for the author’s students, she always kept an eye closely on the progress of this immersion. She was sure they would benefit a lot from this rare opportunity if they were fully engaged and involved with the project. She asked her students to write weekly writings as a way of ensuring they were engaged. At the same time, her students had to finish their small academic writing. Of course, she encouraged her students to entitle their academic writing based on the topics they discussed with their American peers, and she also gave them freedom to choose their own research areas of interest. Consequently, half of the academic writings and the topics for international groups fit each other. For the immersion, students found time outside of class to have conversations (based on how the teachers designed it). It was more social and fun than anything.

At the beginning of the semester, Chinese students were told that their project learning is part of the college English course, and it accounts for 20% of the term score. Thus students’ awareness of working hard during the whole process was raised. The learning content of the academic writing project includes reading and taking notes, deciding on a workable topic, annotated bibliography, making an interview or survey if necessary, writing the final essay, and oral presentation. The specific implementation steps are as follows:

- During the first two weeks learning groups in Chinese class are formed. There are 15 groups, and each group consists of 3 to 4 people, including a group leader.
• In Week 3 and 4, Chinese students have to find a general topic, read and take notes. At the same time, the international groups are formed.

• In Week 5 and 6, a workable topic for each group is decided. Based on the eight topics given by the teachers of both countries and their respective interests, the groups determine their own project topics and complete the project proposal. Students should discuss with the teacher before formally submitting the proposal and make the necessary changes to the proposal under the guidance of the teacher.

• From Week 7 to Week 11, Chinese students were required to conduct the project. According to the project plan and their respective division of labor, team members should regularly report to the teachers during the project implementation period and obtain the necessary guidance.

• In Week 12 and Week 13, they finished their final essay and prepare for the oral presentation of the project.

• On December 6 and 13, each group takes about 12 minutes to report to the class with PPT courseware or video clips etc.

The evaluation of the PBLL-based COIL implicit learning project is carried out by teachers and students. The academic writing project essay and 8 weekly writings based on the communication with American peers are evaluated by the teachers. The oral presentation is evaluated by the teachers and the students. The sum of the three parts is the final grade of each student, accounting for 20% of the term score.
Statistical Method and Analysis

In order to find whether students who participate in this PBLL-based COIL implicit learning make a rapid progress, a parallel class (K08, Year 2016 of TJNU) of the author without such an opportunity is chosen to make a comparison. Students in both classes are required to write the academic writing, the only difference between the two classes is that K08 lacks COIL implicit learning atmosphere.

For this exploration, two sets of college English proficiency test papers are adopted (the first set was conducted at the end of the last semester, the second was conducted on January 11, 2018). However, a one-off test to assess the student's academic performance can’t meet the teaching requirements. The classroom performance, homework, self-study, midterm exams and final exams combine together to form a comprehensive assessment. Different weights in the comprehensive assessment should be carefully designed (20% of the PBLL-based COIL implicit learning project, 10% of mid-term examination, 10% of listening quiz and 60% of the final examination constitute the whole term score).

At present, there are two common scoring systems: the original system and the standard system. The original score is not converted, and it is the original score of the test paper. Most of the English tests in colleges and universities use the original scores as the students’ examination results. Although the original scoring system is intuitionistic and simple, it has some limitations. The original score only reflects the number of answered questions, or the correctness of the answer, but it can not directly reflect the difference between the examinees, and the position of the
individual in all the examinees. However, the standard scoring system can help teachers understand
the degree of students’ learning attitude, knowledge and skills, but also understand the relative
position of each individual among all the examinees in order to evaluate students more objectively.
Therefore, standard scoring system is adopted in the two sets of college English proficiency test
papers in TJNU.

Through the vertical comparison of COIL class and horizontal comparison with the
parallel class, we can understand how much English proficiency students have achieved through
maximum PBLL-based COIL implicit learning. Since half of the academic writings of Chinese
students and the topics for international groups fit each other, whether those students whose
academic writing is closely connected with the communicative topics improve their English
proficiency much more than those whose is not is worth exploring.

Results

*Part 1 Horizontal Comparison between K07 and K08*

Table 1 K07- College English Proficiency Test 1
### Table 2 K08- College English Proficiency Test 1

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#### The Statistical Description of the Test

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#### Score Histogram

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Table 3 K07- College English Proficiency Test 2

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The Statistical Description of the Test

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<th>The Lowest Score</th>
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Table 4 K08- College English Proficiency Test 2
Part 2 Vertical Comparison within K07

Table 5 Average Score of K07

<table>
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<th>Test</th>
<th>Usual-Time Score</th>
<th>Test Score</th>
<th>Overall Score</th>
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<tr>
<td>The Whole Class’ Average Score (47 Ss)</td>
<td>82.8</td>
<td>69.5</td>
<td>74.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Average Score of the Students Whose Academic Writing Is Closely Connected with the Communicative Topics (26 Ss—Group A)</td>
<td>83.2</td>
<td>68.5</td>
<td>74.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Average Score of the Students Whose Academic Writing Is NOT Closely Connected with the Communicative Topics (21 Ss—Group B)</td>
<td>82.3</td>
<td>70.4</td>
<td>75.2</td>
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</table>

Discussion

Table 1 to 4 show the test results of K07 and K08, including the statistical description of each test in general. Every time there are about 1,200 students in 24 classes who participate in the
College English Proficiency Test.

First, standard scores of K07 and K08 in Test 1 are both less than the average standard score 70 points. That shows both classes are under the average level of the 24 classes. In Test 2, the standard score of K07 becomes 71.5, higher than 70, which indicates K07 is above the average level; while the standard score of K08 has gone up to 66.7 from 65.4, still lower than 70.

Second, passing rate increase of K07 is higher than that of K08. The passing rates of Test 1 and 2 are 84% and 85% respectively. The passing rate of K07 increases from 80% to 87%, while the passing rates of K08 in the two tests are the same 73%.

Third, there is a rapid increase in excellence rate for K07. Excellence rates for the two tests are fixed, and both are 6%. Excellence rate of K07 has doubled from 4% to 9%. However, there has been a slight rise for the excellence rate of K08—from 0% to 2%.

Fourth, there are different types of tasks in each test, including listening, T or F questions, reading comprehension, cloze, vocabulary, translation and writing. These tasks are designed to test college students’ English proficiency. Compared with K08, the students in K07 improve a lot especially in cloze, vocabulary, translation and writing after COIL learning with their US peers.

In short, with the academic writing project conducted in K07 and K08, students in both classes have improved their English proficiency. What is the most striking is that students in K07 have made a rapid progress in the context of COIL implicit learning.

From the above analyses, it is obvious that the PBLL-based COIL implicit learning for K07 is much better than the project-based language learning for K08. As a matter of fact, students
of K07 chose different topics for their academic writing. Some topics of their writing tasks and the topics for discussion with their American peers have high matching degree. What kind of specific projects are better? Is one-sided academic writing project (by Chinese students) better than that aided by their American peers? Enlightenment should be gained by analyzing the statistics of Chinese students’ academic performance.

There are 47 students who are divided into 15 project groups involving PBLL-based COIL implicit learning in K07. Among these, 8 groups (26 students) of academic writings are closely connected with the communicative topics and 7 groups (21 students) are not.

Generally speaking, after the project all the students in K07 have improved their English proficiency according to the test scores and overall scores. Table 5 shows the average test score of College English Proficiency Test 2 is two points higher than College English Proficiency Test 1.

When the students are divided into two bigger groups——Group A and B as Table 5 shows, Group A whose average test score and overall score of Test 2 are 3.6 and 1.6 points respectively higher than those of Test 1 improve more than Group B whose average test score of Test 2 is a little less than that of Test 2 and overall score is a little more than that of Test 1. Although the difference of the two bigger groups is not very apparent, Table 5 implies one-sided academic writing project conducted only by Chinese students themselves is not better than that aided by their foreign peers. That’s to say, project-based language learning should be perfectly combined with COIL implicit learning in the future. As for the PBLL-based COIL implicit learning in TJNU, Chinese students should choose the topics of their academic writing which are closely connected
with the communicative topics for the international groups.

**Conclusion**

PBLL-based COIL implicit learning practiced the constructivism learning theory and social culture theory. Students in the international group use English language as a medium to obtain information. And at the same time, obtained information becomes their language learning resource. COIL implicit learning creates an ideal environment in which learners can face communicative tasks in this environment. To those students whose academic writing tasks and topics for discussion with their American peers have high matching degree, they can exercise their cognitive abilities to collect, compare, process and analyze the closely related information. Through this PBLL-based COIL implicit learning project, learners apply what they have learned to practical tasks, thus not only internalizing linguistic knowledge but also developing their ability to explore, think, solve problems and collaborate with others. Most important of all, their intercultural communicative competence has been cultivated. What should be paid more attention to is that learners should be able to focus on their own performance and their contribution to the group they belong to, so that everyone’s value is reflected during the learning process.


Undergraduate and Graduate Collaboration: Building Strong Ties At Both Ends of University Experience. The Case of Morocco and New York

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Abstract

During Fall 2017, LaGuardia Community College first-year liberal arts students collaborated in writing and conversation with Moroccan students enrolled in a second-year Masters’ Program in English Literature and the History of Ideas at the University of Tétouan, Morocco. Our project focused on the novel *Horses of God* written by the Moroccan author, Mahi Binabine. The novel traces the lives of four childhood friends growing up near in a slum near Casablanca, navigating poverty, violence and religious fundamentalism. Students in both colleges read the novel, watched the film based on the novel, wrote critical essays on novel, created introductory videos about themselves and wrote post-COIL reflections. In this article, we will discuss how we developed this collaboration, elaborate on its major outcomes for our students and institutions, and describe how this project advanced our ideas about future collaborations.
Introduction

As part of our freshmen cluster at LaGuardia Community College, CUNY, we developed a staged set of activities in which 10 First Year liberal arts students engaged in a novel online learning community with 17 Moroccan students enrolled in the second year of a Master’s of Humanities program at the University of Tétouan in northern Morocco. Through this COIL initiative, students shared a common reading and collaborated in writing, online conversation and a live video classroom meeting of the two groups.

The two courses that served as a basis for the COIL collaboration were English Composition and French and Francophone Literature in Translation. The theme of the liberal arts cluster was Tragedy, Comedy, Absurdity. Readings in French literature, English, and Theatre courses included classic Greek, modern and contemporary plays, French and Francophone literary works from the 19th century to today by Zola, Camus, Beckett and Duras. Students analyzed different characters’ responses to ambiguous, treacherous, and absurd situations. They also explored a variety of topics such as utopian ideas, love and hate, responsibility and freedom, family and faith, compassion and loyalty, violence and war. The Moroccan students participated as part of a second year of a Masters in English Literature and History of Ideas program. Their course was entitled Narratives in Conflict. They were assigned readings such as Ghada Karmi’s Return; Elias Khouri’s Gate of the Sun; V. S. Naipaul's Half a Life, and Mahi Binebine's Horses of God. Other subjects of the course included Contemporary English Fiction and the Short Story, and Biography and Narratives of the Present.
The Moroccan professor shared with us his students’ presentations about the novel, *Horses of God*, which were posted on the French Literature course ePortfolio. He also granted the American students access to the closed Facebook page dedicated to his course. Our students uploaded introductory videos about themselves and were able to see their Moroccan peers’ videos as well.

**Strategies for Developing Lasting Partnerships with international Faculty**

We, the three professors, developed assignments based on students’ reactions to this novel in several steps. These activities took place during an integrated hour co-taught by LaGuardia Community College professors and in the online exchanges described below.

1. Initial email exchanges and a Google Hangout conversation among the three professors;
2. LaGuardia faculty review Moroccan students’ presentations on the novel;
3. Google Hangouts session with LaGuardia professors, Moroccan professor and Tétouan students to comment on presentations and plan larger exchange with both sets of students; the Moroccan students were invited to provide context for the novel and the film;
4. LaGuardia students confer about questions they want to pose to Moroccan students;
5. Uploading and exchange of personal videos and follow-up online conversations;
6. Google Hangout meeting between the two classes focusing on key themes and issues in the novel, guided by the professors;
7. Both sets of students write reflections on the exchange.
Key questions and themes discussed in individual courses, and then in Facebook and Google Hangout exchanges included the following:

a) How does the narrator’s unique and poignant voice from beyond the grave invite readers to understand, and sympathize with conditions these youths face, without condoning violence? How does this novel offer an important statement about human suffering, loss, and the tragic and absurd dimensions of contemporary life where the haves and have nots are separated by literal and metaphorical walls?

b) The novel suggests that a humanistic desire to belong to something larger is an important element in constituting identity. How do we see this desire operating for these young boys? How does their environment, lack of education, lack of choice or a path out of the ghetto of Sidi Moumen create a fertile ground for terrorism? How does this story depict the way organizations use the fundamental desire to have a purpose to achieve their goals?

c) We don’t hear the voice of young women. Why? What is the author suggesting about the roles of women, their power, powerlessness? How does Binebine subtly use the roles of women in this society, women’s bodies, and women’s silence, to deepen our understanding of the difficulties of women’s lives and of relationships between men and women in conditions of dire poverty?

d) In the final chapters of the novel, the narrator explains the power of death that has surrounded and engulfed them: “Death was still there, everywhere. We had adopted her” (139). “The truth was we were almost dead already. So, really, what did it matter, a little more or less?” (141). How does the narrator focus our attention
on this important tragic understanding embodied in these “half-dead” (143) young men?

We met with the Moroccan professor and students via Google Hangouts on November 27, 2017. Although the time difference made a live meeting complicated, the University of Tétouan professor and students generously agreed to come together at a time their class did not meet. During that conversation we planned the forthcoming Google Hangout event between the two classes and agreed to have both sets of students record videos that illustrated some aspect of their lives, sharing neighborhoods, school plans and dreams. This was accomplished easily because the University of Tétouan students invited all of the LaGuardia students and their professors to join their closed Facebook site. In the week before the Hangout meeting, both sets of students shared videos about their identities and cultures and exchanged questions. One interesting comparative example was a cultural sharing: a LaGuardia student posted a one minute clip of a Rockettes performance at Radio City Music Hall; a Moroccan student shared a musical event at a place called Hercules’ Cave.

A group meeting of the two classes took place on December 5, 2017. This session took place during a regular team-taught class for the LaGuardia students and a late afternoon hour for the University of Tétouan students. In this 90 minute Google Hangout conversation students introduced themselves, made reference to their shared videos and tackled major issues in the novel that will be described below.

**Major themes in Students’ Videos**

1. Moroccan students took pride in their culture: they showed videos of their university, their mosque[s], their neighborhoods, their music, and historical spots.
American students were curious and asked questions about the music aired in one of the videos and about an archeological site, Hercules’ Cave. Moroccan students also shared a video based on a project they had done on “Literature Against Extremism.” American students shared their favorite readings in English and French literature and solicited advice on good readings.

2. American students posted videos of their neighborhoods in Queens, noted the diversity of their lives on and off campus; they created some group videos of their college, their diverse neighborhoods, and favorite activities such as visit to the Rockettes.

3. Three Moroccan students organized a video in which they discussed their familiarity with neighborhoods like the one presented in the novel. This became an opportunity to begin a conversation about the relationship between poverty and extremism that the novel explores and followed the faculty members’ suggestion that the Moroccan students provide context for the novel for the American students. During the video chat, Moroccan students wanted American students to understand the degree to which Islam has been misunderstood, noting that the majority of the victims of terrorism are Muslims. They were pleased that American students understood their point of view and commented on the value of this kind of exchange.

It was a genuine cultural exchange for the Moroccan students, who may not have traveled abroad, to see diversity in action. Students in the American class came from Argentina, Bangladesh, China and Mexico as well as New York City. Moroccan students noted, however, that, based on the exchange, they knew more about America and American
culture than American students knew about Morocco. The American students described the conversation as “eye-opening.” They were eager to exchange ideas with a very different, more homogenous group of students, who shared a common religious background. The Moroccan students’ commitment to literature and to the social problems that literature foregrounds was stimulating and inspiring for the Americans. The Moroccan students were impressed with the American students’ openness and sensitivity to difficult topics presented in the novel.

**Masters’ Students Mentoring Freshmen Students**

In spite of the fact that the American students were in their first semester of college and Moroccan students were in the second year of a Master’s Program, the difference in age, maturity and educational level actually helped strengthen the collaboration. Moroccan students were excited about the American students’ interest in topics related to Moroccan culture. They were especially pleased that a Moroccan novel was chosen for an international exchange. In addition they were pleased to be invited to provide context for both the novel and the film. The three professors, in a post COIL conversation agreed that the potential for peer mentoring was evident in the exchange and could be developed more purposefully in the future.

Notes on the Google Hangout Exchange:

1. When the idea of this exchange was presented to the American students, they were thrilled but they also expressed some concern about discussing delicate issues. They wanted to be sure to be respectful of cultural difference, yet they had burning questions.
2. Americans wanted to know how Moroccans interpreted the way women were treated in the novel. They also had very specific questions about a difficult scene in the novel that involved a male gang rape. Moroccan students rose to the challenge. When asked why the author included a male rape scene, they replied that they believed Binebine wanted to make a point about the consequences of sexual repression.

3. Another theme that was complicated for both sides was attitudes towards women depicted in the novel, towards a mother who was a prostitute, for example, in circumstances of extreme poverty. Some of the American students assumed that attitudes towards women in the novel were a feature of Muslim culture, an assumption Moroccan students made an effort to correct.

4. The two sets of students were united in their abhorrence of violence and terrorism and made a joint effort to understand its causes. While they agreed that lack of education, poverty and lack of male role models or a purpose in life made young men vulnerable, the American students disagreed that poverty or social class was a necessary condition for the decision to become a suicide bomber. They cited 9/11 as an instance where more educated individuals were involved in terrorism.

5. Moroccan students appreciated American students enthusiasm, engagement and openness. At the same time, Moroccan students showed a sophisticated desire to locate discussion in a specific political context. American students demonstrated an awareness of the difference between the Muslim faith and radical Islam. The two sets of students common understanding of the intricacies of some of the themes
the novel presents led one student to say that having different backgrounds, instead of being an obstacle to communication, was actually an advantage.

6. This COIL collaboration illuminated new things about culture and the way the young men in the book were living. Despite many cultural differences, both sets of students immediately understood commonalities. When speaking to their international peers and talking about their culture, LaGuardia students indicated that they recognized similarities between the impoverished community on the outskirts of Casablanca, a slum named Sidi Moumen, and areas of New York City that are also places without hope that foster gangs, drug use, and crime.

7. Drawing on a project initiated by the Moroccan group, the professors reflected on the value of the theme, “Literature Against Extremism.” Moroccan students shared a short video about this topic on their Facebook page. The American professors were especially interested in pursuing questions about how literature might be a force against extremism, something that resonated for them throughout the video exchange as students grappled with the social and political problems the novel depicts.

8. Finally both sets of students, and the three professors, articulated a desire to continue this kind of collaboration in such a way that there could be opportunities for deeper reflection and more sustained exchange.

As this summary suggests, the online meeting allowed students to ask questions, exchange ideas about the novel, analyze the context of the novel, and share thoughts about their reactions. Most important, they were able to come together, share common ground and many, in their reflections, noted how important it was for them to have this
conversation with an audience so different from theirs. Students of both courses were invited to write a reflection about this exchange experience. These reflections were especially useful for the faculty because they highlighted the value of the exchange and gave us ideas for future work together. The three faculty members, as well as the students, felt that the differences in the level of education was an asset and they gave some thought to the idea of developing guidelines for peer mentoring, something that could be developed more purposefully in the future.

**Meaningfulness of the Exchange: Development and Sustainability**

Several elements of the exchange that went beyond the specific project (study of the novel) included conversations initiated through Facebook concerning Moroccan students’ MA Thesis projects. Students engaged in conversations about cultural differences and opportunities. The Google Hangout conversation between LaGuardia and Morocco took place just after Trump’s modified travel ban against several nations with a dominant Muslim population and culture. LaGuardia students expressed concern about this policy and this prompted an exchange about United States policies under President Trump. The Moroccan group expressed confidence that American democracy will prevail, despite some discouraging events. Their professor noted that relations between Morocco and the United States date back to our revolutionary war and was the first country in the world to acknowledge the United States in 1777. This was new and fascinating information to LaGuardia students.

LaGuardia and Tétouan University students' learning was enriched by discussing and reflecting on the key themes and questions that the novel, *Horses of God* provoked:
violence, tragedy, and terrorism. Moroccan students had the opportunity to refine their English in writing and conversation. Because the Moroccan students had read the novel before the video exchange, given class presentations and written assignments about it, they were able to share them with us. They were posted on the French and Francophone Literature course ePortfolio. Freshmen students were therefore able to read them, comment them and learn from them.

As a result of this collaboration, three cluster students have decided to major in Writing and Literature (encouraged by their Moroccan peers) and one student has decided to enroll in an Arabic language course. And the three faculty are planning our next collaboration. Not only are we planning on continuing this COIL project, but we are extending it to encompass research and scholarly exchanges. The Moroccan professor has encouraged the American faculty members to seek funding so that we may come to Morocco where he has invited us both to collaborate with him on seminars at his university.

**Conclusion**

Even though several New York students expressed concerns about offending their Moroccan peers with questions related to hot issues such as homosexuality, prostitution, sexuality, religion, gender roles, extremism and violence, they were able to overcome their fear and engage in a burgeoning dialogue across differences. Students' learning was enriched by searching, discussing and reflecting on the key themes of the novel. *Horses of God* helped both sets of students think more deeply about identity formation and the social context and roots of extremism. Finally, the Facebook exchange led to conversations about cultural differences and opportunities.
While the choice of a single text to study together grounded the experience and enabled a fascinating conversation about the differences in the ways students from different cultures responded, we asked ourselves if we should, in the future, choose a second, contrasting text that also dealt with extremism and ask students to reflect on the question of how literature may be understood as a powerful force against extremism. We agreed that for our next collaboration in the Fall of 2018 we would teach Mohsin Hamid’s *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* together, a novel that deals with the experience of a Pakistani-American in New York City just after 9/11. We also agreed that we would like to extend this collaboration over a full semester with several opportunities for online classroom exchanges. Even examining a single text, the opportunity to revisit and examine responses would go a long way to enhancing student understanding and increase the depth of the exchange. Students need to hear their own voices, reflect on responses of those who come from a very different culture, and to revisit difficult questions.

The three faculty members engaged in this project agreed that this collaboration was an important learning experience for them as well. The success of our project was due, in large part, to the enthusiasm that developed among us during our various Google Hangout conversations before, during, and after the events described here. We found ourselves engaged in conversations about how to expand this project but also in broader conversations about our intellectual work and the communities, we might begin to share both online and in person.

Finally, we agreed that the global problems we all face with regard to poverty, ignorance of other cultures, violence, and extremism may be effectively addressed through COIL programs that foster international dialogue and invite students to develop their own
voices, to pose solutions to these problems. As Ralph Waldo Emerson suggests, “People wish to be settled; only as far as they are unsettled is there any hope for them.” We all need to be unsettled in our belief systems and exposed to difference in a way that encourages excitement, interest, and a new commitment to understanding others.