

Crossing International Borders: Teamwork, technology and online collaborations

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Our Team

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 - Binghamton University – BU – (Binghamton, NY, USA)
- Salvador Venegas Escobar – Latin American Academy Fellow
 - Associate Professor of English
 - Universidad de Monterrey – UDEM – (Monterrey, NL, Mexico)
- Matt Sutin
 - Ph.D. Candidate in Bilingual Education
 - N.Y.U. (NYC, NY, USA)

Student participants

- BU students – Spanish 215 course - 17
- UDEM students –TOEFL preparation course - 27
- Partnerships created – 17 in total (16 partnerships at present)
 - Either 1 BU student: 2 UDEM students or 1:1
 - Randomly selected
- 2 – 3 partnerships formed a group – 6 groups in total
- Most activities were done in partnerships
- Some activities were done across partnerships but within a group

Technology used (Ice-Breaker Activity)

- Before partnership activities began,
 - Ice-Breakers (larger group meetings) were completed
 - Initial COIL information given
- Instructors chose times Friday - Sunday to meet with larger groups
- Students gave availability via Doodle
- Zoom links were then mailed to students for Ice-Breaker activity
- Ice-Breaker activity
 - Students spoke in native language
 - Used expressions and unusual words that would be of interest to partners
 - Partners took notes on new expressions and words learned
 - Screen share with BB (how to access COIL information)
- Follow-up to Ice-Breaker
 - Students shared a list of words that they learned
 - Also reacted to the experience in their target language (TL)

Weekly activities (student collaboration)

- Seven weeks of activities
- Week 1 – Ice-Breaker
- Weeks 2 – 6 - Weekly activities that include:
 - Pre-task, Task and Post-task
 - Five topics – Labor, education, language and culture, gender, tourism
- Weekly activities are complete within one's partnership.
- Remember, 2-3 partnerships make up a group – 6 groups in total
 - For BB Discussion Boards, students comment on posts across partnerships, but within the same group.
- Week 7 – Concluding activity

Pre-task

- Blackboard Discussion - 2 parts
 - Student post to BB and answer instructor-created general questions (Due Monday)
 - To facilitate dialogue, students needed to react to other's posts (Due Tuesday)

Week 2

The labor situation in the United States

Objectives:

- To reflect and share about one's own labor situation
- To learn about your partner's country's labor situation

1.

Activity	Directions	Deadline
Pre-task	In order to receive full credit, post well-developed answers to the general questions (in English) to Blackboard Discussion #2	Monday, March 2, 11:59pm (EST)
Pre-task	In order to receive full credit, you need to thoughtfully respond (in English) to those in your partnership AND one more person of your choice on Blackboard Discussion #2.	Tuesday, March 3, 11:59pm (EST)

General questions

- Do you work while you go to school? If you do, where do you work?
- After graduating, what would you like to do in terms of work?
- Do you believe it will be difficult to find a job? Why or why not?
- Do you think the work situation in Mexico is different than in the United States? Please explain in detail.

Example of completed pre-task

Student #1:

Do you work while you go to school? If you do, where do you work?

No, I don't work while I go to school.

After graduating, what would you like to do in terms of work?

I would like to work in a hospital giving neuropsychological rehabilitation, therapy or psychological assessment. And when I have more experience I will put my own consulting room.

Do you believe it will be difficult to find a job? Why or why not?

Yes, I think it will be difficult to find a job because there are too many psychologists in México and few places to work.

Do you think the work situation in Mexico is different than in the United States? Please explain in detail.

Yes, I think the work situation in México very different than in the United States because I think people that live in United States have more opportunities to find a job because United States is a big and globalized country that have a stable economy and a lot of places to work like.

Task

- Instructors choose articles for students to read or videos to watch
- Zoom meeting (Due Wednesday)
 - 40 minutes
 - 20 minutes in Spanish
 - 20 minutes in English
 - Instructor-created questions
 - Regular conversation
- BU student responsible for:
 - creating Zoom meeting link
 - recording meeting
 - posting to file exchange
 - BU students practiced all of the above for an assignment

Activity
Task

Directions

You will read the articles written in English about the work situation in the US and answer the questions below briefly in English. Post your answers on a Word document on the UDEM Blackboard (under "COIL component, article questions).

1. "Most Americans Are Unhappy At Work"
<http://www.forbes.com/sites/susanadams/2014/06/20/most-americans-are-unhappy-at-work/>
 - a. Do you believe that people from the US are generally satisfied with their job? Why or why not?
 - b. Would you like your boss to be a man or a woman? Why?
 - c. For you, how important is salary (1 being very very important, 5 being not important)
 - d. What other things are important for you besides salary?

Additional articles also listed with questions

Task

Zoom meeting with your partner(s) for 40 minutes –

Half the meeting needs to be in Spanish and the other half need to be in English. You can decide what language to begin with. – In order to receive full credit, you must conduct a 40-minute session on Zoom and all participants must be contributing to the discussion and show that they have read the articles and answered the questions.

During the meeting, ask your partner(s) the questions from your worksheet (Both Binghamton and UDEM students have the same questions but in the language they are learning.) Remember half the session needs to be in English and the other half in Spanish.

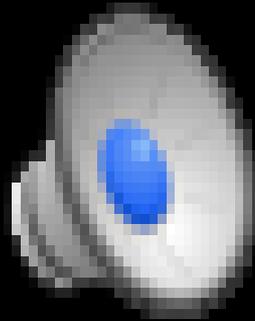
After this Zoom session is complete, the Binghamton student will share the recording of the session with the group in the File Exchange found on Blackboard. Click on My Groups and then your partnership. Then under Group Tools, you will find the File Exchange there

Deadline
Tuesday, Mar.
3, 1159pm
(EST)

Wednesday,
Mar. 4,
1159pm (EST)

Example of completed task

Partnership #1 - Students #1, #2 and #3



Post-task

- Blackboard Discussion - 2 parts
 - Post a paragraph about what they have learned (Due Thursday)
 - Students use information from what they read or watch
 - Also use info from Zoom session
 - To facilitate dialogue students needed to react to other's posts (Due Friday)

3.

Activity
Post-task

Directions

In order to receive full credit, write a well-developed paragraph of at least 10 sentences (in English) about what you have learned about the labor situation in your partner(s)' country (combining as much as information from the articles, the questions you answered and your Zoom session) AND post it to Blackboard Discussion #3

Deadline

Thursday, Mar. 5, 1159pm (EST)

Post-task

In order to receive full credit, you need to thoughtfully respond (in English) to those in your partnership AND one more person of your choice in Blackboard Discussion #2.

Make sure to give feedback on the posted paragraphs. Feedback can include questions, suggestions, etc.

Friday, Mar. 6, 1159pm (EST)

Example of completed post-task

Student #1:

This activity not only taught me how the situation in E.E.U.U. is but also makes me think and reflect the reality of the American people. I always thought that live and work in United States would be almost perfect or at list better than México but now I have the knowledge and the information that prove that it isn't true, I would never forget the statistical data that shows that only 42.6% of workers are satisfied with their jobs or 46.6% of employees feel job security. Another thing that caught my attention was the difference in rating between women and men about work issues, for example 26.1% of the men say they're satisfied with their promotion prospects versus 21.4% of women and 38.3% of men are happy with their wages versus 34.3% of women. United States is one of the countries that support more the gender equity however this data shows that it haven't been able to reach that balance.

Other things that I learned from the zoom and discussion activity are that everybody agree that the economy of United States is better than México nevertheless some company in E.E.U.U like Walmart aren't the best place to work because the wages and people at work aren't the most convenient.

Weekly activities (faculty collaboration)

- Email
 - Daily correspondences
 - Checking-in
 - Updates
 - Activity building
 - Week's activities need to be complete by Sunday
- Skype and/or Zoom
 - Weekly video calls (at least once a week)

Chesla's perspective

- Problems faced
 - Binghamton BB
 - Initial lack of participation from UDEM students
 - Time-consuming
- Triumphs
 - From the onset, students were excited about the project!
 - Students continue to be excited!
 - Communication is improving to set up Zoom sessions!
 - Students are practicing the four goals of language learning
 - Reading
 - Writing
 - Speaking
 - Listening
 - Students are improving these skills and increasing their intercultural communicative competence
 - Research aspect

Salvador's perspective

- Problems faced:
 - Students' lack of experience with telecollaboration, technological tools, logistics, etc.
 - Require extra guidance
 - Students dealing with other classroom issues that require attention (e.g. new textbooks stored on a website that requires usernames and passwords as well)
 - Fear of unknown
- Triumphs:
 - Tangible experience that enables students to have hands-on practice on all 4 skills of the language.
 - Above all, students are getting a better grasp not only of the language they are studying, but also the culture of our neighboring country, the USA
 - After a slow start, students are gathering speed and participating eagerly.
 - The results have paid off enormously even halfway through the project.

Matt's perspective

- Exploring dialogue through the following frameworks:
 - Long's (1996) Interaction Hypothesis
 - Byram's (1997) Intercultural Communicative Competence
 - Bloome et al. (2008) Discourse Analysis approach to language & literacy
 - Using above frameworks, research explores what students say to each other when teaching each other their own native language, and how that affects uptake
- Problems faced (from the perspective of researcher and student):
 - IRB
 - Locating partners
- Triumphs:
 - Collaboration (thank goodness for COIL)
 - Rich data

Solutions found

- Chesla and Salvador:
 - Extended deadlines
 - Communicated with students about issues faced
 - Revised the weekly template to run from Monday – Friday
 - Reviewed sign-in procedures to BB (UDEM)
 - Shared ALL Zoom links to participants in case they needed to join a session

Solutions found

- Matt:
 - Direct Communication
 - Technology on the go

Classroom implications

- Flexible syllabus
 - Need to take into account the COIL activities
 - Regular homework is reduced
 - COIL component is a significant part of grade
- Time is optimized
 - In-class – normal syllabus activities
 - Out-of-class – students continue to practice and improve ALL four language skills
- Student participation is increased overall
 - One-on-one time with native speakers of the L2 learning
- Community of learners is created
 - Ability to cross borders
 - Ability to do so online

Classroom implications

- Passion for technology and education
 - Takes times
 - Takes commitment
 - Takes energy
 - Takes patience
- Need to create an atmosphere for students so that they are excited and not overwhelmed with this type of collaboration

Conclusions

- So far so good!
 - Cultural connections made
 - Increase of culture awareness
 - Increase of language awareness
 - Increase of technology awareness
 - Meaningful online collaborations started
 - Friendships begun
 - Understanding of teamwork
- Overall, a SUCCESS!

References

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Thank you!

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